

PEOPLE . PLACES

THE MAGICAL WORLD OF SPICES I

4 x 52' (ENG, GER)

Everyone knows their scents, but only a few know their origins.

In this series, we want to visit the gardens of spices and discover the magical world of their creation. The most popular aromas were formed by evolution through the interaction of flora and fauna in unique habitats. All of them were created in hotspots of biodiversity.

See also:

The Magical World of Spices II

The Magical World of Spices III

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1. Vanilla from the Gulf of Mexico

Vanilla is one of the most expensive spices in the world. Originally, it comes from Mexico. The small town of Papantla near the Mexican Gulf coast was once the center of the vanilla trade. Already the natives of the Mexican Gulf region knew the secret of vanilla cultivation. In April, the delicate yellow orchid blossom opens for just a few hours. During this short time, they have to be pollinated. A laborious procedure that requires a great deal of skill. With the conquest of Mexico by the Spanish, vanilla also became known in Europe and is still the queen of spices today.

2. Cardamom from Kerala

In Kerala's lush green Western Ghats, farmers battle with challenges to grow the precious "green gold" of cardamom. They are faced with tiny pests that destroy their crops and wild elephants that trample plantations and attack workers. Scientists are trying to develop new organic farming methods under time pressure to secure the heritage and future of this unique spice.

3. Cloves and Nutmeg from the Moluccas

The Moluccas Islands once were the spice chambers of Europe. Cloves and nutmeg were only grown on the remote islands, which today are part of Indonesia. The British, Portuguese and Dutch waged wars over the treasures of the Moluccas. Nutmeg farmer Ponky maintains a 13-generation-old tradition as a nutmeg farmer and cloves are harvested right next to the road. The biodiversity of the islands has inspired researchers and bird thieves alike. Today, ex-bird thief Soni Sapulete protects the islands' unique fauna, including the Ambon king parrot and Megabats, the mythological guardians of the nutmeg.

4. Cinnamon from the Islands of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka, known for its rich flora and fauna, is the cradle of Ceylon cinnamon. European powers once fought for the cinnamon monopoly. The traditional, elaborate production in small factories, which requires skill and experience, still characterizes cinnamon production today.