



**Herbie's Spices 4/25 Arizona Road, Charmhaven, NSW, 2263**  
**Tel: 1800HERBIE (1800 437 243) Fax: (02) 4392 9477**  
**Website: [www.herbies.com.au](http://www.herbies.com.au) e-mail: [shop@herbies.com.au](mailto:shop@herbies.com.au)**  
Herbie's Spices is a division of Hemphill Pty Ltd ABN: 75 077 549 583

## NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2020

Spring is a time always associated with flowers. Cauliflowers, broccoli and broccolini, even cabbage and kale, are all flowers, and it occurred to us that one could make a culinary bouquet by adding **rose harissa** to these flowers. We started the experiment with rose harissa sprinkled on cauliflower cheese, then progressed to rose harissa stir-fried with broccolini, and broccoli florets tossed with rose harissa in butter. We think we're on to something good here, and can't wait to do something with zucchini flowers ... maybe we'll stuff them with a creamy minced lamb and rose harissa filling.

Our **Spring Box of Ideas** marks seven years since we initiated the idea in 2013. It has been our aim to bring you different taste and flavour experiences through a variety of herbs and spices, to gradually expand your knowledge and flavour repertoire. We're still working our way through our product list, with only the very occasional re-appearance of an old favourite. This spring we're giving you **lots of our lovely blends**: Thai spice mix, Lemon and Herb Pepper, Golden Grill, especially for your white meats, and Fragrant Sweet Spice, to work its magic on all your sweet cooking. It's in our pretty baby-leaf green box.

We've been giving a bit of attention to the underdogs of the spice cabinet lately. It seems unfair that some spice gets bad press a century or more ago and the stigma never leaves it. Take **brown cardamom**, for example. Back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, someone rudely referred to it as "bastard cardamom", hardly fair to give it a label like that just because it is different to the more familiar green cardamom pod used so frequently in both sweet and savoury cooking. The pods are harvested from just under the ground, and are dried by smoking in a sieve over coals, resulting in a sultry sweetly-smoky flavour. Brown cardamom has pride of place in our Herbie's Spices Butter Chicken and Tandoori spice blends, as it can impart the smokiness that evokes the tandoor oven that we probably *don't* have in our kitchens! Recently we have added brown cardamom pods to stewed fruit, and now we wonder why it's not done more frequently.

Life is never dull in the spice world. With the world's trading systems in disarray, we are experiencing a **severe shortage of coriander seed**, partly due to crop failures in Australia this year. Now, you may think that there's not all that much call for coriander seed in everyday cooking, (unless you cook a lot of Indian food), but it is a vital ingredient in many of our delicious spice mixes. Ground coriander seeds have a wonderful ability to cushion brighter and stronger elements to make a spice blend rounded and balanced. We have managed to find some high-quality ground coriander seeds from Ukraine and Canada that match the Australian grown flavour profile, Naturally, we are looking forward to a resumption of Australian coriander as soon as it becomes available in 2021.

Sometimes we find the best quality seed or spice we can find has a small amount of **gluten** detected. This could be caused by something as simple as having a field of wheat being harvested on an adjoining farm. Imagine one million grains of rice with eight of those grains containing gluten – that is enough to require a gluten declaration on the pack. Now imagine that this product with 8 parts per million of gluten is being used in a blend, so that, say, 15% of the total blend comprises this product with 8 parts per million of gluten. Is the gluten still measurable? Stay with me now: to make a meal for four people, you may use one tablespoon of spice mix – for each person, that's one quarter of a tablespoon of a spice mix that has 8 parts per million of gluten in just 15% of it. It would probably not matter to someone with an intolerance to gluten, however, intolerance is different to allergy, and the safety of coeliac consumers is important to us. All of the spice blends that we make, using any spice where gluten is measurable, have been tested for the presence of gluten, and the labels will tell you whether or not it has been detected.

Providing a good news swing to balance the coriander roundabout, we are finally able to supply Australian **native bush tomatoes** and **akudjura** again. These have been unavailable for a long time, illustrating the inevitable conundrum posed by Australian native herbs and spices: when they are unavailable here, there is no alternative country from which to source them! Once again, we can make a tomato chutney sing by adding a few whole bush tomatoes while it cooks, and our original **Native Barbecue spice** and **Ockkah** blends containing akudjura, will spring to life again. At this time of COVID, when there is discussion about national self-reliance and the importance of Australian-made, it seems providential that our native spices have made a re-appearance right now. On the other hand, there's a shortage of **Desert Oak** ... the swings and roundabouts are always moving!

Not all of our spice blends are powders. The texture and crunch of blends like **Berberé** and **Bushman's Peppercorn** are all part of their special character. As we are a non-automated food business, these blends are created by a person rather than a computer-programmed machine, and this is why sometimes there may be variation in the particle size of these blends. We try to keep it consistent, but we all love the fact that humans are not machines, and there may be small variations from one batch to the next.

As winter recedes, Christmas is looming ahead. And just in time, our beautiful **new wooden storage boxes** have arrived. Made from farmed pine softwood, they are beautifully made – the square box which holds twelve glass jars has a clear sliding lid, with labels for you to stick on the lids to identify your spices at a glance; and our popular lidded wooden spice storage box returns, to hold 30-35 of your Herbie's Spices packs. As always, we're here to help with your pantry requirements and gifts. Remember, early planning means no stress when December arrives!

Happy Spicing,

*Herbie and Liz*