

Acerola (*Malpighia*)

Common Names: Some common names for acerola are ceraso, Antilles cherry and Barbados cherry.

Description: The acerola grows as a bushy shrub. Its berries are a red color at their peak of nutrients and change

to a green color when harvested.

Location: Acerola is commonly found in the West Indies, South America and southern Texas.

Properties: Acerola is one of the highest content vitamin C foods available. According to Phyllis A. Balch in

Prescriptionf or Herbal Healing (2002), "On average, 100 grams of ripe acerola fruits contain 17,000 milligrams of

vitamin C. For the sake of comparison 100 grams of oranges contains only 500 milligrams of vitamin C.

Uses: This herb is used primarily for its high vitamin C content. The herb is also recognized for containing

amounts of vitamin B1, niacin, magnesium, pantothenic acid and vitamin B2. Because of the vitamin C content in the herb it can be used to fight off allergies, aging effects, infertility, glaucoma, colds and flu, cancer, bronchitis, wrinkles and Parkinson's disease.

Doses: Acerola can be found in pill form at drug stores. You would find this as a vitamin C pill, which would

read on the label, "contains acerola." This herb can also be used in lotion or cream form, but be advised that

allergic reaction is possible.

Warnings: Be advised that water should be taken in liberal amounts when taking acerola. Do not take acerola

when being treated for cancer via surgical operation or chemotherapy treatment.

Acerola Berry Powder Profile

Also known as

Malpighia glabra, Barbados Cherry, West Indian Cherry, Cereza, Semeruco, Cerisier, Florida Sweet, Manoa Sweet.

Introduction

Although acerola are now found growing in most sub-tropical regions of the world, linguistic evidence seems to point to the Yucatan as a point of origin for this fruit. Cultivated in southern Texas, Florida, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia, the largest plantings are in Brazil. Acerola is a fast growing bushy shrub or small tree with small pink and white flowers. The fruits are round and ovoid with three lobes, and are said to have a pleasant, tart taste. They are bright red when ripe, and come to maturity approximately 25 days after the first buds appear. The fruit of the acerola is the richest known source of

natural vitamin C in the world. They are usually picked when still green, because in this state they have almost twice as much vitamin C as when fully ripened. The fruit must be made into juice quickly as the fruit will begin to ferment and mold in as little as three days after harvesting. If not sold as a juice, the liquid is concentrated and pasteurized, and then spray dried into a powder. The type of acerola powder offered by Mountain Rose Herbs is spray dried into an organic maltodextrin carrier that is made from organic manioc root, and is standardized to have not less than 17.5% natural vitamin C.

Parts Used

The fruit is the only part used.

Typical Preparations

The fruit itself is eaten when ripe, and it is sometimes made into a jelly, jam or syrup. The fruit, when picked, must be processed quickly before it starts to ferment and mold, and most of the nutritional use in the United States is from spray dried, freeze dried, or from concentrated fruits which are processed immediately at the site and exported accordingly.

Summary

Acerola has been used traditionally throughout Mexico and South America as an astringent, and antioxidant, as well as for help with dysentery, hepatitis, and fevers. Known as extremely high in vitamin C and antioxidants, acerola fruit is also high in iron, calcium, beta carotenes and phosphorus. Acerola juice is as popular in Brazil as orange juice is in America. Brazilian culture sees it as a nutritive for anemia, diabetes, high cholesterol and liver problems.

Precautions

A study published in 2002 reported that the fruit of the acerola can cause an allergic reaction in people who are also allergic to latex. There are also several reports that the leaves may be irritating to some people, but this should not effect consumption of the powdered form.