

SPICE
HUNTERS 2

By the same authors

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Ethné and Philippe de Vienne



SPICE HUNTERS 2

ASIAN FAMILY COOKING

Recipe and Travel Notebook



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Dusk after
a day of "pepper
hunting" in
the Cardamom
Hills-Kerala
India.



Our friends
Deepa & Sanath de Silva have
the BEST cinnamon in all of Sri Lanka.
Being in their warehouse is like dying
and going to cinnamon heaven.

Introduction

We will do anything and go anywhere we can to learn about food and people. For the past three decades, our travels—in tandem with our spice-hunting explorations—have taken us to spectacular places and into the homes of fascinating folk.

On our last trip, we celebrated Chinese New Year in Yunnan, Republic Day of India in Jaipur, Mumbai, and Cochin, and shared the shock of a nation upon the arrest of the leader of the “official” opposition in a still-fractured Sri Lanka. We ate delicious homemade family fare everywhere we went, which became the inspiration for *Asian Family Cooking*, our latest recipe, travel, and spice box set.

Having a hectic life is no excuse for not eating delicious, varied, and healthy food. Our Asian friends, who are equally busy, manage to do so very well: Deepa de Silva and her housekeeper Nandanee, from Colombo in Sri Lanka; Mrs. Li, her sisters and in-laws from Lusaihe Village in Yunnan; and Auntie Sainaba, the former restaurateur from Punchavayal Village on the Spice Coast, graciously demonstrated and contributed the first recipe of every chapter in our travel scrapbook. We created all the other recipes using ingredients that were available at local grocery stores, using flavours and techniques that we learned from our friends.

Included are six spice blends from the regions we visited, as well as surprisingly multi-purpose fenugreek seeds. Cooks in India and Sri Lanka fry or roast the seeds, use them whole or partially pounded, and add them at different times when cooking—each technique results in a different flavour profile. A stick of fragrant Sri Lankan cinnamon—versatile, in its own way—completes the selection of spices included in the set.

Only our unique, whole spices are used to make our blends and we recommend using a mortar and pestle or an electric coffee mill to grind the blends prior to using them in the recipes.

Bon appétit!

Ethné & Philippe

Grinding spices

It is not always necessary to grind spices into a fine powder: a coarse grind is sufficient in most cases.



Put the spices in a mortar and pound them with the pestle using an up-and-down motion.



Using a circular motion with the pestle is efficient for reducing coarsely ground spices to a powder. Alternating both techniques, however, is recommended for grinding hard spices.

Spice paste

Example: Meen Masala (p. 52)



Add fresh ingredients such as garlic or herbs to the ground spices already in the mortar.



Pound until the ingredients are completely puréed and the spices well-blended.

Grilling spice blends

Example: Yunnan Spices (p. 12)



Crack open the cardamom pod and remove the seeds.



Pound the seeds to a powder.



Cook the flaked spices over a low heat stirring constantly, until they are slightly roasted and aromatic.



Place the hot spices in the mortar to stop cooking, then pound them to a powder.

*For more information:
www.epicesdecru.com*

Grilling whole spices

Example: Garam Masala (p. 44)



Place the spices in a medium-hot pan, stirring constantly until the spices are roasted and aromatic.



Transfer the spices onto a plate to stop cooking and prevent them from burning.

Tarka/Infused ground spices

Example: Dhaba Masala (p. 36)



Ground spices burn easily. Start by adding any wet ingredients called for in the recipe to the hot oil or other fat, and add the ground spices later.



Stir constantly until the tarka is cooked and fragrant. Add the remaining ingredients in the recipe.

Tarka/Infused whole spices

Example: roasting fenugreek (p. 27)



Place the whole spices in hot oil or other fat.



Mix until the spices are caramelized and the fat becomes infused with the essential oils from the spices.



Add the remaining ingredients in the recipe before the spices burn.



Cook until your tarka is aromatic.

*For more information:
www.epicesdecru.com*