

Handbook of

Kitchen Medicine

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Introduction

*The book is presented towards understanding the importance of common spices and their role in healing complex disorders. The book was primarily intended for my students of **Marmayog** (www.marmayog.in) which would enable them to practice its therapeutics without the requirement of complex herbal formulation. The first draft also generated interest within my students who studied Ayurveda (For more information please visit www.nlm.in) and also friends from non-medical background which inspired me to re-write the book in a way that would appeal to all audience with interest in spices, its healing properties and their history. The book is written with utmost responsibility and only those remedies have been put forth that I have myself used in my 14years of clinical Ayurveda practice. The book describes **16 spices** in detail from its relevant **history** to **quality check** and its use in several **medical condition**. To further make the content useful, an entire **Appendix** section is dedicated to explaining disorders which have been mentioned while describing spices for easy understanding and application. The book also further sheds light on the safe use of these spices in synergism with modern medical treatment. The best way to use the book is to try individual remedies for few days with proper understanding of the disorder as mentioned in the Appendix section. Readers must exercise caution in understanding that the book presents safe alternative remedies and in no way claims to be a complete substitute for mainstream supervised medical treatments. For further support on using these remedies, contact me at vdsumit@gmail.com*

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Cardamom





FAMILY

Zingiberaceae LindenL.

AYURVED NAME

Ela (Bhavprakash Nighantu)

ENGLISH

Cardamom

HINDI

Choti Elaichi (True cardamom)

Badi Elaichi (Black cardamom)

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Green cardamom

Elettaria cardamomum White et Mason

Elettaria cardamomum Maton, variety Minor

Black Cardamom

Amomum subulatum

HISTORY

Cardamom has a rich history that dates back as long as 4000 years. The Indian compendium on Ayurveda, **Charak Samhita**, mentions its use as a spice and medicine. Cardamom finds mention in Sanskrit texts of the 4th century BC, in a treatise on politics called Kautilya's Arthashastra and in Taittiriya Samhita where it is used as a ceremonial offering. Cardamom was used as medicine, for embalming and other ritual practices in ancient Egypt as is evident from the Ebers Papyrus dated about 1500 BC. Egyptians were known to chew the pods to clean their teeth and freshen their breath. Greek and Roman literature have records of trading in cardamom from the East. They preferred the two specific varieties of Amoman and Kardamomon, but it is not clear from the historical descriptions whether they were the true cardamom that we know today. The Greeks and Ro-

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TRADE

Indians have traded in cardamom for almost **2000 years**. True cardamom became one of the highly traded commodities with South Asia in the last 1000 years when Arab traders brought it into widespread use. The Portuguese traveller **Barbosa, 1524**, described the export of cardamom from the Malabar Coast (Kerala), a place where cardamoms grew in the wild. Around 1563, by the time of Garcia da Orta, cardamom trade was internationally established. Kerala monopolized the cardamom trade till colonial times. Most of it was bought by the king's officials; some was sold to Arab traders while the best quality exported. Just about 200 years back, most of the world's supply of cardamom was from wild plants found in the Western Ghats of Southern India. Due to the abundance of plants in this area the

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TYPES OF CARDAMOM

Cardamom is a popular spice, known as the fruit of several species of the genera **Elettaria**, **Aframomum** and **Amomum** genera in Zingiberaceae, or ginger family. According to its history and trade it is known as true cardamom, belonging to Elettaria genus and substitutes belonging to Aframomum and Amomum genera.

TRUE CARDAMOM

Botanically speaking, true cardamom is the dried, unripe fruit of the Elettaria genus. It con-

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GREEN CARDAMOM

Green cardamom pods are the most preferred form and are harder to find. They are the most expensive compared to other forms because of their superior ability to retain aroma and flavor longer. They are picked while still unripe and sun-dried or dried in installations (mechanical) to preserve their bright green color(greens).

YELLOW CARDAMOM

Cardamom fruit capsules attain a yellow hue when they are mature completely. At this stage, they are harvested and dried in the sun (yellows). They have a tendency to burst open readily, entailing a loss of essential oils.

CARDAMOM DECORT

The outer pod or the fruit is removed to procure the seed which is sold commercially. This form is known as **Cardamom-decort** or in Indian spice market as **Velachi/Elaichi dana** (dana means seed). These seeds are crushed or ground prior to use to provide plenty of flavor and are more economical than the green variety.

WHITE CARDAMOM

Commonly available in the United States and Europe, cardamom is bleached to achieve this color, or rather the lack of it. White cardamom has been used in baking and making desserts because its color helps keep light-colored batters, sauces, and confections speck-free. The bleaching process also destroys much of the cardamom's flavor that has led to the white cardamom's decline in popularity.

BLACK CARDAMOM (Substitute)

This generally consists of two main genera: **Aframomum** (ex. *Aframomum corrorima*) and **Amomum sp** (ex. *Amomum subulatum*). The black variety is a close substitute to true cardamom due to its aromatic and physical similarities. The *Amomum* species is specifically known in India as **Badi Elaichi**. From a culinary point of view, many experts do not consider it a good substitute although its flavor is much sweeter than the true form. *Aframomum* has distinct use as a spice mostly in the South of Africa.

Elettaria is used both as a spice and as revered medicine in the Indian system of Ayurveda.

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CARDAMOM OIL

Cardamom oil and oleoresin are also produced commercially using crushed fruits. The oil is used mainly as an alternative to the spice, for flavoring a wide range of processed and frozen foods, condiments, gelatins and beverages. It is also used as tobacco flavoring to a minor extent, and in cosmetics, soaps, lotions and perfumes. The oleoresin is used as an oil substitute in similar products.



GREEN CARDAMOM



BLACK CARDAMOM

ADULTERATION

Adulteration in cardamom is done by removing its essential oils. The pods devoid of oil are then rubbed with talc powder to look fresh.

QUALITY CHECK

High-grade green cardamom comes from southern India, Guatemala and Tanzania. Lower grades come from other Asian countries such as Sri Lanka, Thailand or northern India. In

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STORAGE

Cardamom is generally maintenance-free and can be stored for 12 months in glass/ceramic containers away from direct sunlight. Green cardamom is considered to have the best shelf life as it is an intact fruit capsule which provides the best protection for the seeds. Unprotected seeds readily lose their volatile essential oils.

MEDICINAL USES

From a medicinal point of view we consider only 2 varieties, the **small green cardamom** and the **large black cardamom** whose properties are similar, with only minor differences. **Green Cardamom** is an excellent home remedy. To prepare cardamom as medicine, the outer green kernel must be removed and the small inner seeds be collected and stored. 1gm of cardamom with 2gm of sugar candy and honey taken on regular basis **improves eye-sight**. This medicine must be taken 2 times a day - once in the morning and at sunset. Regular use **improves vision and memory**. The simple formulation also helps in kidney and urinary disorders. It disinfects the **urinary system and cures recurrent infections**. It also has a good effect on kidneys and is a potent elixir to people whose kidneys are weakened with

regular use of pain killers. The same medicine if taken 2 hrs. after breakfast and dinner helps treat various infections of the lungs and throat. People suffering from **bronchitis** and

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pure silver. Regular use improves **sperm quality** and **quantity** and helps promote fertility. In women too, cardamom milk helps **regulate ovulation** and improves ovarian reserves. Women suffering from low reserves leading to infertility or **PCOS** can benefit immensely with the infused milk. Cardamom milk is beneficial to people suffering from **epilepsy**. The milk if taken with 2 pieces of soaked and peeled almonds (almonds must be soaked for 12 hrs. and skin peeled) before sleeping prevents recurrent seizures, helps strengthen the brain and also repairs the areas of the brain which may have been damaged during **seizures**. Chewing

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powder and alum over the ulcers till salivation takes place. Then wash the area with water. Repeat this 2-3 times a day to obtain relief. People who suffer from **liver enlargement** (swollen liver) can get relief by consuming 5 cardamom seeds with honey 2 times a day on empty stomach. Cardamom is very effective for liver ailments. The **pericarp or cardamom decort** is an excellent remedy to stop **emesis**. The pericarp is placed in a closed vessel over a flame till it reduces to ash. 1/2gm of this ash mixed with honey must be licked to obtain relief. People who suffer from motion sickness can carry this ash with them as an instant remedy.

Large cardamom seeds are used to treat **malaria**. Mix large cardamom seeds and cumin in equal proportions, and boil 3gm of this mixture in 200ml of water and reduced to 50ml on a low flame. This tea taken 2 times a day is very beneficial in treating malarial fevers. The

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ing **kidney stones**. The seeds are boiled in milk and 3 times the same amount of water till only milk remains. This is then filtered and consumed 2 times a day for optimum results. The medicine also cures disorders like **gonorrhoea**. External application of seed paste is an antidote to **scorpion stings**.

The properties exhibited by black cardamom are also seen in green cardamom but not vice versa and hence, where the uses of both coincide one must always use green cardamom for therapeutic purposes. The use of black cardamom must be restricted to its unique medicinal applications or in case of unavailability of green cardamom.