

37110 Saffron

Saffron is a spice derived from the flower of the saffron crocus (*Crocus sativus*), a species of crocus in the family Iridaceae. The flower has three stigmas, which are the distal ends of the plant's carpels. Together with its style, the stalk connecting the stigmas to the rest of the plant, these components are often dried and used in cooking as a seasoning and colouring agent. Saffron, which has for decades been the world's most expensive spice by weight, is native to Southwest Asia.

A kilogram of saffron requires 20,000 flowers. Spain, Greece, Italy and France are the major producers of saffron.

The dye is leached from the flower with water, absorbed by charcoal and then extracted from it with alcohol. A brittle, yellowish-brown mass is obtained.

Saffron is not very light fast and is very susceptible against UV-rays. Nevertheless the saffron found beneath yellowed old varnish layers was often very well preserved.