

Cardamom



Cardamom Benefits

Cardamom is well known as a spice used in Indian cooking, and is one of the primary constituents of Garam Masala. What many people don't realize is that cardamom is also medicinal, and helps relieve digestive problems induced by garlic and onion, making it more than merely an aromatic addition to the stomach-challenging cuisine it accompanies. Cardamom is considered one of the most valuable spices in the world due to its rich aroma and therapeutic properties.

Origins

Many varieties of cardamom exist, but there are two genera which include cardamom plants. The first, known scientifically as **Ellataria** and commonly referred to as green or true cardamom, is found mainly in India. Cardamom grown in Asia is part of the genus **Amomum**, and goes by an assortment of common names, such as brown cardamom, Java cardamom, Bengal cardamom, Kravan, white cardamom, Siamese cardamom, and red cardamom.

Both Ellataria and Amomum are part of the **Ginger** family (Zingiberaceae).

Cultivation

Cardamom is farmed in only a few places in the world, including Sri Lanka, China, Laos, Nepal, Vietnam, pockets of India, and Guatemala. It grows uncultivated more rarely, limited to the rich, dense soils of certain South Asian forests. Despite these limitations,

the ground seeds of cardamom, as well as intact seeds often within pods, are widely available for purchase.

As a member of the ginger family, cardamom grows perennially and produces vast, fleshy root structures known as rhizomes. It has large leaves, green and white flowers, an edible but slightly bitter fruit, and large seeds. The seeds of the cardamom plant contain a variety of important minerals such as **calcium**, sulfur, and phosphorus. They also contain volatile oil composed of acetic and formic acids. This volatile oil, which makes up about 5 percent of the seed's mass, has aromatic and medicinal properties, and it is what makes cardamom so valuable.

Health benefits

Studies confirm that cardamom oil acts as an analgesic and antispasmodic in rats and rabbits, producing relief and lowered distention and writhing within digestive systems reacting negatively to uncomfortable stimuli. This effect is the primary medicinal quality of cardamom, and Eastern cultures have been taking advantage of it for centuries.

Cardamom has been used to relieve the following medical problems:

Bad Breath

Cardamom is one of the most effective remedies against halitosis. Simply chewing on the seeds eliminates bad odors. Cardamom is even used in some chewing gums because of its effectiveness, billed as a surefire cure to the most offensive breath.

Tooth, Gum, and Oral Disorders

Cardamom is widely used in South Asia to fight tooth and gum decay and disease. It can also be used to help soothe a sore throat and relieve hoarseness of voice.

Digestion

The volatile oil in cardamom has been proven to soothe the stomach and intestines, making cardamom an ideal solution for a host of digestive problems, such as constipation, dysentery, and indigestion. Cardamom can be used aromatically to increase or encourage appetite, and also assists in soothing gas and heartburn. Generally, cardamom relieves most upset stomachs. To use cardamom for digestive problems, consume seeds alone, serve ground seed with food, or serve as a tea.

Urinary problems

South Asians use cardamom's relieving properties to help with the discomfort of passing gall and kidney stones. Cardamom, combined with banana leaf and alma juice, can act as a diuretic, soothing a variety of kidney, bladder, and urinary problems like nephritis, burning or painful urination, and frequent urges to urinate. The relief from uncomfortable symptoms provided through cardamom should not be considered a cure to underlying diseases and disorders.

Depression and Aromatherapy

Cardamom oils can be added to baths as a form of aromatherapy that fights depression and reduces stress. Ground cardamom seeds can be made into a tea for similar benefits.

Cancer Prevention

Cardamom contains IC₃ (indole-3-carbinol) and DIM(diindolylmethane). These phytochemicals are well-known cancer fighters, helping to specifically ward off hormone-responding cancers like breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and prostate cancer. Early research suggests that consuming cardamom regularly may help with preventing these forms of cancer.

Anti-aging

In addition to these specific medicinal uses, cardamom contains an abundance of antioxidants, which protect the body against aging and stress, and fight common sicknesses and bodily strife. In rat studies, cardamom has been shown to increase glutathione, an antioxidant enzyme found naturally in our bodies.

Cardamom volatile oil has only recently come under the scrutiny of scientists curious about its therapeutic properties, but Asian and Indian cultures have reliably used it for ages as a remedy for discomfort and depression, and still rely upon it today. It is now being discovered to have amazing health benefits, and early science confirms its medicinal effectiveness.