

# Indian Foods for Healthy Ageing



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Health friendly foods and diets have been reported worldwide. As we age, proper nutrition becomes even more important, as ageing is associated with the onset of many age-related diseases and significant physical, psychological, and socioeconomic changes. The practice of consuming spices, superfoods, and culturally diverse diets is somewhat unique to India. Some of the Indian foods and diets that have been claimed to possess health benefits are described below.

## Spices are not only tasty, but healthy too!

India is home to many spices that often possess a pleasant taste, color, smell and flavor. They are almost universal ingredients in Indian foods. Health benefits of some spices have been known to indigenous practitioners of Indian Medicine for a long time. India is also the world's largest producer and exporter of spices.



Spices and herbs possess anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-tumorigenic, anti-carcinogenic, glucose and cholesterol lowering activities, and properties that affect cognition and mood. Spices with proven or anecdotal claims of health benefits include:



- Turmeric and cardamom for antiseptic and anti-carcinogenic properties
- Cinnamon for high blood pressure
- Chili pepper for lowering cardiovascular and cancer-related mortality
- Clove for toothache
- Ginger for easing the flu
- Cumin and asafetida for indigestion
- Coriander for gut, heart, and brain health
- Garlic for anti-microbial and cholesterol lowering effect
- Fenugreek for diabetes



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## Superfoods: Global to Local

Superfoods have a very high nutritional density as they offer maximum nutritional benefits for minimal calories. A number of seeds and sprouts, fruits and vegetables, cereals, and leafy greens have been touted as superfoods. Chia seeds, quinoa, acai berry, oats, kale and many others are examples of international superfoods. In general, superfoods contain many gut-friendly components and a variety of nutrients such as antioxidants that can prevent cancer, anti-inflammatory nutrients that can prevent arthritis and Alzheimer's disease, healthy fats, which can prevent heart disease and dyslipidaemia, fiber and minerals like chromium, which are helpful for diabetes.

Five international superfoods include chia seeds, quinoa, oats, kale, and acai berries. In India, we substitute with local foods that have similar superfood properties. Cost wise, Indian counterparts are 3 to 30 times cheaper. Many of these are a part of ancient Ayurvedic medications in India, are low caloric and are rich in antioxidants, anti-inflammatory nutrients, healthy oils, vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Some of them even win hands down in the head-to-head comparison with imported alternatives.



**BASIL SEEDS FOR CHIA SEEDS**



**AMARANTH FOR QUINOA**



**GOOSEBERRY FOR Acai BERRY**



**BUCKWHEAT FOR OATS**



**BEEF GREEN FOR KALE**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, both government and non-government bodies in India issued advisories to use mouthwash made with warm water and turmeric, to inhale the steam of water boiled with carom seeds or pudina mint, and to drink warm water boiled with ginger, cumin, or coriander.





# Indian Foods for Healthy Ageing

The Mediterranean Diet is universally accepted as a health-friendly diet. However, it is not widely consumed in India due to cost, culture, and climate.

The good news is that the Mediterranean diet can be adapted to an Indian version to make it affordable and acceptable. Olive oil can be substituted by many cheaper healthy oils. The Indian diet includes many healthy grains and pulses. Pomegranate, cranberry and mixed fruit juices are good sources of health friendly liquids. Salt intake can be lowered by using Himalayan pink salt and taste enhancers like lemon, tamarind, spices, herbs and chutneys.

## Mediterranean Diet

## Indian version of Mediterranean Diet

1. Fats & oils	Olive oil	Mustard, groundnut, flaxseed, sunflower, nuts oil also have omega fatty acids & cheaper
2. Proteins	Fish, chicken, legumes, sea food & less red meat	Fish for some, cottage cheese, whey, tofu, soya, sprout, milk, eggs, & legumes like pulses, peanut, green pea, kidney beans
3. Carb	Whole grain	Brown rice, whole grain bread & biscuits, oats, millets, lentils
4. Fruits & veg	Fresh	Cost, perishability & awareness issues. Banana, orange, onion, spinach, sweet potato, carrot, broccoli
5. Alcohol	Red wine	Pomegranate, crane berry & mixed fruit juices
6. Salt	Low	Pot chloride or pink salt or use taste enhancers like lemon, tamarind, spices, herbs, chutneys to lower salt intake

## Healthy Ageing diet principles include adequate quantity & quality of food components

ADEQUATE CALORIES FOR ADEQUATE ENERGY-NO MORE, NO LESS

AVOID EXCESS CARBS, PREFER WHOLE GRAINS

ADEQUATE PROTEINS, VEG, FRUITS AND RIGHT OILS



GOOD WATER INTAKE

NEITHER EAT MORE, NOR LESS, NO EXCESS, SUGAR, SALT & OIL.

To conclude, dietary principles for healthy ageing remain simple and easy to understand. What is important is to practice and follow them in right earnest. It is never too late to begin. However, the earlier, the better. Low calorie superfoods are only additions and not replacements.

