

Carob and Powder Profile

Also known as

Ceratonia siliqua, Locust Bean, St. Johns Bread, Carob Tree.

Introduction

The carob is a tree in the same plant family as beans and peas. Its pods have been used for food for as long as 5,000 years. Carob pods were thought to be the "locust beans" consumed by John the Baptist, hence the name St. John's Bread. The Greeks referred to them as the "Egyptian fig" as the tree was first raised in Egypt and Western Asia. It has since adapted to cultivation in the semitropical reaches of the United States, Australia, Latin America and the Mediterranean. The Egyptians used the carob seeds as an adhesive binding during the mummification process. Made popular as a substitute for chocolate, carob powder was once deemed essential to the opera, for saving the voices of performance-weary sopranos. The seeds were also used by the Greeks and Romans as a unit of weight measurement for gold. It has been hypothesized that this is where the term carat is derived from.

Constituents

According to Dr. James Duke, carob seed powder contains alanine, alpha-aminopimelic-acid, amino acids, arginine, ash, aspartic acid, benzoic acid, butyric acid, capronic acid, carubin, catechin tannin, cellulose, ceratoniase, ceratose, chiro-inositol, concanavalin-A, fat, formic acid, fructose, D-galactose, gallic acid, beta-D1,6-DI-O-galloylglucose, beta-D-glucogallin, glucose, glutamic acid, glycine, gum, hemicellulose, histidine, hydroxyproline, invert sugars, isobutyric acid, isoleucine, leucine, leucodelphinidin, lignin, lysine, D-mannose, methionine, mucilage, myoinositol, pectin, pentosane, phenylalanine, pinitol, primverose, proline, protein, saccharose, saponin, serine, starch, sucrose, sugars, tannin, threonine, tocopherol, tyrosine, valine, water, xylose. The pods are rich in antioxidant polyphenols (19.2%), like chocolate.

Parts Used

Seeds and pods

Typical Preparations

Seed and pod powder usually roasted but raw as well, used in the same manner as cocoa powder and sprinkled on food or taken as a tea, extract or capsule. The cut Carob is the easiest form to be taken as a tea. The raw carob is perceived as bitter by most taste buds so roasting it improves the flavor dramatically, however many do enjoy the raw flavor of Carob.

Summary

As a food, carob is most often used as a hypoallergenic substitute for chocolate. In herbal medicine, carob powder is most often used as a treatment for diarrhea. The fiber (locust bean gum) in carob helps reduce the volume of fluid lost and prevents dehydration, especially in children. Give to children mixed with applesauce or sweet potatoes and a glass of water. In traditional herbal medicine, carob powders are used to treat prostatitis and prostate infections. It is also applied topically to remove warts. Carob powder is useful as a diet food, and is used in a variety of weight loss formulations, energy bars, drinks, and tea formulations. It lowers the glycemic index of foods with which it is mixed. A slice of carob cake, for instance, releases sugars much more slowly into the bloodstream than a slice of chocolate cake.

Precautions

In very rare instances, allergy is possible. Avoid over-consumption until you know you are not allergic.

Botanical: *Jacaranda procera* (SPRENG.)

Family: N.O. Bignoniacea

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---**Synonyms**---Carob Tree. Carobinha. Bignonia Caroba. Jacaranda Caroba. Caaroba.

---**Part Used**---The leaves.

---**Habitat**---South America.

---**Description**---The genus *Jacaranda* includes several species which are used medicinally in South America, and especially in Brazil. The trees are small, and the leaves thick, tough, and lanceolate, about 2 1/2 inches long, odourless, and slightly bitter in taste.

---**Constituents**---There has been found in the leaves Caroba balsam, caroborelinic acid carobic acid, steocarobic acid, carobon, and crystalline substance, carobin.

---**Medicinal Actions and Uses**---The value of the *Jacaranda* active principles has been proved in syphilis and venereal diseases, being widely used by the aborigines of Brazil and other South American countries. The leaves have also been tried in epilepsy for their soothing influence.

---**Dosage**---From 15 to 60 grains.

---**Other Species**---

CAROB-TREE, or *Ceratonia siliqua*, is a small tree of the Mediterranean coasts. (One species of Jacaranda tree grows in Palermo, and the exquisite blue flowers when in bloom about the middle of June are an arresting sight, much more suggestive of 'Love in the Mist' than the plant which actually bears that name. - EDITOR.) Beyond its name it has no connexion with Caroba. It furnishes the St. John's Bread which probably corresponds to the husks of the Prodigal Son parable, and the seed which is said to have been the original jewellers' carat weight.

The Spaniards call it Algaroba, and the Arabs Kharoub, hence Carob or Caroub Pods, Beans, or Sugar-pods. It is also called Locust Pods. These pods are much used in the south of Europe for feeding domestic animals and, in times of scarcity, as human food. Being saccharine, they are more heatgiving than nourishing. The seeds or beans were used as fodder for British cavalry horses during the Spanish campaign of 1811-12.

South American varieties are *Prosopis dulcis* and *P. siliquastrum* of the Leguminosae family.