

Nutty for Nutmeg

How a humble spice played a key role in capitalism—and U.S. history

For the complete video with media resources, visit:

<http://education.nationalgeographic.org/media/nutty-nutmeg/>

Partner



Nutmeg is a [spice](#) made from the seeds of a [tropical evergreen](#) tree, *Myristica*. Today, nutmeg is grown and produced in tropical locations from Indonesia to the West Indies. In the 1600s, however, the nutmeg tree only grew in Indonesia's Banda Islands.

[Plot the route](#) of 17th-century [merchants](#) with our geo-tour of the nutmeg [trade](#), then watch our video, from the National Geographic Channel's series "Eat: The Story of Food." Learn how Dutch traders [ruthlessly](#) controlled the nutmeg trade—and helped shape the American [cultural landscape](#) in the process.

Note: Be sure to click the "i" on every bookmark for important informational text in the geo-tour!

Questions

- [Read through our "geo-tour" of the nutmeg trade.](#) Based on the climate conditions necessary for the cultivation of the nutmeg tree, what countries do you think are the top nutmeg, mace, and cardamom producers in the world? (Some of them are listed in the geo-tour!)

According to a UN agency, the top nutmeg, mace, and cardamom producers in the world are: Guatemala, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Indonesia, Laos, Grenada, Tanzania, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka.

- [Read through our "geo-tour" of the historic nutmeg trade.](#) What elements of modern society did the Dutch East India Company (*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* or VOC) introduce?

The development of modern capitalist societies, stock markets, and multinational corporations are all economic concepts introduced by the VOC more than 300 years ago. The brutal way in which the VOC colonized the Banda Islands contributed to the ways in which European empires governed colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

Vocabulary

| Term | Part of Speech | Definition |
|--------------------|----------------|--|
| cultural landscape | noun | human imprint on the physical environment. |
| evergreen | noun | tree that does not lose its leaves. |
| merchant | noun | person who sells goods and services. |
| route | noun | path or way. |
| ruthless | adjective | cruel. |
| seed | noun | part of a plant from which a new plant grows. |
| spice | noun | tasty and aromatic plant substances used in cooking. |
| trade | noun | buying, selling, or exchanging of goods and services. |
| tropical | adjective | existing in the tropics, the latitudes between the Tropic of Cancer in the north and the Tropic of Capricorn in the south. |

Articles & Profiles

- [National Geographic Education: Spice Buyer—Al Goetze](#)
- [UN Conference on Trade and Development: Commodity Profile Spices](#)

Maps

- [MapMaker Interactive: Go Nutty for Nutmeg \(and the Dutch East India Company\)](#)



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