

Read the text below and then do the puzzle that follows.

SPICES

By the year 1000, Arabian traders had found many wonderful treasures in India, but perhaps the most precious trading goods were spices. These traders brought rare and exotic spices such as *cumin* and *coriander* from India. They then supplied these spices to their countrymen and to Europe. Through this trade they were able to make fortunes.

Today, when spices are cheaper and more widely available, it seems unbelievable that they were once a royal luxury and that men were willing to risk their lives to acquire them. In 1497, four tiny ships sailed southward from Portugal, under the guidance of Captain Vasco da Gama. He was searching for a new route to the spice lands of Asia. In a two-year journey that covered 38,624 kilometres, he took his ships around the continent of Africa to India and back to Portugal. Although only two of the four ships returned safely to their home port, they brought back a cargo of spices worth 60 times the cost of the voyage, making da Gama a wealthy man. Rich people were eager to exchange their gold for his *pepper* and *cinnamon*. *Cinnamon* was particularly valued for use in funeral ceremonies when a wealthy person died. *Vanilla* was another favourite of the rich because, when mixed with cacao, it made a previously unknown, delicious drink. *Pepper* was the most precious spice of all, often used as a form of money, particularly when rent had to be paid.

Da Gama's successful voyage started a European power struggle for control over the spice trade. For three centuries afterwards, the nations of western Europe fought violent battles at sea. Some people believe that the wealth made from the spice trade in the past is similar to the wealth of oil companies today.

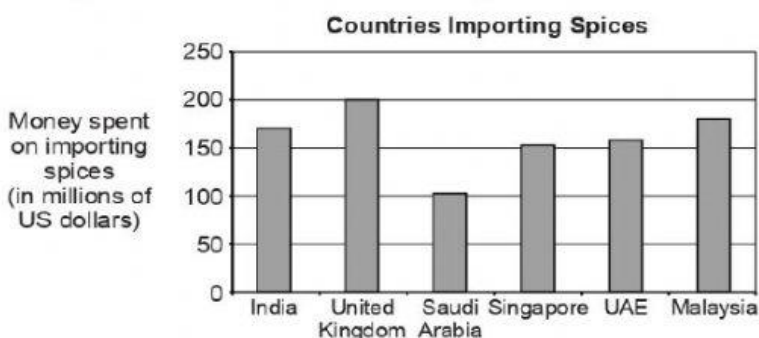
The people of those times used spices, as we do today, to improve or vary the flavours of their food. Spices were also used to disguise the taste of food that was not fresh. Without the addition of spices it would have been too unpleasant to eat. In times when there was no refrigeration, spices were also used for preserving food, such as meat, for a year or more. In the 16th century, *cloves* were commonly used both to preserve food and for medicinal purposes. It is fascinating to note that *cloves* are still used in the same way in some modern food. Later, *mustard* and *ground mustard* were also found to have preservative qualities. When spices were not available, people often went hungry because they could not prevent their food from going bad.

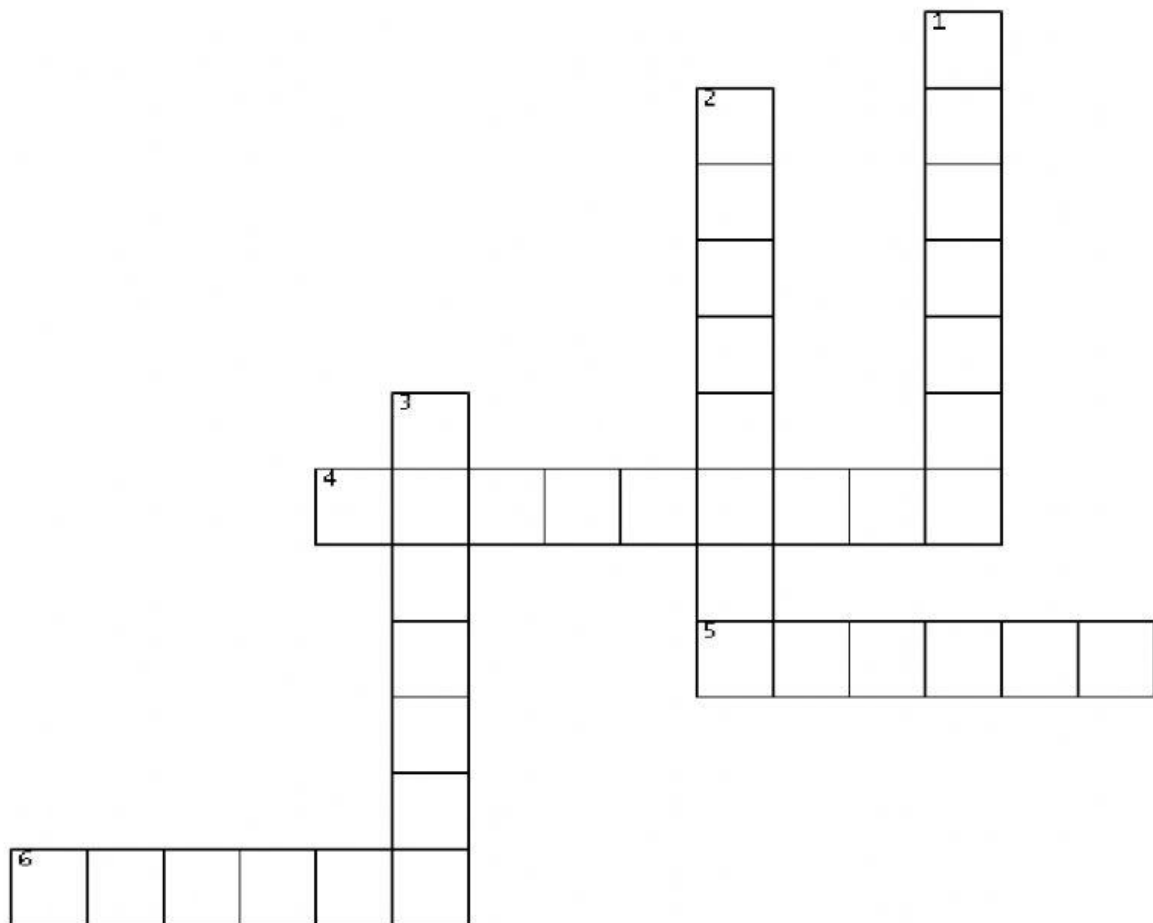


Today, we use spices to flavour our food but do not have to spend a large amount of money to purchase them. Nevertheless, the total amount that countries spend on importing spices continues to be significant.

Many people around the world work in very difficult conditions to produce spices for us. Much of the work is done by hand and very specific skills are needed. These skills have been handed down from generation to generation, but there is now some concern that younger people no longer want to do this sort of work because they prefer to go to the cities and work in office jobs.

Most of us are completely unaware of the origin of the spices, and varied traditions surrounding the spices, that we keep in small packets or bottles on our kitchen shelves. For example, when we shake some *cumin* into a pan we are not expecting it to keep married couples together, which is what people believed in the past.





ACROSS

- 4. extremely good
- 5. unusual and especially interesting because of coming from a country that is far away
- 6. a long journey, especially by ship.

DOWN

- 1. a religious ceremony for burying or burning the body of a dead person.
- 2. to treat food in a particular way so that it can be kept for a long time without going bad
- 3. a large amount of money, goods, property, etc.