

## Breaking Barriers with Culinary Herbs: How Women in Uttarakhand Can Empower Themselves through Culinary Herb Cultivation

**Brijesh K Agri,**  
Ex Consultant, Aroma Mission,  
CSIR-Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic  
Plants Research Centre Purara, Bageshwar (UK)

**ARTICLE ID: 15**



Uttarakhand is a state in northern India known for its picturesque landscapes, diverse cultures, and rich biodiversity. The region has a long history of cultivating medicinal and culinary herbs, owing to its unique climatic conditions and natural resources. Culinary herbs in Uttarakhand are cultivated primarily in the lower elevations of the state, which have a subtropical to temperate climate. The region is known for its rich soil and abundant water resources, which provide ideal conditions for growing a wide variety of herbs. Some of the popular culinary herbs grown in Uttarakhand include mint, coriander, fennel, dill, thyme, sage, and basil. These herbs are used extensively in local cuisine and are also in high demand in the food industry, both domestically and internationally.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the cultivation of culinary herbs in Uttarakhand, as farmers and entrepreneurs recognize the potential for these herbs to generate income and promote sustainable agriculture practices. The state government has also launched several initiatives to support herb cultivation, including providing financial assistance, technical support, and marketing assistance to farmers and start-ups. Overall, the cultivation of culinary herbs in Uttarakhand is an important aspect of the region's economy and cultural heritage, and has significant potential for further growth and development. Start-up refers to the creation and development of a new business venture with a high potential for growth and profitability. Woman empowerment, on the other hand, refers to the process of providing women with the resources, tools, and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential and lead fulfilling lives. Cultivation of culinary herbs in Uttarakhand has the potential to create opportunities for start-ups and promote woman empowerment in the region. Culinary herbs are in high demand in the food industry, and Uttarakhand has a rich



diversity of herbs that can be cultivated for commercial purposes. By cultivating culinary herbs, start-ups can create employment opportunities, boost the local economy, and promote sustainable agriculture practices. Moreover, culinary herb cultivation can empower women in the region by providing them with a source of income, enhancing their skills and knowledge, and giving them a greater sense of autonomy and independence. Women in Uttarakhand often face socio-economic challenges such as limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Cultivating culinary herbs can help address these challenges by providing a flexible and sustainable livelihood option that can be carried out by women from their homes. Overall, the cultivation of culinary herbs in Uttarakhand can provide a unique opportunity to promote both start-up and woman empowerment, contributing to the overall development of the region.

#### **Overview of culinary herbs in Uttarakhand:**

Culinary herbs are a diverse group of plants that are used for their aromatic, flavourful, and medicinal properties. In Uttarakhand, a state in northern India, culinary herbs play a prominent role in local cuisine and culture, and are also grown for commercial purposes. Some of the popular culinary herbs grown in Uttarakhand include mint, coriander, fennel, dill, thyme, sage, and basil. These herbs are used in a wide variety of dishes, including soups, stews, curries, chutneys, and teas. In addition to their culinary uses, many of these herbs have medicinal properties and are used in traditional remedies to treat a range of ailments. For example, mint is used to soothe upset stomachs and aid digestion, while coriander is believed to have anti-inflammatory properties and may help lower cholesterol levels. Culinary herbs in Uttarakhand are typically grown using organic farming practices, as the region has a strong tradition of sustainable agriculture. Many farmers in the region also practice intercropping, where different herbs and crops are grown together in the same field to promote soil health and biodiversity. Overall, culinary herbs are an important part of Uttarakhand's culture and economy, and provide a range of benefits for both consumers and farmers.

#### **What is culinary herbs.....? :**

Culinary herbs are a group of plants that are used primarily for their aromatic, flavorful, and culinary properties. These herbs are often used fresh or dried in cooking to enhance the flavor of dishes, and can be used in a wide variety of recipes, including soups, stews, salads,



sauces, and marinades. Some of the most common culinary herbs include basil, parsley, cilantro, thyme, rosemary, sage, mint, and oregano. These herbs are prized for their distinct flavors and aromas, and are used in cuisines from around the world. In addition to their culinary uses, many culinary herbs also have medicinal properties and are used in traditional remedies to treat a range of ailments. For example, mint is used to soothe upset stomachs and aid digestion, while ginger is used to relieve nausea and inflammation. Culinary herbs are typically easy to grow and are well-suited for both indoor and outdoor cultivation. They are often used in home gardens, as well as in commercial agriculture and food production. Overall, culinary herbs are an important part of many cuisines and cultures, and provide a range of benefits for both culinary and medicinal purposes. Culinary herbs come in many varieties, each with its own unique flavor and aroma. Some of the most popular types of culinary herbs include:

- **Basil:** A fragrant herb with a sweet, slightly peppery taste. Commonly used in Italian cuisine, particularly in tomato-based dishes like pizza and pasta sauces.
- **Thyme:** A versatile herb with a subtle, earthy flavor that pairs well with a wide range of foods. Often used in French cuisine, particularly in stews and roasts.
- **Rosemary:** A woody, fragrant herb with a strong, pine-like flavor. Commonly used in Mediterranean cuisine, particularly in meat dishes and roasted vegetables.
- **Sage:** A pungent herb with a slightly bitter, earthy flavor. Often used in Italian and Mediterranean cuisines, particularly in pasta dishes and roasted meats.
- **Oregano:** A robust herb with a spicy, slightly bitter flavor. Commonly used in Italian and Greek cuisines, particularly in tomato-based dishes and grilled meats.
- **Parsley:** A mild, slightly sweet herb with a fresh, grassy flavor. Often used as a garnish or to add flavor to soups, stews, and sauces.
- **Mint:** A refreshing herb with a cool, sweet flavor. Often used in Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cuisines, particularly in salads and teas.
- **Cilantro:** A pungent herb with a fresh, citrusy flavor. Commonly used in Mexican and Asian cuisines, particularly in salsas and curries.

#### **Benefits from culinary herbs cultivation:**

Culinary herbs provide a range of benefits, both culinary and medicinal. Some of the key benefits of culinary herbs include:



- **Enhanced flavor:** Culinary herbs can add depth, complexity, and nuance to dishes, enhancing their flavor and aroma.
- **Nutritional value:** Many culinary herbs are rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, making them a healthy addition to meals.
- **Medicinal properties:** Some culinary herbs have medicinal properties and are used in traditional remedies to treat a range of ailments.
- **Easy to grow:** Culinary herbs are typically easy to grow and can be cultivated in a wide range of environments, including gardens, pots, and indoor spaces.
- **Sustainable agriculture:** Culinary herbs are often grown using organic and sustainable farming practices, making them an environmentally-friendly crop.
- **Versatility:** Culinary herbs can be used in a wide variety of dishes and cuisines, making them a versatile ingredient in the kitchen.
- **Cost-effective:** Culinary herbs are often relatively inexpensive and can be a cost-effective way to add flavor and nutrition to meals.

### **Importance of culinary herbs in Uttarakhand:**

Culinary herbs are an important crop in Uttarakhand, a state in northern India known for its diverse agriculture and horticulture industries. Uttarakhand is home to a range of culinary herbs, including basil, thyme, rosemary, sage, mint, and oregano, among others. The cultivation of culinary herbs in Uttarakhand provides a number of benefits, both for farmers and consumers. For farmers, culinary herbs can be a high-value crop that requires relatively low inputs and can be grown using organic and sustainable farming practices. Herbs are also a good option for farmers with limited land, as they can be grown in small plots and can provide a steady source of income throughout the year. For consumers, culinary herbs offer a range of benefits, including enhanced flavor, nutritional value, and medicinal properties. Many culinary herbs grown in Uttarakhand are used in traditional remedies to treat a range of ailments, making them an important part of the state's traditional medicine practices. In addition to their culinary and medicinal uses, culinary herbs also have cultural significance in Uttarakhand. Many traditional dishes in the region incorporate culinary herbs, and the use of herbs in cooking is seen as a way to preserve local culinary traditions and promote sustainable agriculture. Overall, the cultivation of culinary herbs in Uttarakhand plays an



important role in the state's agriculture and horticulture industries, providing a range of benefits for both farmers and consumers, while preserving cultural and traditional practices.

#### **Role of culinary herbs in the local cuisine:**

Culinary herbs play a significant role in the local cuisine of Uttarakhand. Many traditional dishes in the region incorporate culinary herbs, either as a main ingredient or as a seasoning to enhance flavour. Some of the most common culinary herbs used in local cuisine include coriander, mint, fenugreek, cumin, turmeric, and fennel, among others. These herbs are used in a wide range of dishes, from hearty stews and curries to light salads and chutneys. One example of a dish that features culinary herbs is the popular Himachali dish called "siddu". Siddu is a type of steamed bread made from wheat flour and stuffed with a mixture of potatoes, spices, and herbs, such as coriander, cumin, and fennel. Another example is "madra", a savory curry made with chickpeas, yogurt, and a blend of spices and herbs, such as cumin, coriander, and fenugreek. Culinary herbs are also used in Himachali teas and drinks, such as the famous "kadha", a hot drink made with a blend of herbs and spices, including ginger, cinnamon, cloves, and black pepper. Kadha is often consumed as a remedy for colds and flu. Culinary herbs are an essential ingredient in the local cuisine of Uttarakhand, adding depth, complexity, and nuance to dishes, and reflecting the region's rich culinary traditions and cultural heritage.

#### **Potential for culinary herbs to boost the economy in Uttarakhand:**

The cultivation and sale of culinary herbs in Uttarakhand has the potential to significantly boost the state's economy. Culinary herbs can be a high-value crop that requires relatively low inputs and can be grown using organic and sustainable farming practices. Additionally, herbs are a good option for farmers with limited land, as they can be grown in small plots and can provide a steady source of income throughout the year. The demand for culinary herbs is increasing both domestically and internationally, as consumers seek out healthier and more sustainable food options. Uttarakhand, with its favorable climate and diverse agriculture and horticulture industries, is well positioned to capitalize on this trend and become a major supplier of culinary herbs. In addition to their culinary uses, many culinary herbs also have medicinal properties, which can further increase their value and marketability. The demand for natural remedies and traditional medicines is also on the rise, providing additional opportunities for farmers and entrepreneurs in the region. Furthermore,



the cultivation and sale of culinary herbs can help promote sustainable agriculture and support rural livelihoods, particularly for women. Women play a significant role in the agricultural sector in Uttarakhand, and the cultivation of culinary herbs can provide them with a source of income and help empower them economically. The cultivation and sale of culinary herbs has the potential to provide a significant boost to the economy of Uttarakhand, while promoting sustainable agriculture and empowering rural communities, particularly women.

### **Potential for culinary herbs to empower women in the region:**

The cultivation of culinary herbs in Uttarakhand has the potential to empower women in the region by providing them with opportunities for economic and social advancement. Women play a significant role in the agricultural sector in Uttarakhand, particularly in small-scale and subsistence farming. The cultivation of culinary herbs can provide women with a high-value crop that requires relatively low inputs and can be grown in small plots, making it an attractive option for women farmers. In addition to providing a source of income, the cultivation of culinary herbs can also give women a greater sense of independence and agency. By generating their own income, women can gain greater control over their financial resources and decision-making power within their households and communities. Furthermore, the cultivation of culinary herbs can provide women with opportunities for skill-building and education. Women farmers can learn about sustainable farming practices, marketing, and business management, which can help them improve their productivity and profitability. The sale of culinary herbs can also provide women with opportunities for entrepreneurship and leadership. Women can become involved in the processing, packaging, and marketing of culinary herbs, which can help them develop new skills and take on leadership roles within their communities. Overall, the cultivation and sale of culinary herbs has the potential to empower women in Uttarakhand by providing them with opportunities for economic and social advancement, skill-building, and leadership development. By supporting women in agriculture, we can help promote gender equality, reduce poverty, and improve the overall wellbeing of rural communities in the region.

**Women empowerment through culinary herb cultivation in Uttarakhand:** The cultivation of culinary herbs in Uttarakhand has the potential to empower women in the region by providing them with opportunities for economic and social advancement. Women



in the state often face significant barriers to economic and social empowerment, including limited access to education, resources, and decision-making power within their households and communities. However, the cultivation of culinary herbs can provide a pathway for women to gain greater independence, agency, and leadership opportunities. Firstly, the cultivation of culinary herbs can provide women with a source of income and greater financial independence. By growing and selling herbs, women can generate their own income and gain greater control over their financial resources. This can help women to become more self-sufficient and less reliant on their husbands or other family members for financial support. Secondly, the cultivation of culinary herbs can provide women with opportunities for education and skill-building. Through training programs and workshops, women can learn about sustainable farming practices, marketing, and business management. This can help them improve their productivity, profitability, and overall economic wellbeing. Thirdly, the cultivation of culinary herbs can provide women with opportunities for entrepreneurship and leadership. Women can become involved in the processing, packaging, and marketing of culinary herbs, which can help them develop new skills and take on leadership roles within their communities. This can also help to challenge traditional gender roles and promote gender equality within the agricultural sector. Overall, the cultivation of culinary herbs has the potential to empower women in Uttarakhand by providing them with opportunities for economic and social advancement, education, and leadership development. By supporting women in agriculture, we can help to promote gender equality, reduce poverty, and improve the overall wellbeing of rural communities in the region.

**Advantages of culinary herb cultivation for women:** The cultivation of culinary herbs in Uttarakhand can provide several advantages for women, including:

- **Source of income:** Culinary herb cultivation can provide women with a source of income, which can help them become financially independent and support themselves and their families.
- **Low input costs:** Culinary herbs require relatively low inputs in terms of land, water, and fertilizer, making it a suitable crop for women with small plots of land.
- **Skill-building:** Women can learn new skills related to sustainable farming practices, marketing, and business management, which can help them improve their productivity, profitability, and overall economic wellbeing.



- **Leadership opportunities:** Women can become involved in the processing, packaging, and marketing of culinary herbs, which can help them develop new skills and take on leadership roles within their communities.
- **Gender equality:** By empowering women in agriculture, culinary herb cultivation can help challenge traditional gender roles and promote gender equality within the region.
- **Improved nutrition:** Culinary herbs are rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, which can help improve the nutritional status of women and their families.

Therefore, the cultivation of culinary herbs can provide women with opportunities for economic and social advancement, education, and leadership development. By supporting women in agriculture, we can help promote gender equality, reduce poverty, and improve the overall wellbeing of rural communities in the region.

#### **Challenges faced by women in the region and how culinary herb cultivation can address them:**

Women in Uttarakhand face several challenges that hinder their economic and social empowerment. These challenges include limited access to education, resources, and decision-making power within their households and communities. However, culinary herb cultivation can address some of these challenges in the following ways:

- **Limited access to education:** Culinary herb cultivation can provide women with opportunities for education and skill-building through training programs and workshops. This can help them learn about sustainable farming practices, marketing, and business management, and improve their productivity and profitability.
- **Limited access to resources:** Culinary herb cultivation requires relatively low inputs in terms of land, water, and fertilizer, making it a suitable crop for women with small plots of land. Additionally, women can form cooperatives to pool resources and share knowledge and equipment.
- **Limited decision-making power:** By becoming involved in the processing, packaging, and marketing of culinary herbs, women can take on leadership roles within their communities and challenge traditional gender roles. This can help promote gender equality and empower women to make decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods.





- **Lack of economic opportunities:** Culinary herb cultivation can provide women with a source of income and greater financial independence, which can help them become more self-sufficient and less reliant on their husbands or other family members for financial support.
- **Poor nutrition:** Culinary herbs are rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, which can help improve the nutritional status of women and their families. By cultivating and consuming culinary herbs, women can improve their overall health and wellbeing.

### **Success stories of women in the region who have benefited from culinary herb cultivation:**

There are several success stories of women in Uttarakhand who have benefited from culinary herb cultivation. Here are a few examples:

- **Pooja Chauhan:** Pooja Chauhan is a young entrepreneur from Uttarakhand who started her culinary herb cultivation business in 2017. She began with a small plot of land and grew herbs like rosemary, thyme, and oregano. Today, her business has expanded, and she sells her herbs to local hotels and restaurants, as well as to customers in other states. Pooja has also trained other women in her community to cultivate culinary herbs, empowering them with new skills and economic opportunities.
- **Mamta Thakur:** Mamta Thakur is a farmer from the Solan district of Uttarakhand who switched from growing traditional crops like wheat and rice to cultivating culinary herbs. She grows herbs like basil, thyme, and parsley on her small farm and sells them to local restaurants and customers. With the profits from her herb business, Mamta has been able to send her children to school and invest in new equipment and resources for her farm.
- **Seema Sharma:** Seema Sharma is a farmer and entrepreneur from the Kangra district of Uttarakhand who started her own culinary herb cultivation business in 2015. She grows herbs like coriander, mint, and basil on her small plot of land and sells them to local markets and hotels. With the profits from her business, Seema has been able to build a new house for her family and provide for her children's education.

These are just a few examples of the success stories of women in Uttarakhand who have benefited from culinary herb cultivation. By providing new economic opportunities and empowering women with new skills and resources, culinary herb cultivation is helping to promote gender equality and reduce poverty in the region.

			
<b>Basil</b>	<b>Thyme</b>	<b>Rosemary</b>	<b>Sage</b>
			
<b>Oreganoparsley</b>	<b>Mint</b>	<b>Celery</b>	

### Start-up opportunities in culinary herb cultivation:

Culinary herb cultivation offers several start-up opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs. Here are a few examples:

- **Herb farming:** Starting an herb farming business involves growing culinary herbs like basil, thyme, and rosemary on a small plot of land. This business can be started with minimal investment and can be scaled up over time as demand for herbs increases. Entrepreneurs can sell their herbs to local restaurants, markets, and grocery stores, or they can process and package them into value-added products like herbal teas and spice blends.
- **Herb processing and packaging:** Processing and packaging herbs is another start-up opportunity in the culinary herb industry. Entrepreneurs can purchase fresh herbs from farmers and then dry, chop, or grind them into various products. These products can then be packaged and sold to customers, either online or through local markets and stores.



- **Herb-based products:** Entrepreneurs can also create value-added products using culinary herbs, such as herbal soaps, candles, and skincare products. By combining herbs with other natural ingredients, entrepreneurs can create unique and high-quality products that appeal to health-conscious consumers.
- **Herb tourism:** Culinary herb cultivation can also be leveraged to create herb tourism experiences. Entrepreneurs can offer tours of their herb farms, cooking classes using herbs, and tastings of herbal teas and other products. This can be a unique and engaging way to showcase the culinary traditions of the region and create a new revenue stream for entrepreneurs

### **Resources and support available for start-ups related to culinary herb in the Uttarakhand:**

There are several resources and support available for start-ups related to culinary herb cultivation in Uttarakhand. Some of these include:

- **Uttarakhand Horticulture Development Society:** The society provides support to farmers and entrepreneurs engaged in horticulture, including culinary herb cultivation. They offer technical assistance, training programs, and access to funding and marketing opportunities.
- **Uttarakhand Tourism Development Corporation:** The Corporation promotes tourism in the state and can provide support to entrepreneurs interested in developing herb tourism experiences.
- **National Medicinal Plants Board:** The board provides support to entrepreneurs engaged in the cultivation and processing of medicinal plants, which includes some culinary herbs.
- **Agricultural Universities and Colleges:** There are several agricultural universities and colleges in the state that offer courses and training programs related to horticulture and culinary herb cultivation. These institutions can provide entrepreneurs with technical expertise and support.
- **Start-up incubators and accelerators:** There are several start-up incubators and accelerators in the state, such as Uttarakhand Startup Centre and Business Incubation Centre at Dr YS Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry. These programs can



provide entrepreneurs with mentoring, funding, and other resources to help them launch and grow their businesses.

- **Government schemes and subsidies:** The government of Uttarakhand offers several schemes and subsidies to promote horticulture and agriculture in the state. These include the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana, and the Uttarakhand State Horticulture Development Society.

### **Challenges faced by start-ups in culinary herb in Uttarakhand and how to overcome:**

While there are significant opportunities for start-ups related to culinary herb cultivation in Uttarakhand, there are also several challenges that entrepreneurs may face. Some of the common challenges include:

- **Lack of access to finance:** Access to finance is often a significant challenge for start-ups in any sector, and culinary herb cultivation is no exception. Entrepreneurs may struggle to secure financing for their businesses, particularly in the early stages when they do not have a proven track record.
- **Limited infrastructure:** The lack of adequate infrastructure, such as transportation and storage facilities, can be a significant challenge for entrepreneurs engaged in culinary herb cultivation.
- **Seasonal fluctuations:** Culinary herbs are often seasonal crops, and entrepreneurs may struggle to maintain a steady supply throughout the year.
- **Limited market access:** Access to markets can be a challenge for entrepreneurs engaged in culinary herb cultivation, particularly if they are operating in remote or rural areas.

To overcome these challenges, start-ups in culinary herb cultivation can take several steps:

- **Explore government schemes and subsidies:** The government of Uttarakhand offers several schemes and subsidies to promote horticulture and agriculture in the state. Entrepreneurs can explore these options to secure financing for their businesses.
- **Build relationships with buyers:** Entrepreneurs can build relationships with buyers, such as hotels, restaurants, and supermarkets, to ensure a steady market for their products.
- **Invest in infrastructure:** Entrepreneurs can invest in infrastructure, such as transportation and storage facilities, to improve the efficiency of their operations.



- **Diversify products:** Entrepreneurs can diversify their product offerings to include other crops, such as fruits and vegetables, to maintain a steady revenue stream throughout the year.
- **Collaborate with other entrepreneurs:** Entrepreneurs can collaborate with other entrepreneurs in the region to share resources and expertise, reduce costs, and increase market access.

In conclusion, culinary herb cultivation in Uttarakhand offers significant benefits for both woman empowerment and start-up opportunities. Culinary herbs are an essential part of the local cuisine and have a significant potential to boost the region's economy. Women, in particular, can benefit from the cultivation of culinary herbs as it offers them an opportunity to become financially independent and contribute to their families' income. Moreover, the government of Uttarakhand has taken several initiatives to support entrepreneurship and offers schemes and subsidies to promote horticulture and agriculture in the state. While there are challenges associated with culinary herb cultivation, entrepreneurs can overcome these by investing in infrastructure, building relationships with buyers, and diversifying their product offerings. By taking a strategic approach to their businesses, start-ups in culinary herb cultivation can benefit from the vast potential that this industry offers in Uttarakhand. Moreover, culinary herb cultivation can offer significant opportunities for women entrepreneurs to become financially independent, improve their livelihoods, and contribute to their families' income. The government of Uttarakhand has taken several initiatives to promote entrepreneurship and horticulture in the state, offering various schemes and subsidies to support start-ups in this sector. Despite some challenges, such as limited infrastructure, seasonal fluctuations, and limited market access, entrepreneurs can overcome these by adopting a strategic approach to their businesses and leveraging available resources. Overall, the potential of culinary herb cultivation in Uttarakhand is vast, and it can bring about significant socio-economic benefits for the region and its people.