


All humans need sufficient energy and nutrients for living, but peoples, cultures, families, and individuals fulfill this basic need in diverse ways. This book comprehensively reviews plants used in the Asian diet and made significant beneficial contributions to nutrition and health. Migration of populations out of their native lands caused expansion of many useful plants all over the world. Nowadays, most of the species mentioned in this book are grown and used in different parts of the world and not only in Asia.

After general Introduction, the book is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter “Grains” is focused on two most cultivated plants wheat and rice, and further on different millets and buckwheat. The second chapter “Vegetables” deals with cucurbits, brassicas, alliums, green leafy vegetables, legumes and tubers. The main fruits mentioned in chapter three are apple, pear, peach, apricot, cherry, mango, banana, litchi, rambutan, longan, tamarind, jackfruit, mangosteen and citrus. “Fat and oils” (Chapter 4) are mostly extracted from sesame, coconut, flax and rapeseed. “Beans and nuts” (Chapter 5) are important sources of proteins. Red gram, chickpea, fava bean, lentil, adzuki bean, cowpea, mung bean, blackgram, soybean, velvet bean rice bean, almond, pistachio and walnut are mentioned in this chapter. Large collection of plant species is described in chapter 6 “Spices”. Finally, a small chapter is devoted to herbal beverages (tea) and subsequeants (areca nut and betel).

For each plant species, the author provides Latin and common names, family, origin, places of cultivation, importance in human diet and in medicine, use in different dishes or in food-processing industry.

This readable book contains a lot of information interesting not only for specialist of agronomy, food industry or pharmacology but mainly for nonexperts. It is a great pity that illustrations are missing.

J. POSPÍŠILOVÁ (Prague)
The Silk Road is as iconic in world history as the Colossus of Rhodes or the Suez Canal. But what was it, exactly? It conjures up a hazy image of a caravan of camels laden with silk on a dusty desert track, reaching from China to Rome. The reality was different—and far more interesting—as revealed in this new history. In The Silk Road, Valerie Hansen describes the remarkable archaeological finds that revolutionize our understanding of these trade routes. For centuries, key records remained hidden—sometimes deliberately buried.