



You Already Own a Pantry of Superfoods

The honest, India-first look at everyday foods — real numbers, no cures, no hype. Amla, ragi, dahi and dal, done right — before you spend a rupee on imported powders.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Everything that matters, in pointers

This mini gives you the honest map of Indian nutrition in 20 minutes: what "superfood" actually means, the real numbers behind millets, pulses, spices, fats and greens, and how to build a balanced plate. No cures promised — just what the evidence supports.

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THE ONE IDEA TO HOLD THE WHOLE WAY

No single food is magic. Health tracks with your whole-plate pattern over years — not with a hero ingredient. Every food in this book is a contributor to that pattern, never a substitute for it.

The superfood myth

- **"Superfood" is marketing, not science:** no regulator anywhere — not FSSAI, not the US FDA, not Europe's EFSA — defines it. It's a sales word that works because it sounds official.
- **EU banned it since 2007:** you can't print "superfood" on packaging in the EU unless a specific health claim is backed by authorised evidence.
- **The pattern is the product:** a spoon of turmeric cannot rescue a plate of fried, salty, sugary food. Health tracks with the whole diet, over years — not with one ingredient.
- **India already has an honest answer:** ICMR-NIN's "My Plate for the Day" (2024) — fill roughly half your plate with vegetables and fruit, the rest with grains, pulses, nuts and dairy.
- **Read every number as representative:** content $\neq$ absorbed, fresh $\neq$ powder, a culinary pinch $\neq$ a supplement dose. IFCT and USDA figures also differ.

THE BOOK'S PROMISE

India doesn't need imported superfoods. It needs an honest look at the ordinary foods already on the plate — what each genuinely offers, and where the marketing outruns the evidence.

CHAPTER 01 · CONTINUED

You already own the pantry

~600mg

vitamin C in 100g amla — vs
blueberry's ~9.7mg

~228mg

vitamin C in 100g guava —
~4× an orange

~344mg

calcium in 100g ragi — more
than same weight of milk

IMPORTED STAR	INDIAN MATCH	HONEST POINT
Blueberry (vit C)	Amla	~600 vs ~9.7mg
Orange (vit C)	Guava	~228mg, ~4×
Chia (ALA omega-3)	Flax, mustard	Matches, cheaper
Quinoa (protein)	Moong / masoor	Similar, cheaper

REMEMBER

Figures vary by variety, season and source (IFCT vs USDA). Treat every number as representative, not lab-precise.

Millets & grains

- **2023, Year of Millets:** a UN-declared, India-backed campaign — as much about climate resilience and farmer livelihoods as nutrition. Real, but not a nutrition trial.
- **Ragi's calcium story:** ~344mg calcium per 100g raw ragi — the most calcium-dense common cereal, roughly 3× milk by weight.
- **The catch:** ragi is high in phytates and oxalates, which bind minerals — the 344mg is what it contains, not what you absorb. Soak, sprout, ferment to improve uptake.
- **Jowar & bajra's real edge:** lower glycemic index than white rice (bajra ~54, jowar ~62 vs rice ~70+) — a genuine, careful blood-sugar advantage.
- **Processing undoes it:** finely milled millet flour and packaged "millet snacks" can have a high GI. The advantage belongs to whole, minimally processed forms.

SAY THIS, NOT THAT

Ragi is a strong, cheap, dairy-free way to support calcium intake as part of a balanced diet. It does not "prevent osteoporosis" — bone health also needs vitamin D, protein and weight-bearing activity.

CHAPTER 02 · CONTINUED

How to actually eat millets

GRAIN	APPROX. GI	BAND
Bajra (pearl millet)	~54	Low
Jowar (sorghum)	~62	Medium
White rice	~70+	High

- **Ragi:** mudde, roti, dosa, porridge. Sprout for infants — it lifts vitamin C and mineral availability.
- **Jowar:** rotla/bhakri, khichdi, upma, or popped. Keep it whole, not ultra-fine flour.
- **Bajra:** a winter grain — warming bhakri and khichdi with a little ghee and greens.
- **The rule:** rotate millets with rice and wheat rather than replacing everything. Variety wins, and introduce gradually — the fibre can bloat.

CAREFUL CLAIM

Whole millets help blood-sugar management as part of a balanced diet. They are not a diabetes cure.

Pulses, dairy & ferments

- **Affordable protein:** dals ~7–9g, chana ~8.9g, rajma ~8.7g protein per 100g cooked — plus fibre, folate, iron, almost no fat.
- **Dal-chawal complete protein — updated:** pulses + cereals form a complementary amino-acid profile, but the strict "same meal" rule is outdated. Your body pools amino acids across the whole day.
- **Raw kidney beans are dangerous:** phytohaemagglutinin, a toxic lectin, causes severe nausea and vomiting. Soak, then boil hard — a pressure cooker does this reliably. Never just "warm through."
- **Dahi is a real probiotic:** homemade curd reaches 10^7 – 10^9 live bacteria per gram. But once idli/dosa batter is cooked, the bacteria die — fermentation's benefit there is pre-digestion, not live cultures.
- **The B12 overclaim — don't rely on it:** any B12 from bacterial fermentation is small and unreliable. Dahi and idli do NOT provide dependable B12.

WATCH OUT

Vegetarians and vegans should get B12 from supplements or fortified foods — not from fermented staples. ~47–70% of Indian vegetarians show biochemical B12 deficiency in studies.

CHAPTER 03 · CONTINUED

Getting more from pulses & ferments

- **Sprout them:** sprouted moong raises vitamin C and lowers phytates — eat as salad or lightly steamed.
- **Soak & add hing:** soaking, sprouting and a pinch of asafoetida ease the oligosaccharides that cause bloating.
- **Pair with vitamin C:** a squeeze of lemon or a tomato base helps your body absorb the non-heme iron in dal.
- **Vary the pulse:** rotate dals, rajma, chana and besan across the week for a fuller nutrient range.

40-60%

cut in phytic acid from
fermentation

~11g

protein per 200ml homemade
dahi

0

reliable B12 from dahi or idli

THE FIRM ONE

This is not a minor point in India — chronic B12 deficiency damages nerves and blood, sometimes irreversibly. Test in pregnancy, for infants, elders, or unexplained fatigue.

Turmeric, amla & spices

- **Curcumin is poorly absorbed:** it's only ~2–5% of dried turmeric by weight, and most of what you swallow is metabolised before it reaches your bloodstream.
- **The famous "+2000%":** black pepper's piperine does slow curcumin clearance — but the 2000% figure comes from one 1998 Bangalore study, never independently replicated at that magnitude in 25+ years.
- **Amla holds its vitamin C:** ~600mg per 100g, ~20× an orange by weight — and its tannins let dried amla powder retain 30–50% of it, unusually high for a dried food.
- **Moringa's "7×" claim misleads:** almost always refers to dried powder by weight — and you eat a teaspoon of powder, not 100g. Fresh leaves in dal are the honest win. Never use the root — it's unsafe.
- **Garlic, cinnamon, ginger:** real but modest effects, mostly from supplement-level trial doses. Choose Ceylon cinnamon over cassia — cassia's coumarin is liver-toxic in large regular doses.

MARKETING OUTFRONS EVIDENCE HERE

Turmeric or haldi-doodh does not cure cancer, arthritis, or Alzheimer's. Enjoy it because it's pleasant and traditional, not because it's medicine.

CHAPTER 04 · CONTINUED

Sensible & true vs overclaimed

PER 100G	FRESH MORINGA LEAVES	DRIED POWDER
Protein		~9g ~22–25g
Calcium		~185mg ~630mg
Iron		~4mg ~24mg

- Sensible:** cook turmeric with fat (oil/ghee) — fat genuinely aids absorption. A pinch of pepper is a fine, traditional pairing.
- Overclaimed:** quoting "+2000%" as proven fact, assuming a curry pinch equals a trial dose, expecting a spice to act like medication.
- Ginger stands out:** well-evidenced for nausea (pregnancy, motion, chemo) — one of the better-supported food remedies. Still a remedy for a symptom, not a cure.

ONE CAUTION

Turmeric powder is sometimes adulterated with lead chromate — buy reputable brands. High-dose curcumin supplements can interact with blood thinners.

Fats, nuts, seeds & greens

- **Ghee — neither poison nor miracle:** ~50%+ saturated fat, but a high smoke point and lactose/casein-free. A few teaspoons a day, within your fat budget, is fine and traditional — not a health supplement.
- **Coconut oil's MCT myth:** ~82% saturated fat — more than butter. The AHA reviewed 7 controlled trials; it raised LDL in all 7. Commercial coconut oil is only ~13–15% true MCTs.
- **Skip the imported chia:** ground flaxseed (~23g ALA/100g) beats chia (~18g) — cheaper, Indian. But plant ALA converts to usable EPA/DHA only ~5–10%.
- **The spinach myth:** palak's iron content is decent, but oxalates block much of its absorption. Methi, amaranth and moringa carry more available iron.
- **Jaggery is still sugar:** its glycemic index (~84) is actually higher than white sugar's (~65), at nearly the same calories. Trace minerals don't cancel the glucose load.

THE HONEST VERDICT

To get a meaningful iron dose from jaggery you'd eat ~160g — 600+ calories of sugar. Diabetics should treat jaggery exactly like sugar, arguably worse for spikes.

Saturated fat, by the numbers

82%

saturated fat in coconut oil

50%+

saturated fat in ghee

GI 84

jaggery's glycemic index vs
sugar's ~65

- **Pair greens with vitamin C:** lemon, amla, tomato or guava dramatically boosts non-heme iron absorption — the single highest-value habit in this chapter.
- **Keep tea/coffee away from meals:** their tannins block iron. Have them between meals, not with iron-rich dal or saag.
- **A small daily handful (~30g)** of mixed nuts and seeds is linked with better lipids and lower cardiovascular risk.

REMINDER

Kidney-stone formers should moderate high-oxalate spinach. Diet alone will not fix clinical anaemia — that needs medical iron.

The balanced plate & myth-busting

- **ICMR "My Plate" (2024):** roughly half vegetables and fruit, a quarter grains/millet, a quarter+ pulses/protein, a spoon of nuts, a little added fat.
- **Protein without meat:** dal-chawal, rajma-chawal and khichdi form complete-protein combos — but dal alone is only ~7–9g/cup; use several sources across the day.
- **Detox & alkaline diets don't work:** your liver and kidneys detox continuously, for free. Blood pH is held at 7.35–7.45 no matter what you eat.
- **No food has negative calories:** digesting food costs only ~5–10% of its calories — celery doesn't "burn more than it contains."
- **Superfood powders rarely beat whole foods:** a whole guava (~228mg vitamin C, 8g fibre) usually beats a costly powder with no fibre or satiety.

B12 — THE FIRM ONE

~47–70% of Indian vegetarians show biochemical B12 deficiency. Strict vegetarians and vegans should use supplements or fortified foods, and test — not rely on dahi or idli.

Eating smart & seasonal, on a budget

- **Nutrition is cheap in India:** soy chunks (~52g protein/100g dry), dals, seasonal greens, curd and eggs, banana and groundnuts, whole millets — the pricey foods are the imported ones.
- **Eat local, eat in season:** winter — bajra, sarson, methi, amla; summer — gourds, coconut water, curd; monsoon — well-cooked vegetables and ginger.
- **One firm safety note:** never drink bitter lauki (bottle gourd) juice — bitter gourd contains toxic cucurbitacins and has caused reported poisoning in India.
- **Foods support goals, never cure them:** energy, digestion, bone health, heart health — all "as part of a balanced diet," never a replacement for medical care.

THE WHOLE PLATE WINS

Eat a diverse, mostly whole-food, seasonal plate most days — that single habit outperforms any powder, juice or imported berry you could buy.

YOU'VE GOT THE MAP. NOW GET THE FULL PANTRY.

This was the 20-minute version. The full guide covers 40+ foods.

You now know more than most people shopping the "health food" aisle. The complete **Indian Superfoods Guide** takes every chapter above and gives you 40+ foods, real IFCT/USDA numbers, and the full myth-busting encyclopedia.

- **The full 8 chapters** — every food above, plus dozens more, each with nutrients, benefit and caution.
- **The complete myth-busting chapter** — detox, alkaline, negative-calorie, jaggery, and the curcumin 2000%.
- **The balanced-plate blueprint** — build a real thali, hit protein without meat, fix iron & B12 gaps.
- **Seasonal & budget eating** — region by region, rupee by rupee.
- **FAQs & glossary** — the questions readers actually ask, answered honestly.

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