



EACH **SPICEJET** AIRCRAFT HAS BEEN NAMED AFTER A PARTICULAR SPICE. IN THIS ISSUE WE TALK ABOUT THE BENEFITS AND USAGE OF **SAFFRON**



Biryani with a touch of saffron at Jyran Tandoor Dining & Lounge Sofitel Mumbai BKC

FLAVOURFUL STRANDS

ONE OF THE MOST EXPENSIVE SPICES IN THE WORLD WITH GOOD REASON IS SAFFRON. AND YOU KNOW JUST WHY WHEN YOU ADD EVEN A LITTLE OF IT TO YOUR FOOD. **BY BINDU GOPAL RAO**

SAFFRON IS DERIVED FROM A FLOWER CALLED CROCUS sativus also known as saffron crocus. The stigmas of the flower are called threads and these are used as seasoning and colouring. The word saffron is derived from the Arab word zafaran, meaning yellow. Commonly known as kesar in hindi, saffron is one of the most expensive and delicate spices in the world. Its eye-catching crimson colour, fine texture, flavour and medicinal properties make it one of the most exquisite spices in the world. Saffron is said to be one of the most ancient among spices, with a history dating back to the ancient era of 1500 BC.

Gulshan Kumar, Executive Chef, The Orchid Hotel, Pune, adds, “In the Middle East it is listed in a 12th century botanical dictionary found in the Assure Banipal library as a medicinal entry. In Germany, a book, Rocologia, mentioning its properties was published in 1670.”

Further derivations come from the Old French safran, Medieval Latin safranum, and Middle English safroun.

Chef Swasti Aggarwal, Food Strategist, Foodhall India, explains, “Saffron is harvested from the fall-flowering plant *Crocus sativus*, a member of the Iris family. It is native to Asia Minor, where it has been cultivated for thousands of years to be used in medicines, perfumes, dyes, and as a wonderful flavouring for foods and beverages. With miraculous health benefits and medicinal properties, saffron was a prized possession and was majorly used by the elite classes.”

Saffron was first cultivated near Greece and gradually propagated through Eurasia to North America and North Africa. Over the years, the popularity of this spice has led to a surge in its cultivation across countries like Iran, Greece, Morocco, Spain, India and Italy. At present, Iran is one of the major producers of saffron both, in terms of quantity and quality. The vibrant crimson stigmas of the plant called threads are collected and dried. These dried strands are further used as a food seasoning and food colour.

The herb is also known as Varnya Gana in the world of Ayurveda, meaning one that gives fairness and glow to the skin. Vibhore Agarwal, Vice President, ML Kind Food, adds, “According to traditional Kashmiri legends, saffron was brought to the region by two Sufi ascetics, Khwaja Masood Wali and Hazrat Sheikh Shariffudin, during the 11th and 12th centuries AD. A golden-domed shrine and tomb dedicated to those Sufis can be found in the saffron-trading village of Pampore.”