






Spices that Changed the World

- Romans break the Arab Monopoly
 - Age of Exploration
 - Spice Wars
- Old and New World Spices

Ancient Trade Routes that provided the Mediterranean Region with spice and silks from about 4000 B.C.



Arabs monopolized the spice trade until 200 B.C. by keeping origins of spices secret

Traded with Egyptians, Greeks, Romans

Roman feasts enjoyed many spices






Romans discovered true origins of spices and broke Arab monopoly by establishing trade with India and Ceylon by sea from Egypt ~200 B.C.

With the fall of Rome to the Visigoths, trade with the east stopped and Europe entered the Dark Ages



Alaric demanded 3,000 pounds of pepper (along with gold and silk) 409 AD

The Crusades to Constantinople, Damascus and Jerusalem reintroduced the West to Asian spices 1096 -1204







Spice trade began again towards the end of the Middle Ages with Venetians trading for spices (mostly pepper) and commanding the high prices in Europe

Marco Polo increased the stature of Venice as a trading port with his travels to the Orient and as an ambassador from Venice he met with the Chinese emperor Kublai Khan

After 24 years of travel throughout Asia, Marco Polo returned to Italy and was taken captive during a Venice – Genoa squabble. During this time he wrote a book, which among other things, described the plentiful stores of precious spices throughout Asia

Portugal and Spain set out to find sea routes to the Orient for Asian Spices

In 1497 Vasco de Gama sailed to the coast of India

In 1492 Columbus sailed west in search of Asian spices

Their successes spurred a new age of exploration

Ferdinand Magellan circumnavigated the globe in 1519 - 1522

Found western route to spice Islands

Spice Wars 1400 - 1700

- Portuguese were first to establish in the Spice Islands and remained dominant until 16th century
- Dutch conquered Malacca in 1641 and by the end of 17th century monopolized spice trade
- After defeating the great Spanish Armada and with a bolstered navy, the English defeated the Dutch in 1780 and the Dutch lost hold of their spice dynasty
- America entered spice trade in 1784 by trading directly with native cultures on Sumatra (for pepper) eventually American trade was stopped by pirates

Girl with Pearl Earring
1666 Jan Vermeer

Old World Spices

Mediterranean (Europe and Middle East):

- onion and garlic
- mustard
- laurel
- hops
- mint
- saffron

East Indies and India

- nutmeg and mace
- ginger
- cloves
- pepper
- Cinnamon and cassia

New World Spices

- Chili peppers
- Vanilla

Spices Today are cheap and plentiful

Spices are grown all over the world

Most ordinary spice racks would have been worth a fortune in ancient times

New York is the principle harbor for trading spices today