

Guarana Seed and Powder Profile

Also known as

Also known as- Paulinia cupana, Brazilian cocoa

Introduction

Guarana is a name that has become extremely familiar in the mainstream consumer world as a caffeine substitute in an ever widening list of "energy drinks". A native evergreen sprawling, shrub like vine of the Amazon region, the guarana tree produces red berries that have been used like coffee in its native Brazil for centuries. When ripe, the berries split open at the end and look like a human eyeball (it's actually quite eerie to see.) A legend of the Satare-Maure Indians of Brazil tells that a beautiful woman named Onhiamuacabe gave birth to a child whose father was said to be a "mysterious being". The child was eventually put to death for eating some type of forbidden nuts. At his burial site a guarana bush began to grow from his eye. Native Indians still consider the effects of guarana to be supernatural in nature. The seeds of the berry are dried, roasted and then brewed to make a drink that is at first bitter and slightly astringent, then sweet. Traditional uses for guarana include stimulating the digestive system, reducing fever and treating migraines. Older texts contain reference to a substance called guaranine, said to be chemically identical to caffeine. More recently, many chemists argue that the substance IS caffeine, making guarana the highest source of caffeine available in nature. Guarana seeds contain 2.5 times the amount of caffeine than coffee does. Others state that guaranine is similar to caffeine, but is tolerated better by the body because it is not water soluble and is therefore released into the bloodstream more slowly.

Constituents

guaranine and the alkaloids theobromine and theophylline, caffeine

Parts Used

Seed

Typical Preparations

Brewed as a tea, in food and snack items, added to coffee, as a capsule, and in extract form.

Summary

The first record for use for guarana is from the writings of a Jesuit priest in 1669, who traveled to visit the Maure Indians deep in the Amazon. They were using it as a daily tonic that they believed to help prevent malaria and dysentery, a belief that is still held to this day. It was cultivated by the indigenous peoples as far back as Pre-Columbian times, and was first commercialized for use in 1958. Guarana shows many promising health benefits, though research is ongoing. Guarana is rich in anti-oxidants, and

is thought to help strengthen the heart, clean the blood and cool the body down.

Precautions

Guarana is a central nervous system stimulant similar to coffee, but stronger. Anyone who has been advised to avoid coffee should avoid guarana, though it is rated GRAS by the FDA (generally regarded as safe). It's long term use is not recommended and it is to be avoided while pregnant.

Botanical: Paullinia Cupana, Kunth. (H. B. and K.)

Family: N.O. Sapindaceae

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---**Synonyms**---Paullinia. Guarana Bread. Brazilian Cocoa. Uabano. Uaranzeiro. Paullinia Sorbilis.

---**Part Used**---Prepared seeds, crushed.

---**Habitat**---Brazil, Uruguay. - **NOTE:** Dr Earle Sweet, Sayfer Botanicals, points out that this is incorrect, **Guarana does NOT grow in Uruguay.** - 12/16/96

---**Description**---This climbing shrub took the name of its genus from C. F. Paullini, a German medical botanist who died 1712. It has divided compound leaves, flowers yellow panicles, fruit pear shaped, three sided, three-celled capsules, with thin partitions, in each a seed like a small horse-chestnut half enclosed in an aril, flesh coloured and easily separated when dried. The seeds of *Paullinia Sorbilis* are often used or mixed with those of *P. Cupana*. Guarana is only made by the Guaranis, a tribe of South American Indians.

(Note: Marcos Garcia, Embrapa-CPAA, Manaus Amazonas, Brazil, also points out "The origin habitat of Guarana is the Amazon Region. But actually it is cultivated in others locations at Southest of Brazil." - editor HTML version - A MODERN HERBAL)

After the seeds are shelled and washed they are roasted for six hours, then put into sacks and shaken till their outside shell comes off, they are then pounded into a fine powder and made into a dough with water, and rolled into cylindrical pieces 8 inches long; these are then dried in the sun or over a slow fire, till they became very hard and are then a rough and reddish-brown colour, marbled with the seeds and testa in the mass. They break with an irregular fracture, have little smell, taste astringent, and bitter like chocolate without its oiliness, and in colour like chocolate powder; it swells up and partially dissolves in water.

---**Constituents**---A crystallizable principle, called guaranine, identical with caffeine, which exists in the seeds, united with tannic acid, catechutannic acid starch, and a greenish fixed oil.

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---**Medicinal Action and Uses**---Nervine, tonic, slightly narcotic stimulant, aphrodisiac febrifuge. A

beverage is made from the guaran sticks, by grating half a tablespoonful into sugar and water and drinking it like tea. The Brazilian miners drink this constantly and believe it to be a preventive of many diseases, as well as a most refreshing beverage. Their habit in travelling is to carry the stick or a lump of it in their pockets, with a palate bone or scale of a large fish with which to grate it. *P. Cupana* is also a favourite national diet drink, the seeds are mixed with Cassava and water, and left to ferment until almost putrid, and in this state it is the favourite drink of the Orinoco Indians. From the tannin it contains it is useful for mild forms of leucorrhoea, diarrhoea, etc., but its chief use in Europe and America is for headache, especially if of a rheumatic nature. It is a gentle excitant and serviceable where the brain is irritated or depressed by mental exertion, or where there is fatigue or exhaustion from hot weather. It has the same chemical composition as caffeine, theine and cocaine, and the same physiological action. Its benefit is for nervous headache or the distress that accompanies menstruation, or exhaustion following dissipation. It is not recommended for chronic headache or in cases where it is not desirable to increase the temperature, or excite the heart or increase arterial tension. Dysuria often follows its administration. It is used by the Indians for bowel complaints, but is not indicated in cases of constipation or blood pressure.

---**Dosage**---Powder, 10 grains to 1/2 drachm. Fluid extract of Guarana, U.S.P., 30 minims sweetened with one teaspoonful of syrup in water three times a day.

As a strong diuretic 7 1/2 grains can be taken daily and in 24 hours it has been known to increase urine from 27 OZ. to 107 OZ.

Tincture of Guarana, B.P.C., for sick headaches, 1 to 2 fluid drachms in water.