

## STUDENT TEXT:

# The wonderful world of herbs

The use of plants as herbs has been important to all cultures since long before history was recorded. Hundreds of tribal cultures have used wild and cultivated herbs for religious, medicinal, and food purposes for thousands of years.



Native to Arab countries near the Mediterranean region, cilantro made its way along the spice routes in Spain. From there, the Western expansion of the Spanish empire brought new cooking styles and ingredients across the ocean to the “New World.” It continues to be grown in Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and the United States. Cilantro is harvested in fresh cut bunches, and has a distinct “fresh” flavor. Most salsas that you dip your chips into contain cilantro as it is a staple herb in Latin America. The seeds of the cilantro plant are dried and appear in spice racks whole or ground with the name of coriander.

Oregano is a culinary herb with leaves that have an aromatic, warm, and slightly bitter taste. This popular herb is commonly used in Italian cooking, mostly in its dried state, as a “pizza sauce herb” but has its origins in Greece. The Romans also used oregano because they enjoyed the taste and found it easy to grow. Their love of the herb helped spread its use throughout Europe and Northern Africa. It is used in the Philippines, Argentina, and throughout Latin America. In Mexico, it can be used to season meats, stews, and soups and the aroma in the leaves is often used to flavor Mexican rice.

Basil has been cultivated for more than 4,000 years. There are more than 200 different varieties of basil. Basil is native to areas in Asia and Africa and grows wild as a perennial on some Pacific islands. Basil was brought from India to Europe through the Middle East in the sixteenth century, and subsequently to America in the seventeenth century. Basil is a popular culinary herb used in many cuisines including Italian and Thai. Italians use a mortar and pestle to grind basil with oil, garlic, cheese, and nuts to make pesto. Pesto is commonly used as a pasta sauce. In Thailand, basil is used to infuse flavor into foods, like the traditional Thai green curry. The herb is added at the end of the cooking process to retain its aroma and flavor.

Herbs have been used to improve the flavor of foods throughout history. It is no different today. Take a trip around the world without even leaving your kitchen—use herbs!

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_

*Fill in the blanks with names of different spices.*

USE THE LONGITUDE AND LATITUDE COORDINATES TO PLOT AND LABEL EACH LOCATION ON THE MAP.

1. \_\_\_\_\_, is an herb that is added to food eaten in this country's culture. (15°N, 101°E).
2. \_\_\_\_\_, used in pizza sauce, originally had its roots in this country. (39°N, 22°E).
3. Native to Arab countries near the \_\_\_\_\_ region, cilantro made its way along the spice routes to this country. (40°N, 4°W)
4. The aroma of oregano leaves is often used to flavor \_\_\_\_\_ in this country. (24°N, 103°W)
5. Known for its "fresh" flavor, \_\_\_\_\_ is presently grown in countries that border this body of water. (15°N, 75°W)

