

Volume One  
Issue One



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**Articles:**

- [Fashion](#)
- [Interior Design](#)
- [Food and Nutrition](#)
- [Grammar](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Media](#)
- [For Kids](#)

**Coming Soon**

Photography  
Business/Politics  
Gardening

**Food and Nutrition**

Coriander: An Introduction

by

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Coriander, also known as cilantro, is a welcome addition to any kitchen condiment arsenal. Technically, of course, the leaves are the cilantro and the seeds are the coriander, but this matters little to distinguishing palates such as ours. Moderately priced, this delightful herb can easily be found in tiny markets as well as monolithic superchains. For the purposes of this article, I shall refer to it as "coriander", because the word sounds better and has more syllables.

Coriander, to the novice, can be a bit overwhelming. A pungent little powerhouse of flavor, it can take charge of a dish as no other ingredient. For this reason, I suggest adding it near the end of the cooking process. Let it introduce itself subtly at first, and it will soon be a welcome guest at any culinary occasion. Its tannish, ochre appearance, especially when mixed with sesame oil, can add a bountiful glow to the most wan recipe.

Nutritionally, it has been demonstrated that coriander can assist with the reduction of excess fat in the bloodstream. It is also an excellent digestive aid, a substantive antioxidant, and an anti-inflammatory agent that can help soothe arthritis.

Let's begin with two basic uses for coriander.

First, it is one of the key ingredients in making a simple curry paste. To a heated skilletful of peanut oil, add the following:

- 2 tablespoons curry powder
- 2 tiny sliced chips of fresh ginger
- 1 chopped medium yellow onion
- ½ teaspoon ground cardamom
- ¾ teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1½ teaspoons coriander

- 2-3 dashes of ground black pepper
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce

Reduce heat to simmer, stir into a paste, and you are ready to add freshly sliced vegetables for an all-encompassing taste marvel.

Second, coriander makes a marvelous addition to an oil and vinegar dressing. Delicately mix the following:

- 1 cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon dijon mustard
- pinch of sea salt
- ½ teaspoon soy sauce
- sprinkle of oregano
- ½ teaspoon coriander
- dash of garlic powder
- pinch of lemon zest

This dressing works wonderfully with an endive, celery, and cucumber salad. Garnish with shredded carrots and grated parmesan cheese.

As you can see, coriander can turn any performance into a box office smash! Furthermore, it is fun to say and tastes as exotic as it sounds. Welcome it with open arms, and coriander will prove to be a lifelong friend.

[RETURN TO  
CURRENT ISSUE](#)

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