

Pepper (Gam Miris)

Regarded as the “**king of spice,**” black pepper is an incredibly popular among spices since ancient times. Peppercorn is native to the tropical evergreen rain forest of South Indian Kerala state, from where it spread to rest of the world through Indian and Arab traders. Pepper fruit, also known as the peppercorn, is actually a berry obtained from the pepper plant.



Botanically peppercorn belongs to the family of **Piperaceae**, in the genus of **Piper** and known scientifically as **Piper nigrum**. It is a perennial vine and climber that requires supporting trellises (tree or pole) to grow resembling as growth characteristics as that of beetle leaf plant. The pepper plant begins producing small round berries after about three to four years of plantation. Technically, the pepper berry is a fruit (drupe), measuring about 5-6 mm in diameter, enclosing a single large seed at its center.

Pepper generally refers to black, white and green pepper. Black pepper is the unripe fruit of the pepper plant, *piper nigrum*, cooked and dried. Green pepper refers to the dried, but uncooked, unripe fruit of the pepper plant. White pepper, on the other hand, is the seeds from ripe pepper fruits. Pepper is the spice that is most commonly traded in the world. It is used for its strong aroma and for its spiciness as a chilli replacement. In addition to its use as a spice it has medical purposes and is also used for massages (pepper oil). Pepper is native to South and Southeast Asia.

Health Benefits -

Black pepper is a carminative, it discourages intestinal gas from forming, and as a bonus, the outer layer of the peppercorn aids in the break-down of fat cells. It warms the body so it promotes sweating, which helps rid the body of toxins.

Culinary uses

Black pepper is one of the most versatile spices used in several kinds of savoury cooking. In order to keep their fragrance and flavor intact, they generally milled just before preparing dishes and added at the last minutes in the recipes (since prolonged cooking results in evaporation of essential oils).