

2

CULINARY INGREDIENTS

Essence of the Module

This module deals with the basic understanding of the building blocks of cuisine – the culinary ingredients. This module is a link between the first module and the rest of the modules of the book.

Module Objectives and Competencies

The main themes of this book are cost effectiveness of culinary operations and economics of food production. This module introduces culinary ingredients to the reader. The objective of this module is not to detail ingredients as would be done in a cookery or cuisine-led book. The objectives of this module are:

- (a) to provide introductory knowledge about different aspects of culinary ingredients; and
- (b) to link this module to culinary business taken up in Module 1 and to the rest of the book.

The sub-topics taken up in this module are:

1. Introduction to the world of ingredients.
2. Ingredients and formats of culinary business.
3. Globalization of culinary ingredients.
4. Ingredients and gastronomy.
5. Organic ingredients.
6. Locally farmed ingredients.
7. Indian culinary ingredients.
8. Ethnic ingredients and authentic recipes. Understanding taste imprinting.
9. Ingredients and responsibilities of chef.

2.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD OF INGREDIENTS

The true impression of the **quality** of ingredients is conveyed to a customer through the culinary preparation that he enjoys. Even before a customer tastes the food, the reminiscent aroma of the ingredients stimulates the appetite and heightens the anticipation of what is to come. A good experience with the ingredients and the menu items leads to a valuable dining experience.

Ingredients are all-pervasive in cuisines of the world. It is the skilful handling and marriage of ingredients which produce wonderful menu items which any culinary business wishes to sell.

for the chefs and other operators of fine dining restaurants established under the tenets of French and other Euro-American cuisines to understand the culinary ingredients associated with the menu items. They must study the marriage of food-based culinary ingredients with wines as well as other alcoholic beverages. They must garner sound knowledge of wines, winemaking, wine analyses and viticulture. This, in turn, would increase their culinary repertoire and help establish the culinary business towards superior business platforms exhibiting wine and cuisine culture.

2.3 GLOBALIZATION OF CULINARY INGREDIENTS

Globalization of culinary ingredients is the norm of the day. The cuisines of the world, their related culture and related ingredients are becoming more entrenched around the globe. Interest in international cuisines has made chefs knowledgeable and familiar with the flavours and taste notes of global ingredients. We find description of these ingredients in almost all dictionaries of various languages. Culinary terms associated with each cuisine are being used for other cuisines, even without translation.

Globalization of culinary ingredients has definitely influenced delivery performances and quality of international cuisines and the evolution of professional cooking. Globalization of culinary ingredients has happened due to:

- improvement in transportation;
- improvement in infrastructure;
- improvement in communication systems;
- need to disseminate expertise and knowledge; and
- need to think global.

The process of international integration of culinary ingredients is on and would remain on.

2.4 INGREDIENTS AND GASTRONOMY

Gastronomy is the study of the relationship between **culinary ingredients** of a particular cuisine and its related culture. The term gastronomy is not limited exclusively to the art of cooking; otherwise a cook would also be known as a gourmet. Cooking is only a small part of the discipline of gastronomy.

Gastronomy explores various cultural components with culinary ingredients as the central axis. Study of gastronomy is therefore also related to the fine arts and social sciences, and even to the natural sciences in terms of the digestive system of the human body.

A gourmet's principal activities involve researching and discovering, tasting, experiencing, understanding and writing about culinary ingredients of a particular cuisine in addition to associated activities and exhibition of fine arts. Gastronomy is therefore an interdisciplinary activity.

All forms of culinary business almost always concentrate exclusively on the culinary ingredients of any particular cuisine. Such activity can be described only as business and not as gastronomic experience. On closer research and observation however, one can detect the culinary ingredients linked with the fine arts.

Dance, drama, dramatic skills, music, painting, sculpture, literature and other fine arts are integral parts of gastronomic studies in addition to the study and usage of culinary ingredients and specific food cultures. By conducting food festivals, culinary business can promote gastronomy through the exhibition of specific cuisines along with related fine arts.

Gastronomy is any cuisine supported by the:

- knowledge of effects of the ingredients used in the recipes of that cuisine;
- related culture;

- festivals and festivities;
- history;
- sporting life of the region; and
- weather conditions.

The Indian culinary ingredients present multitudinous flavours and taste notes as well as textures. India has its own expensive and exotic culinary ingredients like 'zafran' and 'gucchi' which are used in cooking of regal and exotic cuisines like the Dum Pukht originating from Lucknow and the Nizami cuisine originating from Hyderabad.

As mentioned above, local ingredients are predominantly used for preparation of regional Indian cuisines. These cuisines change every 300 kilometres in some manner. Each geographical area presents different and distinct:

- schools of cuisines;
- cooking styles; and
- shelf life of ingredients.

Traditionally, herbs and spices were introduced into cuisine by herbalists to safeguard health. In addition, Indian culinary ingredients have taken strong influences of cuisines of the travellers, "invaders" and settlers.

2.8 ETHNIC INGREDIENTS AND AUTHENTIC RECIPES

The use of ethnic culinary ingredients in authentic recipes enhances the experience of tourists. Such ingredients play a role in the way tourists experience a destination. Many travellers visit and return to the same destination to savour the unique and authentic recipes and the ethnic culinary ingredients used in these recipes. Culinary business can evolve itself into a **culinary destination** via the route of using authentic recipes. When chefs take pride in cooking of authentic recipes with zeal for perfection and with care that comes from the heart, they in effect create "taste-imprinting" on the customers through their preparations.

Taste imprinting: Human beings consume homemade culinary preparations from infancy to adulthood in a repetitive manner over the years. The human physiology accepts the flavour and taste notes of these preparations as the best and concurrent with the perception of being well-fed and that of contentment. These flavour and taste notes, along with the strong memories of ingredients that constituted these preparations remain in their minds forever.

If due to pursuits of career or due to settling elsewhere does not allow possibilities of consumption of these preparations, the human brain and taste buds yearn for them. Even the best foods of the world prepared by master chefs are not good enough while matching with the culinary preparations with which one grew up. This phenomenon is known as "**taste imprinting**".

2.9 INGREDIENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A CHEF

Culinary business has the social and moral responsibility to take care of health and welfare of customers. Chefs must be sensitive to their sacred duty of safeguarding the health of their customers. Purchase of quality ingredients and their hygienic handling is of primary importance. The chefs should never compromise on matters of food safety even at the cost of paying higher purchase prices of the ingredients.

Chefs should never attempt to use spoilt and suspect ingredients and those which were inadvertently not used within their prescribed "best-before" period. Using such ingredients for the customers or even

Culinary Economics

for staff invites trouble and displays poor professionalism. Through the food and beverages controller the chefs should ensure that warranties have been secured from suppliers for ingredients received.

2.10 END OF MODULE NOTES

This module on culinary ingredients is not proposed to guide the reader on the fine nuances of cuisine or detailing of cooking methods or recipes. Ingredients are the most fundamental requirement of culinary business. The intention here is to provide brief information on the topic of culinary ingredients and to be still in line with the main theme of the book, that is, economics of food production and cost-effectiveness of culinary business.

Managing ingredients in terms of the economics of their identification, purchase, receipt, storage, issue, pre-preparation, and preparation as specific menu items or creative culinary preparations has been taken up at length in different modules of this book. (This module therefore has **backward** linkages with the Module 1 and **forward** linkages to the rest of the modules of the book).