

Rooibos (*Aspalanthus linearis*)

Location: It is native to the mountains near Capetown, South Africa.

Description: Rooibos tea, a shrub of half a meter to two meters in height with bright-green needle-shaped leaves. Traditionally, its stems and leaves are bruised with hammers, then left to ferment in the sun. The resulting tea has a characteristic sweet flavor. South Africans have drunk rooibos tea for at least 200 years, and it became widely used in South Africa during World War II, when black tea was unavailable. It is one of the few indigenous plants that have become an important commercial crop. Rooibos tea should not be confused with honey bush tea.

Properties: Rooibos tea is made from the leaves of the rooibos tree. Rooibos contains at least thirty-seven natural anti-oxidants, minerals, vitamin C, and alpha-hydroxy acids. It does not contain caffeine, and it has a very low tannin content.

Uses: Rooibos is an anti-viral, anti-anxiety, and anti-allergy agent. Rooibos is used in the treatment of syphilis to stop generalized inflammation and pain, although it is not a treatment for the disease itself. It has a beneficial effect on age-related mental decline. Rooibos is also used as a milk substitute for infants who are prone to colic. This herb is considered to have considerable antispasmodic activity. There is growing evidence that it contributes to a reduction in heart disease and other ailments associated with aging. Benefits of rooibos for specific health conditions include treatment of allergies and stress; HIV/AIDS; insomnia and restless leg syndrome.

Doses: Rooibos is available as a tea.

Warnings: Like black tea, it inhibits the absorption of iron from food, although rooibos has a lesser effect on iron absorption than does black tea. People with iron deficiency conditions should avoid both beverages.