

Long Pepper Profile

Also known as

piper longum, Pippali, Bengal Pepper, Indonesian Long Pepper, Java Pepper, Lada Panjong, and Bi Bo

Introduction

The long pepper has been used for centuries in Mediterranean, African, Indian, and Indonesian cooking, although it has almost fallen into obscurity in the past few hundred years. The long pepper comes from a flowering vine with large catkin flowers. Within each flower are small black spikes that are the actual pepper. The taste is very similar to regular black pepper, and it is a relative of the species *piper nigrum*, but with a much hotter taste and an almost earthy, sweet overtone. It has been reported that Attila the Hun demanded part of the ransom for his sacking of Rome to be paid in long peppers. One of the most notable uses is as an ingredient in herbal medicine includes adding long pepper with ginger and black pepper in a popular base ingredient in Ayurvedic medicine called Trikatu. As a stand alone medicinal herb, it has been used for treating coughs, colds, fevers, and a variety of stomach ailments.

Parts Used

The entire catkin or spike. When broken or ground up it imparts an even greater pungency to food.

Typical Preparations

Used as a spice for a variety of dishes, or as a substitute for regular black pepper. On a global scale, it has been used in pickles, preserves, curries, soups, sauces, or ground up and tossed with fresh fruit.

Summary

The word pepper comes from the Sanskrit word *pippali*, which is Sanskrit for long pepper. Along with its many culinary and medicinal uses, Ayurvedic teachings also consider the long pepper as an aphrodisiac. It has been used in a snuff form for drowsiness, and has been applied topically for muscular pain and inflammation. In Medieval Europe it was used as a carminative, and stimulant. It was also thought of as a cure for hemlock. In India, it is mixed with honey and used as a cold cure. On a more macabre note, practitioners of western occult arts have used the long pepper in a formula to help create the fabled "Dead Man's Hand", a grisly talisman that is said to impart invisibility and protection to its owner.

Precautions

Long pepper is a skin irritant and may cause an allergic reaction in certain individuals.