

Cayenne(Capsicum)

CommonNames: Chili pepper, chili, red pepper.

Location: This herb can be found naturally in Central America.

Description: The fruits, commonly known as chili peppers, are used medicinally.

Properties: This herb can be used as an anti-inflammant and to help digestion. Cayenne also gets rid of gas and increases metabolism and the production of gastric juices.

Uses: Cayenne can be used to treat heat stress, food poisoning, arthritis, psoriasis, sore muscles, diabetes, herpes- related nerve damage, lung cancer, obesity and migraine headaches.

Doses: According to Phyllis Balch in Prescription for Herbal Healing (2002), "For external application, use cayenne in the form of capsaicin cream; for internal applications, use cayenne powder, mixed with starchy food."

Warnings: Do not place cayenne on the eye area, mouth area or on pieces of broken skin.

Cayenne and Chili Profile

Also known as

Capsicum annum, Capsicum frutescens, Capsicum spp, Sweet Pepper, Cayenne, African Pepper, Hot Pepper, Bird pepper, Tabasco pepper, and Louisiana long pepper.

Introduction

Chili is the Aztec name for Capsicum annum. It has been used both as a food and a medicine by Native Americans for over 9000 years. The Capsicum family includes bell peppers, red peppers, paprika, and pimento, but the most famous medicinal members of the family are cayenne and chile. The tasty hot peppers have long been used in many of the world's cuisines, but their greatest use in health comes from, surprisingly, conventional medicine. Chilies are also used as a synergistic ingredient in various tonics, laxatives, sedatives, and hay fever remedies.

Constituents

1,8-cineole, 2-octanone, alanine, alpha-carotene, alpha-linoleic acid, alpha-phellandrene, arginine, ascorbic acid, beta-carotene, betaine, campesterol, capsaicin, capsanthin, carvone, fiber, folacin, glutamic acid, hesperidin, isoleucine, isovaleric acid, kaempferol, manganese, myrcene, p-coumaric acid, potassium, proline, quercetin, scopoletin, solanine, thiamin, thujone, tryptophan, valine, zeaxanthin, zinc.

Parts Used

The fruit, fresh or dried, chopped or powdered.

Typical Preparations

Widely used in cooking. Most often compounded as a cream for external use, rarely brewed into a tea for internal use.

Summary

The burning sensation of hot peppers is a reaction of the central nervous system to capsaicin; unlike horseradish, wasabi, garlic, ginger, and mustard, capsaicin only causes the sensation of damage, not real damage to tissues. This sensation of pain, however, depletes a chemical called substance P, and when substance P is used up, the ongoing tissue damage of arthritis, shingles, cluster headaches, fibromyalgia, or lower back injury does not result in pain. Eating hot peppers can also deplete pain chemicals in the stomach. Peppers do not actually cause heartburn or ulcers. They merely cause the sensation of pain, depleting substance P, so other conditions cannot cause pain. Eating foods seasoned with cayenne or chile may even protect the stomach against damage by aspirin, ibuprofen, or other NSAID pain relief medications. Capsaicin creams can also reduce itching in psoriasis.

Precautions

Pepper in any of its form may be a irritant to the mucous membranes and caution should be exercised when handling. Don't touch your eyes with your hands after you have handled capsaicin in any form as painful burning may occur. Excessive use internally may result in gastro-intestinal upset.

Botanical: Capsicum minimum (ROXB.)

Family: N.O. Solanaceae

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---**Synonyms**---African Pepper. Chillies. Bird Pepper.

---**Part Used**---Fruit, ripe and dried.

---**Habitat**---Zanzibar - but now grown in most tropical and sub-tropical countries.

---**Description**---Cayenne or Capsicum derives its name from the Greek, 'to bite,' in allusion to the hot pungent properties of the fruits and seeds. Cayenne pepper was introduced into Britain from India in 1548, and Gerard mentioned it as being cultivated in his time. The plant was described by Linnaeus under the name of *C. frutescens* proper. This species appeared in Miller's *Garden Dictionary* in 1771. It is a shrubby perennial plant 2 to 6 feet high. Branches angular, usually enlarged and slightly purple at the nodes; petioles medium; peduncles slender, often in pairs, and longer than the fruit; calyx cup-shaped, clasping base of fruit which is red, ovate, and long; seeds small and flat, from ten to twenty-nine. The cuticle of the pericarp is uniformly striated and in this particular is distinct from other species. Taste very pungent and smell characteristic. It is difficult to determine the source of true powdered Capsicum, as the colour is affected by light, so that it should always be kept in dark receptacles. African pepper is generally light brownish-yellow colour and very pungent; its pungency appears to depend on a principle called Capsicin. Cayenne is sometimes adulterated with oxide of red lead, which may be detected by digesting in dilute nitric acid. Other adulterants are coloured sawdust which can be found by the aid of the microscope. The British Pharmacopoeia requires that capsicum should yield not more than 6 per cent of ash, and this test detects the presence of most adulterants.

---**Constituents**---Capsaicin, a red colouring matter, oleic, palmitic and stearic acids.

---**Medicinal Action and Uses**---A powerful local stimulant, with no narcotic effect largely used in hot climates as a condiment, and most useful in atony of the intestines and stomach. It should not be used in ordinary gastric catarrh. For persons addicted to drink it seems to be useful possibly by reducing the dilated blood-vessels and thus relieving chronic congestion. It is often added to tonics and is said to be unequalled for warding off diseases. Herbalists use it largely in pill form and powdered. Externally it is a strong rubefacient and acts gently with no danger of vesication; is applied as a cataplasm or as a liniment; it can be mixed with 10 to 20 per cent of cotton-seed oil. The powder or the tincture is beneficial for relaxed uvula. A preparation in use in the West Indies called Mandram, for weak digestion and loss of appetite, is made of thinly sliced and unskinned cucumbers, shallots, chives, or onions, lemon or lime juice, Madeira, and a few pods of bird pepper well mashed up in the liquids. It can be used as a chutney.

---**Doses**---*For a gargle:* 1/2 drachm of powder to 1 pint of boiling water, or 1/2 fluid ounce of the tincture to 8 fluid ounces of rose water. If the throat is very sensitive it can be given in *pill form* - generally made with 1 to 10 grains powder. *The infusion* is made with 2 drachms to 1/2 pint boiling water taken in 1/2 fluid ounce doses. The tincture is used as a paint for chilblains.