

# SCIENCE OF SPICES: *Ginger*

Woody | Hot | Citrusy



Ginger is a tropical, rhizomatous flowering plant. It grows up to 3 ft (1 m) tall.



## **BOTANICAL NAME**

*Zingiber officinale*

## **MAJOR FLAVOR COMPOUND**

*Gingerol, shogaol, and zingiberene.*

## **PARTS USED**

*Rhizomes (fleshy underground stems).*

## **REGION OF CULTIVATION**

*Ginger is native to tropical Asia. Today it is mainly cultivated on India's Malabar Coast (which produces 50% of the world's fresh crop), and through tropical and subtropical parts of Asia. It is also found in parts of Africa, Jamaica, Mexico, North America and Peru.*

## **METHOD OF CULTIVATION**

*Rhizomes are harvested 2-5 for fresh usage and 8-10 months for dried usage.*

## **PREPARATION**

*Fresh: Young rhizomes are cleaned and dried for 1-2 days.  
Dried: Mature rhizomes are peeled, dried, and ground.*

## **NON-CULINARY USES**

*Perfumery, and cosmetics; in traditional medicine for indigestion and nausea.*

## **POWDER**

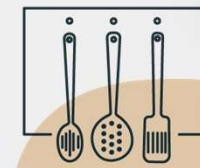
*Do not use ground dried ginger to substitute the fresh spice, as it has a different flavour profile.*

## **FRESH**

*Avoid older rhizomes with signs of shrivelling, which can mean the flesh is fibrous.*

# Kitchen Creativity

Ginger has a hot-spice, citrusy, woody taste. The dried spice has a stronger, more aromatic flavour than fresh ginger, and is commonly used in baking and in spice blends. Fresh ginger is most commonly used in Asian cuisine.



## RELEASING THE FLAVOR



Peeling the ginger bursts open the outer layer of cells, allowing fragrant oils to evaporate. Cooking converts the ginger's mouth-watering flavor compounds into a much milder zingerone.

## FOOD PARTNERS

- **Baking.**

Try adding ground ginger to carrot cake, lemon cake and coconut or dark chocolate cookies.

- **Pork.**

Add slices of fresh ginger to slow-cooked pork dishes to offset the fattiness.

- **Fish.**

Use julienned ginger with shredded leek or spring onions when steaming fish.

- **Squash & coleslaw.**

Mix grated fresh ginger into Asian-style coleslaws, or fry with the onion base of a squash soup

- **Mango, pears & rhubarb.**

Pair with mango in puddings, and poach with fresh slices with pears and rhubarb.



## BLENDS TO TRY

### Advieh

A heady blend of Persian spices to sprinkle over savoury rice, rub over meats, or add to stews. It is also good on Persian rice pudding.

- 2 tbsp. dried rose petals
- 2 tbsp. cardamom seeds
- 1 tbsp. cumin seeds
- 2 tbsp. ground ginger
- 2 tbsp. ground cinnamon

*Grind the wild spices and combine with the ground ginger and cinnamon.*



### Yaji

This is a spice blend used to marinate the meat for suya, West Africa's street food kebabs.

- 10 strands of grains of Selim
- 1 tbsp. whole Ashanti pepper
- 5 tbsp. crushed kuli-kuli or peanut puffs, e.g. Osem Bamba
- 5 tbsp. ground ginger
- 2 tbsp. cayenne pepper flakes
- 1 dry stock cube, crumbled
- ½ tsp salt
- Black pepper, to taste

*Break up the grains of Selim and grind the Ashanti pepper; you may need to sieve out any fibres. Combine with the remaining spices and mix well.*



### Leche de tigre

Translating as 'tiger milk', this is the marinating liquid for ceviche, the raw fish dish from Peru and now enjoyed all along the Pacific Coast.

- ½-1 aji limo, habanero, or other hot chili, finely chopped
- 1 large garlic clove, crushed
- 1 in (2.5 cm) piece of ginger, coarsely grated
- 1 tbsp. fresh coriander stalks, finely chopped
- ½ small red onion, finely chopped
- Juice of 5 limes
- Salt, to taste

*Combine all ingredients and refrigerate for 1 hour before using to marinate fresh white fish. Leche de tigre is traditionally drunk after the fish has been eaten.*



Source: Dr Stuart Farrimond 'The Science of Spices'.