Turmeric

2026 Herb of the Year

Turmeric or Curcuma longa is in the Ginger family of Zingiberaceae. This is a tropical plant, native to South Asia and common in India. The rhizomes have been used for millennia in India and Asian cooking as well as in Ayurvedic medicine where it is known as “Golden spice”. The plant grows in climates of zones 8-11, but can be grown in pots or grown out doors and potted up to be brought in for the winter. Now adays it can be found in many supermarkets here in the west. I have often bought the rhizomes from the grocery store and potted them up to start the plant to grow outdoors in summer. The rhizomes are planted close to the surface and produce large lance shaped leaves and cone shaped flowers. The plant produces finger like rhizomes which are harvested in the fall as the leaves start to go dormant.

As a fresh root, or dried and powdered it is a must for many curry dishes and as “Golden Milk” tea. It can be added to almost any dish for its distinct flavor and yellow color. It can be added fresh or dried to soups, stir fries and stews and is part of most Fire Cider recipes. It is often used with Black Pepper as the pepper makes the curcumin, one of active constituents, more bioavailable. It is used as a culinary dye for foods such as butter and cheese but also has a long history as a fabric dye and is used as a dye for the robes of Buddhist Monks giving them their distinctive golden color.

In the Hindu culture turmeric is used in food as well as in social and religious ceremony. It is used in wedding and as protection for newborns. Wearing a piece of the rhizome is believe to ward off evil. The dried powder is used in many religious and social ceremonies form birth to marriage as well as for healing and devotion.

Turmeric’s ancient history of use as food and medicine has been associated with the treatment of certain cancers, cholesterol treatments and reducing risk of cardio vascular conditions. Recent research had indicated its potential benefits for brain health in memory retention and various dementia and Alzheimer’s disease (Avery 2015) The combination of black pepper and turmeric has be show to aid in lower blood sugar (Khan 2024). It has long been known for its anti-inflammatory properties.

Golden Milk Recipe

This recipe is for one serving but can be multiply for additional servings.

Ingredients

1 cup milk (can be almond or oat milk)
½ teaspoon Turmeric powder
½ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ginger

1 tablespoon honey or maple syrup
Pinch of ground black pepper

Directions

Place all ingredients in a sauce pan and stir to blend. Cook over a medium heat for 3-5 min stirring occasionally till hot. Serve immediately.