

Red Gold



Saffron, which is one of the most valuable herbs of Iran, has attracted the world's attention because of its charming fragrance and delightful taste. Due to its valuable properties, along with the beauty and gentleness that it grants the skin, it grows to conquer all hearts.

According to IranSaffron website, there have been several assumptions about the origin of saffron (*Corcus Sativus L.*), some of which belong to legends. One such legend maintains saffron was first brought to India by Adam during his descent to this world. It adds that saffron was taken to Kashmir for cultivation and later applied in various fields.

On the basis of this belief, all fragrant herbs, plants and fruits, including saffron, were all granted to Adam in the heaven, from where he brought them to the earth.

Some research documents have proved that Iran is the native land of saffron, which originally grew wild at the foot of Zagros mountains and the surrounding areas of Alvand. The wild growing saffron called "Jo Qassem", which was first referred to as "Karkomiseh" in Farsi, closely resembles the ordinary saffron.

> Ancient Applications

The oldest available documents about the applications of saffron belong to the ancient Iranian dynasty, the Achaemenids. An inscription engraved on a pillar belonging to that dynasty mentions food products used in the palace kitchen. This inscription was located in front of the king's palace. Polly Yen (a Greek writer of the second century AD) has recorded the content and quantity of food mentioned on the inscription at the King's Palace.

The royalty used up to one kilogram of it each day. The other items included honey, grape sap, apple extracts, some of the best wheat flour and barley available, pistachio and sesame oil, animal fat, caraway seeds, ergot of rye, parsley seeds and cardamom pods.

The items mentioned could have been used in preparing different kinds of dishes, bread, sweets and cookies. After Xerxes the Great, the Persians added variety to their dishes and prepared delicious food. Historians mentioned Persian pastries and dishes that were presented at meals on Darius's table. They included a thick type of bread, a special kind of saffron-coated bread, cookies made with the finest wheat flour from Egypt and Greece along with barley mixed with syrup and saffron.

Tooes, the king of Paphlagonia (a country in the northern region of Asia Minor), was astonished by the number of dishes prepared for Darius.

Saffron was also used by the Achaemenids in cosmetic products such as moisturizing oils.



We do not know how the Medes referred to the common and wild saffron, although we know that the residents of Zagros district used a specific name for saffron. The old equivalent for saffron was pronounced "Karkom" as recorded in Pahlavi sources (Persians before the Parthian era) or a "Pasosi" word "Karkam". The residents of Alvand referred to the wild growing saffron as "Karkomiseh", the first part "Karkom" coming from the older equivalent.

Undoubtedly, the Sumerians were the first people to step into the world of civilization and written evidence of their work is available. This tribe, which settled in Mesopotamia, had emigrated from a mountainous region. Their original dwelling is assumed to have been either the western regions of the Caspian Sea, the mountainous regions of Zagros or other parts of Iran.

The actual point of consideration is how the Sumerians obtained information about saffron despite the fact that saffron did not grow wild in Mesopotamia.

> More Evidence

There is evidence to indicate saffron originated at the foot of the Zagros and Alvand mountains. If Sumerians had knowledge of the applications of saffron, then they must have taken it from Iran where saffron grew in the wild.

Extracts from a few documents found by historians about saffron are presented below:

Lexicographers of the 11th century A.H. and above all Mir Jamaleddin Hossein Anjavi Shirazi (1028 A.H.), the author of Jahangiri Dictionary, studied and explained the roots of the word "Karkomineh" (saffron), which refer to

a fragrant flower growing in large numbers and their color.

Ibn Esfandiari Kateb, a historian from Mazandaran, Iran, reported that up to 300 kilogram of saffron were exported in the Parthian era annually.

American scientist Barteld Loufer, who published his research results on Iran-China Cultural and Civil Relations (in 1917), has done enlightening research on the origin and history of saffron along with its different names in different languages.

As stated in his research work, saffron is a native, wild growing herb that was cultivated in Iran for the first time. He strongly believes that saffron bulbs, its cultivation techniques and knowledge of its valuable properties were transferred from Iran to different parts of the world.

Glen Danial, a researcher of Sumerian culture and civilization (a tribe that dwelled in Mesopotamia but had migrated from the mountainous region of Mazandaran), found it strange and amusing that there are a few Sumerian expressions that are still being used in English language today such as the word 'saffron'.



In Case You Missed

6,699 Artifacts Registered As Public Property



Deputy head of Isfahan Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Department for protecting historical and cultural properties said about 6,699 artifacts have been identified and registered as public property by the department.

According to the Persian daily 'Iran', Saghar Hamidi added, "The objects were collected from Isfahan, Chadgan, Todtak, Lanjan, Natanz, Kashan, and Tiran."

The official also noted that identification certificates have been issued for a few private collectors of the province.

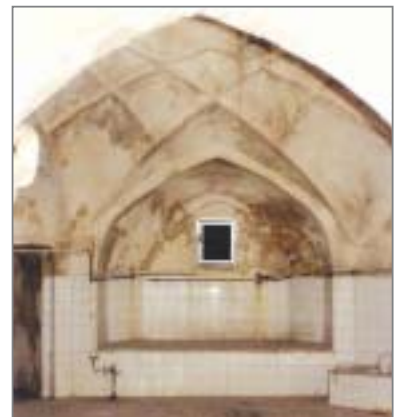
"Furthermore, several historical coins found in different edifices of Isfahan and the coins of Kashan's museums have been studied," she noted.

Hamidi said last year 95 artifacts were recovered by the police after illegal diggers were arrested and handed over to the court.

Qajar Bathhouse in Qazvin

Qajar Bathhouse is one of the oldest in Qazvin province. It which was built by Amir Gooneh Khan Qajar-Qazvini, one of the army commanders of the Safavid King Shah Abbas II in 1057 AH.

The bathhouse was originally called Hamam-e (Bathhouse of) Shah. After another bathhouse was built in the city, the old bath was called Hamam-e Khoune-ye Shah (the Bathhouse of Shah's House),



which was renovated during the reign of Qajar dynasty and ever since it was called Hamam-e Qajar, reported IRNA.

The bathhouse covers an area of over 1,045 square meters. It comprises two sections, one for men and another for women. The main door opens to the south and its spiral stairways end into a cold storage. There is a beautiful pond in the middle of the storage. The building is shaped as an eight-sided polygon.

The historical edifice was bought by Qazvin Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Department in 2000. It was renovated during 2002-5 and then used as an anthropology museum and also a traditional tea-house for a while.

Qajar Bathhouse is located on Obeid-e Zakani Avenue in the center of Aqa Kabir neighborhood.

New Type of Pearl Found

An Iranian researcher said that a new type of pearl has been discovered in the Persian Gulf.

Abdolali Saberi, also the discoverer of the pearl, told Fars News Agency that during a biological research operation he accidentally came across an unknown species of oyster some 30 meters below the sea and extracted the pearl.

"At the beginning, I thought that the pearl was known, but after I sent it to domestic and international centers for identifying stones and jewelry, I was informed that the type of pearl was unknown."

"I registered the pearl under the name 'Eye of the Sea' and acquired an international certificate, in which the specifications of the pearl are outlined," he added.

Saberi pointed out that the pearl is colorful and beautiful.

"It is more natural than the pearl typically found in the market," he said.

