



Turmeric: The spice of life

SACHIT KAPUR believes that this kitchen essential could turn out to be the 'new age gold' in the post-pandemic era

Turmeric, the kitchen-essential known as 'haldi', is the king of spices in Indian cuisine. A pinch adds a golden colour and incredible flavour to our food. Turmeric is valued in every desi kitchen for its subtle flavour, distinct yellow colour and powerful aroma. In Ayurvedic medicine, this humble spice is hailed for its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. It connects tradition with medicine and strengthens the bonds of culture, food and pharmacy together.

The Indian market saw a sudden rise of turmeric-based supplements during the COVID-19 pandemic as an immunity booster. It's not that turmeric is new to India or Indians are not aware of its benefits. The advantages of turmeric in boosting our immunity moved it from the Indian kitchen to the Indian food industry as a functional ingredient. Turmeric aids in making our immunity stronger and it is used in Ayurveda, Japanese, Egyptian traditional medicines to treat many diseases. However, due to the low percentage levels in standardised turmeric powder, it's difficult to reap all benefits by just taking turmeric in small doses and thus supplements could be required.

RISE OF DEMAND FOR FRESH TURMERIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to take stock of our lives and prioritise our health. In a country like India that has great faith in kitchen remedies, COVID-19 has prompted people from across all states to return to old-fash-

ioned 'immunity boosters'. In the process, fresh turmeric has become a prized ingredient. And it is used for far more than just haldi *doodh*, or the occasional face pack. Even turmeric lattes are so 2016 as the pandemic has given rise to the inculcation of this spice into golden-yellow salads, teas, *kadha* and juices. Some regional Indian cuisines use fresh turmeric as a vegetable like the haldi *sabzi* in Rajasthan, which is a common winter curry. Turmeric is a rhizome (root), hailing from a plant in the ginger family and local vegetable vendors have been seeing a steadily increasing demand for this fresh root since 2020.

CURCUMIN: THE MAGICAL INGREDIENT

For decades, Indian tradition has touted the benefits of turmeric due to its wonder ingredient, curcumin, which gives it a yellow colour. It's the active component that gives turmeric its powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, among many clinical benefits such as its anti-viral, antinociceptive, antipyretic, and anti-fatigue effects that would be effective to manage the symptoms of the COVID-19 infected patient.

With the increase in demand due to multiple domestic, clinical and ayurvedic benefits, turmeric is now becoming a "New Age Gold" in times of the pandemic.

(The author is the co-founder of a company that sources high quality, nutrient-rich superfoods directly and sustainably from partner farmers.)