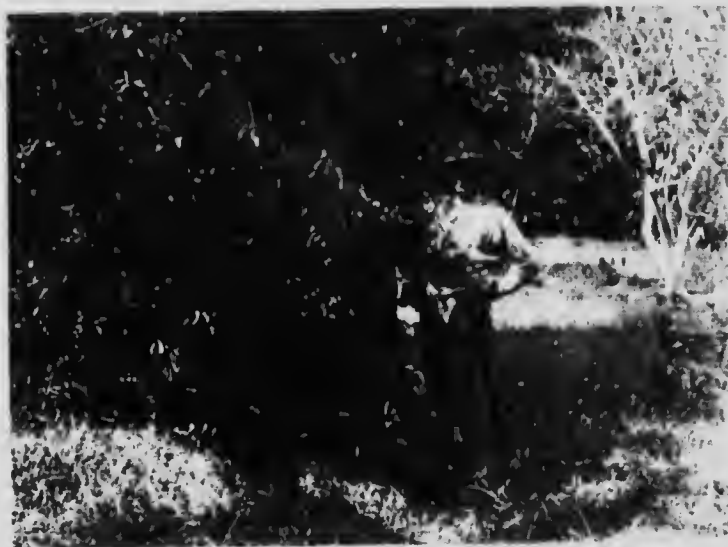




A NUTMEG TREE IN JAMAICA

cultably in South America, the West Indies, West Africa, and the warmer parts of Queensland. The finest qualities of the spice are probably obtained from China, and the West Indian product is also justly famous for its quality. The methods of cultivation and preparation are essentially the same in all parts of the world. In planting out, rhizomes of mature plants are cut up into short lengths, each possessing at least one "bud," which are planted about two feet

apart. The harvest commences when the leaves begin to wither, which usually takes place after about ten months. The rhizomes are then very carefully dug up, and the fibrous roots and adherent earth removed. From this point the treatment varies according to whether dried or preserved ginger is required. Dried ginger is of two kinds, peeled and unpeeled, the latter being merely the cleaned rhizomes dried in the sun. In the preparation of the peeled variety, the cleaned rhizomes are thrown into water and then peeled with a narrow-bladed knife, care being taken to remove only the thinnest possible layer, since the essential oil and resin, to which ginger owes its pungent flavour, occur just beneath the skin or epidermis. After peeling, the ginger is again soaked in clean water to which chemicals are often added to improve the colour of the "roots." The ginger is then dried in the sun on a paved or cemented barbecue, the process occupying from six to eight days, when the product is ready for export.

Preserved ginger is prepared chiefly in China. The washed rhizomes are put into boiling water and, after being peeled, placed in earthenware vessels and a strong boiling solution of sugar poured over them. The syrup is drained off after twenty-four hours, and the process repeated for two days. The ginger is then taken out of the syrup and is ready for export, appearing on the market either dry or packed in jars.

ALLSPICE, PIMENTO

Pimento or allspice consists of the dried unripe fruits of *Pimenta officinalis*, a beautiful tree about thirty feet high with a straight trunk much branched above, bearing abundance of dense, evergreen foliage. The plant is a native of the West Indies, Mexico, and South America, but the chief supplies of the spice are obtained from Jamaica, whence the name "Jamaica pepper" is derived. The fruits are spherical berries, which when ripe are smooth, shining, and of a black or dark purple colour. They are gathered when of full size, but while still green. A boy climbs into the tree, and, bending down the branches, snaps off the smaller ends leaving the fruits which fall to the ground to be gathered by women and children. The berries are removed by hand, and carefully cured on large paved barbecues, the process occupying from six to ten days. The spice consist of small, spherical, wrinkled fruits about the size