

# Harrison Township Public Library

## Spice of the Month Club: Turmeric

### Information

**Flavor Profile:** Bitter, Spicy with notes of ginger and woody aroma

**History:**

Turmeric is the dried, knobby shaped rhizome of the plant *Curcuma longa*. It resembles ginger, but is a bright yellow color. The origin of the Latin name *Curcuma* stems from the Arabic word *al-kurkum*, which means saffron.

Incidentally, both spices are used to make yellow colored dyes.



The use of turmeric dates back 4,000 years to the Vedic culture in India. The original records suggest turmeric was used as a culinary spice, but also for medicine and in religious ceremonies. Marco Polo mentioned turmeric in notes of his travels in China in 1200 AD, stating “There is also a vegetable that has all the properties of true saffron, as well as the smell and the color, and yet it is not really saffron.” In medieval Europe, turmeric was known as “Indian saffron” and used as an inexpensive substitute.

Turmeric is sacred in the Hindu religion and used in a variety of religious practices. A turmeric dyed string known as the mangala sutra is worn by brides to signify readiness to marry and manage a household. Buddhist monks have used turmeric for centuries to dye their bright yellow robes. It is also used to dye other types of religious clothing. Today it’s added as a coloring agent in American mustard.

Turmeric is a rather heavy spice to handle alone, but blended with others in a curry powder, it binds them all together beautifully – and just a little gives curry powder its signature color. Turmeric works well in complex blends, where its pungent earthiness acts as a base to help to bind other flavors together. Add it to rice before it boils for a golden-colored dish. Add it to eggs, a yogurt dip, or a cream sauce to pour over broccoli or cauliflower. Make a dressing of turmeric, olive oil, lemon juice, salt and black pepper for a three-bean salad. Add it to lentil veggie burgers, or use it in a sauce for salmon. Just be careful when using turmeric, because it will stain clothes.

It is mainly cultivated in Asia, India and China.

**Regional Stars:** In Indian cooking, turmeric harmonizes the flavors in a curry blend, while in North Africa you can find it in tagines and stews. In Southeast Asia, the fresh root is combined with lemongrass, tamarind, chiles, shallots, and garlic into a paste for stews and vegetables; the leaves can be used to wrap up balls of rice.

**Food Partners:**

Complements: bitter greens, carrots, cauliflower, chickpeas, lemon, lentils, onions, peanuts, raisins, shallots, sweet potatoes, tofu, yogurt

Pairs well with: black pepper, cilantro, cinnamon, coriander, cumin, garlic, ginger, mustard seeds

**Healing Powers:** Turmeric is often used as an anti-inflammatory and may help fight Alzheimer's disease. Some use it as a face mask, though it dyes your skin a little yellow.

## Recipes:

### Easy Yellow Rice

(Easy)

**Ingredients:**

1 tsp. ground turmeric  
½ tsp. ground cumin  
1 to 2 tablespoons butter (or substitute for vegan/dairy free version)  
2 cups long grain basmati rice  
4 cups water  
1 tsp. salt  
Chopped chives or green onions for garnish



**Instructions:**

1. In a medium saucepan combine butter, turmeric and cumin. Saute on medium heat until butter is melted and lightly foaming, while stirring it with the spices. Add rice and stir until the rice is completely coated with the spice mixture.
2. Add water and salt and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer until water is completely absorbed about 15 minutes. Turn off heat and let sit for 5 minutes. Serve warm with chives or scallions.

<http://www.virtuallyhomemade.com/2014/08/easy-yellow-rice.html>

\*If you are feeling adventurous, throw in some frozen peas about 5 minutes before it finishes cooking. The color contrast is very pretty.

## Anti-Inflammatory Hot Turmeric Milk

(Easy)

### Ingredients:

1 ½ cup almond milk (or milk or other milk substitute)  
1 tbs. grated fresh ginger  
1 tsp. honey, or more to taste  
½ tsp. ground turmeric  
½ tsp. ground cinnamon



### Instructions:

1. Combine milk, ginger, honey, turmeric, and cinnamon in a small saucepan. Whisk over medium heat until boiling, 5 to 10 minutes.
2. Remove the pot from heat. Strain out the fresh ginger and serve immediately.

<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/270068/anti-inflammatory-hot-turmeric-milk/>

\*This recipe has been altered for taste after experimentation by the librarian. If you want to use the original, the link is above.

## Honey Roasted Turmeric Chicken

(Medium)

### Ingredients:

2 pound chicken breast  
¼ cup honey  
¼ cup soy sauce, low sodium  
½ tsp. turmeric, ground  
4 clove garlic  
1 tablespoon cornstarch  
1 tablespoon oil, vegetable  
Serve with 3 stalk green onion

### Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cut chicken into strips (about ½-1 inch wide)
2. Make glaze: whisk together honey, soy sauce, turmeric, minced garlic, and corn starch until fully combined. Set aside.



3. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add oil and sear chicken for 1-2 minutes on each side, until top and bottom are white (the middle will still be pink).
4. Place chicken strips in a medium-large baking dish and our glaze over them. Flip chicken strips until coated.
5. Bake for 10 minutes. Take baking dish out of the oven and spoon glaze from the bottom of the dish on top of the chicken once more. Place back in the oven and bake for 10 more minutes, until chicken is cooked through.
6. Serve with chopped green onions.

<https://www.superhealthykids.com/recipes/honey-roasted-turmeric-chicken-recipe/>

\*Disclaimer, the librarian is a vegetarian, but her boyfriend said this was delicious. Serve with steamed broccoli.