

## Ginger - *Zinger Iber Officinale* – From Floor To Table In An African Society – Ikwerre Ethnic Nationality Of River – State

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**Abstract:** A review of the origin, definition and production practices of Ginger botanically know as *Zinger Iber officinales* were examined. Its common diseases/pest in an African society was also outline. The general economic importance in relation to Ikwerre Ethnic Nationality were x-rayed. Based on this, it is then recommended that an average African should make use of Ginger as an additive to most food consumed

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**Key Word:** Ginger, production, utilization and protection.

### Introduction

Fresh herbs add much to the appearances and flavour of many dishes but their uses in kitchen is so often restricted because they are not grown locally or their retail prices are so high.

There are about thirteen of the most widely grown and known of these culinary herbs;

Some of these fresh herbs are:-

Basil (sweet)	- <i>Ocimum basilicum</i>
Chervil	- <i>Anthriscus cerefolium</i>
Dill	- <i>Peucedamumgraveoleas</i>
Chives	- <i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>
Fennel (sweet)	- <i>Foeniculum Vulagare</i>
Garlic	- <i>Allium Sativum</i>
Rosemary	- <i>Rosmarinus Officinalis</i>
Sage	- <i>Salvia Officinalis</i>

Of all these, Ginger and Garlic are at their best when used fresh.

However, This crop ginger has been described in various perspectives.-

(1)- As any of a group of tropical herbs grown commercially in East indies, African and China for their aromatic root-stalks, used for flavouring foods and Medicine. (Website's New dictionary of the American Language)

(2) As a plant with hot-tasting root used in cooking as a flavouring and making of wine.(Advanced learners dictionary)

(3) As a plant grown for its large underground stems (called rhizomes. (African Encyclopedia )

### Origin And Description Of Ginger:

Ginger crop originated from Asia or India. It grows in North and West Africa, particularly in Sierra Leone a country known for export of Ginger. The crop (plant) came into Nigeria in 1927 but

gained prominence in 1988 after meeting of the stakeholders at Umudike.

The plant is a small erect perennial herb, and is considered to be the most important of all spices and condiments, used all over the world, it is commonly used to give aromatic hot taste to curries and various fruit and vegetable preserves. It contains an essential oil which is responsible for the aromatic odour, and an oleoresin in (called ginger in) which is responsible for its pungent taste.

Ginger (Rhizome) is a prostrate, thickened stem, creeping horizontally under the surface of the soil. It is provided with distinct nodes, long or short internodes. It bears some scally leaves at the node and possesses a bud in the axil of the scaly leaf.

### Climatic And Soil Requirement:

Ginger requires a loamy soil with an abundant supply pf humus. It thrives well in area where annual rainfall is about 1500mm or more but cannot stand water logging. It grows best in low land forest areas, under shade.

### Varieties:

There are two major variety of ginger crop :- The yellow (UG II) type which is more popular in Sierra Leone, and the white (UG I) type which is common in Nigeria

### Husbandry

Ginger is raised from the rhizomes with bud. The cuttings (setts) are about 2.5 – 5cm long containing 1-2 nodes (eyes). The seed rate is about 840-1700kg of ginger setts per hectane.

Planting distance is 23-30cm by 15-23cm with depth of 5-10cm. the crop is an exhausting one and demand a lot of Nitrogen, potassium and phosphrous from the soil, compost manure may be applied at planting or NPK fertilizer during growth.

Weeding as one of the cultural practices is very important. This could be done manually or with herbicides.

Maturity is about 9-10 months after planting when the leaves turn yellow and the stems begin to lodge.

#### **Pests, Disease And Control:**

These are root-knot Nematodes, shoot borer, leaf spot and soft rot.

*Vermicularia zingiberæ*:- This disease attacks the leaves and prevents rhizome development.

Farm sanitation and spraying with Bordeaux mixture give effective control.

#### **Economic Uses Or Importance Of Ginger In Ikwerre Local Government Area:**

Ginger is both used internationally and locally commonly in Igbo as ginger, Hausa as Chita and in Yoruba as Atals.

In Nigeria and the world at large ginger is used in various purposes both economically and medicinally.

1. Ginger is used for culinary purposes in making ginger bread, Biscuits, cake, soups and sprinkles.

2. It is also required for the production of ginger beer, Ginger ale, Ginger wine, Ginger perfumery.

3. It is commonly used to give aromatic hot-taste to curries and various fruits and vegetable preserves.

4. Medicinally it is stomachic, digestive and carminative

5. It also serves as foreign exchange earners to the country or countries that produce it. eg Sierra Leone.

6. It is important to chemical industries because of its essential oil content responsible for the aromatic odour and also contains oleoresin (called gingerin) which is responsible for its pungent taste.

#### **Local Uses Of Ginger In Ikwerre L.G.A.**

The Ikwerre Ethnic Nationality in Rivers State comprises of four Local Government Areas- Ikwerre, Emohua, Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt Local Government Area. Predominantly, the people are farmers dealing mostly on crop production and to some extent fishing. Among all the crops produced in the area, Ginger was introduced into the Area from the 1988. Today, every livelihood, makes use of the plant. It's known to have the following attributes Viz-

1. For healthy living, Ginger serves as a herb spice and flavour to the people.

2. For Fever, cold and chest pain, ginger is now used as a remedy instead of paracetamol or any other refined medicine.

3. For throat problem, ginger is used in place of vitamin c.

4. It is also used locally to treat constipation, cough and catarrh in the area's

5. It is used as condiment for improving flavour of Tbere (suya) and serves as a source of income.

6. Ginger is used to prepare local recipe and concussions against stomach-upset. Recommended dosage by a Naturalist Doctor is to chew a cutting (sett) of about 2.5-5cm after meal.

#### **Summary/Recommendation**

Ginger is one of the culinary herbs that add much to the appearance and flavour of many dishes. It is a very important raw material to so many industries such as beer industry, Wine industry, Baking industry etc.

Economically ginger serves as source of income to the farmers and also as a source of food. It is then recommended as in other crop. Like cassava, yams cultivated and consumed in Ikwerre Ethnic Nationality to be used as an additive in their daily food.

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