

## Herbs & Spices

### **Asian Basil**

Commonly known in the west as Vietnamese mint, it has a clove-like flavour that is generally stronger than the Mediterranean basil. This aromatic herb is always used in the Vietnamese National dish, Pho (pronounced fur).

### **Vietnamese Coriander**

This long pointed leaf is identified with Vietnamese cuisine, and has a minty and slightly peppery flavoured leaf. Commonly eaten fresh in salads, noodle soups and with hot vit lon (fertilized duck egg).

### **Lemongrass**

Lemon grass is widely used as a herb in Asian, particularly in Vietnam.

It has a citrus flavour and can be dried and powdered, or used fresh. The stalk itself is too hard to be eaten, except for the soft inner part. However, it can be finely sliced and added to recipes. It may also be added whole as this releases the aromatic oils from the juice sacs in the stalk. Lemon grass is commonly used in teas, soups, and curries. It is also suitable for poultry, fish, and seafood.

### **Saw-leaf Coriander/Herb**

An annual herb that is native to Mexico and South America, but is cultivated worldwide. It is used extensively in Vietnam as a culinary herb.

This variety of coriander dries well, retaining good color and flavor - it is sometimes used as a substitute for cilantro, but has a much stronger taste. Medicinally, the leaves and roots are used in tea to stimulate appetite, improve digestion, combat colic, soothe stomach pains, eliminate gases and as an aphrodisiac.

### **Star Anise**

Star Anise is a star shaped fruit from a small evergreen tree or bush, native to Northern Vietnam and China. Commonly used in soups and stir-fries or with pork, veal or duck. Don't confuse star anise with the more common anise seed. While both impart a liquorice flavour they are entirely different plants.

### **Cinnamon**

Cinnamon is a small evergreen tree 10-15 meters tall, native to South East Asia & India. The bark is widely used as a spice due to its distinct odour. Its flavour is due to an aromatic essential oil which makes up 0.5 to 1% of its composition.

### **Cardamom**

The cardamom tree (frequently misspelled and mispronounced "cardamon") has large leaves and white flowers with blue stripes and yellow borders; it grows to about 3 metres. The fruit is a small capsule with 8 to 16 brown seeds.

### **Turmeric**

Turmeric is a ground root and related to ginger. The root is bright orange inside and produces a beautiful spice. A very small amount is needed to add colour and flavour.