

Bitter Melon

Botanical: *Momordica charantia*

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Bitter melon is a tropical fruit-like gourd that appears more like a prickly or lumpy cucumber. It can be eaten raw or cooked or used in tea for its health benefits. It contains compounds that help treat diabetes. The juice is often called Karela juice. Bitter melon is high in nutrients.

Western



Western Name: Bitter Melon

Also Known As: Bitter Gourd, Wild Cucumber, Karela

Main Systems: Immune Sys., Digestion, Respiratory Sys.

Key Actions: Antioxidant, Antiviral, Anti-inflammatory, Anticancer, Antidiabetic, Antibacterial, Immunomodulating, Anti-obesity, Stomachic, Laxative, Emetic, Antibilious

Key Medicinal Uses: Diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer, asthma, skin infections, reduce cholesterol, upset stomach, kidney stones, liver disease, psoriasis, abscesses, wounds, cough, respiratory diseases, ulcer, gout, rheumatism, HIV, AIDS, menstrual disorders.

Eastern



Pin Yin: Ku Gua

Also Known As: Marakheenouk

Main Meridians: Heart, Lung, Spleen, Liver

Key Actions: Cleanses the Blood, Clears Liver Heat, Cools Summer Heat, Nourishes Blood, Moves Qi, Eliminates Inflammation, Tonifies the Liver

Key Medicinal Uses: Stomach disorders, constipation, ulcers, malaria, cancer, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disorders, lowers cholesterol, colic, fever, chronic cough, painful menstruation, skin conditions, acne, eczema, psoriasis, heal wounds, measles, chicken pox burning pain in the stomach.



BASIC HABITAT/BOTANY: Bitter melon is a member of the Cucurbitaceae family. It is a tropical tendril-bearing vine with simple, alternate leaves that can grow to be 4-12 cm across. They each have 3 to 7 deeply separated lobes. The Chinese variety is long, pale green, and covered with wart-like bumps. The Indian variety is narrower with pointed ends with rough jagged spikes on the rind. Native to southern China and eastern India, it is now cultivated in many parts of the world.

KEY CONSTITUENTS: Cucurbitacins, Quinine, Catechin, Gallic acid, Epicatechin, Chlorogenic acid, Lectin, Flavonoids, Phenols, Vitamin C, Vitamine A, Vitamin E, Potassium, Zinc, Folate, Iron, Fiber, Phosphorous, Magnesium, Calcium.

PARTS MOST FREQUENTLY USED: Inner Fruit of the Melon, Skin, Juice, Young Shoots, Leaves

FLAVORS/TEMPS: Bitter, Cool

CAUTION: Bitter melon is generally considered safe. It is not recommended for pregnant women as it may cause uterine contractions. Some people may experience an upset stomach and over use of the juice can cause headaches and possible fevers. Excessive use of the seeds can cause coma.

HISTORY/FOLKLORE: Bitter melon has a long history of medicinal use in Asia and Africa. In Turkey it has been used to treat stomach complaints and in India and China it is very popularly used to treat diabetes. Bitter melon can help your cells utilize glucose and move it to your liver, muscles, and fat.



FUN FACT!



93%

Bitter melon is especially rich in vitamin C, containing 93% of your recommended minimum daily allowance of the vitamin.



White and Green

There are two types of bitter melon, a white and green variety. The white variety tends to be softer and more bitter in flavor.



Twice

Bitter melon contains twice the amount of beta-carotene as broccoli, twice the amount of calcium as spinach, and twice the amount of potassium found in bananas.

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