

How to Use Ajwain?

7 mins read

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Indian kitchens are a harmonious blend of flavours and aromas, and one spice that embodies the essence of traditional Indian cooking is Ajwain. Known as carom seeds in English, Ajwain has a unique, pungent taste and a bold aroma that can transform the simplest of dishes into something extraordinary. Every Indian household, no matter which region considers Ajwain an essential spice, often passed down as a culinary heirloom from one generation to the next.

Ajwain has been a staple in Indian cuisine for centuries. Its usage dates back to the times when our grandmothers added it to everyday dishes, not just for its taste but for the comfort it brought to the family meal. The versatility of Ajwain lies in its ability to blend seamlessly with different flavours, making it an integral part of various recipes, from traditional curries and breads to modern snacks and beverages.

In this blog, we'll explore the many facets of using Ajwain in cooking, its various forms of consumption, and why this humble seed has remained a beloved ingredient in Indian kitchens for so long.

How to Use Ajwain in Cooking

Ajwain's robust flavour profile makes it a versatile spice in Indian cooking. Its sharp, slightly bitter taste can add depth and complexity to a wide range of dishes. Here's how you can incorporate Ajwain into your culinary repertoire:

Seasoning

Ajwain is often used as a seasoning in Indian dishes. Its bold flavour can elevate a simple dal or sabzi, making it more aromatic and flavourful. Adding a pinch of Ajwain during the tadka or tempering process helps release its oils and intensifies its flavour, infusing the entire dish with its unique essence. For example, a few seeds added to hot oil before cooking onions for curries can make a significant difference.

Ajwain is also a must-have seasoning in dishes like Ajwain Paratha, where the seeds are kneaded into the dough, and in Pooris, where they lend a distinct taste to these fried breads. Ajwain's intense flavour complements the richness of these dishes, making them a favourite choice for breakfast or festive meals.

Baking

Ajwain's sharpness works wonders in baked goods. It is often used in savoury Indian snacks like mathri and namak paare, where the seeds are mixed into the dough before baking or frying. These snacks, crisp and flaky, are perfect with a cup of tea. Ajwain can also be added to homemade crackers or breads to give them a hint of spiciness and aroma.

For a more adventurous approach, try adding a teaspoon of Ajwain seeds to your biscuit or bread dough. The result is a savoury snack with a delightful crunch and a burst of flavour in every bite.

Pickling

No discussion about Ajwain is complete without mentioning its role in Indian pickles. The intense flavour of Ajwain pairs perfectly with the tanginess of pickles. It not only adds a burst of aroma but also helps preserve the pickles for a longer duration. Ajwain is often added to mango, lime, and mixed vegetable pickles, where its robust flavour mingles with the tartness of the fruits and vegetables.

To make a quick pickle at home, mix sliced carrots, radishes, and cucumbers with salt, lemon juice, and a pinch of Ajwain. This quick fix adds a zesty, tangy crunch to your meals and can be stored for a few days in the refrigerator.

Soups & Snacks

Ajwain's use in soups and snacks is quite popular. It's a key ingredient in Ajwain Ka Shorba, a traditional Indian soup where the seeds are sautéed with ginger and garlic and then simmered with broth and spices. This soup is often served as a warm, comforting starter.

For snacks, Ajwain is sprinkled over pakoras and bhajiyas before frying, adding a burst of flavour. It's also used in making masala peanuts, where the seeds are mixed with gram flour, spices, and peanuts before being fried. This makes for a crunchy, spicy snack perfect for tea-time indulgence.

Different Ways to Consume Ajwain

Ajwain is not just limited to culinary applications. It can be consumed in various ways, each offering a different experience. Here are some popular methods of consuming Ajwain:

Ajwain Tea

Ajwain tea is a traditional beverage made by boiling Ajwain seeds in water. It is often enjoyed as a soothing drink, especially in Indian households. The tea has a warm, slightly peppery flavour that can be enhanced with a dash of honey or lemon. To make Ajwain tea, simply boil a teaspoon of Ajwain seeds in a cup of water for about 5 minutes, strain, and enjoy.

Ajwain Water

Ajwain water, or Oma water, is another popular way to consume Ajwain. It is prepared by soaking a teaspoon of Ajwain seeds in a glass of water overnight. The water absorbs the flavour and aroma of the seeds, making it a refreshing drink to start the day. It is a common practice in Indian households to sip Ajwain water in the morning for a burst of flavour and aroma.

Ajwain in Curries and Gravies

A small amount of Ajwain can transform the flavour of any curry or gravy. It is often used in Punjabi curries like Rajma (kidney beans) and Chole (chickpeas) to enhance the flavour. The seeds are sautéed with onions and tomatoes at the beginning of the cooking process, releasing their full potential and infusing the entire dish with a distinct aroma.

Ajwain Roasted and Mixed with Salt

This is a traditional snack where Ajwain seeds are dry roasted and mixed with a pinch of salt. It can be chewed directly for a burst of flavour. This simple combination is often carried in small containers by older generations and offered to guests as a gesture of hospitality.

Ajwain in Doughs and Batters

Adding Ajwain seeds to doughs for parathas, rotis, or batters for pakoras not only enhances the taste but also provides a delightful crunch. The seeds disperse evenly, ensuring every bite carries the signature flavour of Ajwain. Try adding a pinch to the batter for pakoras or to the dough for parathas for a subtle yet impactful twist.

Conclusion

Ajwain's importance in Indian kitchens goes beyond just being another spice on the rack. It is a symbol of tradition, a reminder of the times when our grandmothers would reach for the jar of Ajwain to add that final touch to a dish. Its distinct flavour, versatility, and ease of use make it an indispensable ingredient in Indian cooking.

From flavouring parathas and pooris to adding depth to curries and snacks, Ajwain's role in the kitchen is irreplaceable. Its ability to blend with other spices and elevate even the simplest dishes is why no Indian kitchen is complete without it. So, whether you're preparing a traditional meal or experimenting with a new recipe, don't forget to reach for that jar of Ajwain—your dishes will thank you for it!

Head over to our website to know more about our spices, and grab a pack of our whole or powdered Panch Phoron from any leading eCommerce platform to add a new flavour to your palette today

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the best way to consume Ajwain? —

The best way to consume Ajwain is by using it in tempering (tadka) for curries, adding it to doughs for breads like parathas and pooris, or making Ajwain water or tea.

Can we eat Ajwain seeds directly? +

What is Ajwain called in English? +

What are the 4 types of Ajwain? +