



CILANTRO: THE 'SUPER HERB'

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For many thousands of years, people across the globe have enjoyed the fresh, citrusy flavor and bright, zesty aroma of one of the world's oldest and most beloved herbs, cilantro. Commonly known as Coriander leaves, cilantro is a favourite of many in the culinary world, boasting a rich history of food pairing that's almost as old as time itself. Often used in Mexican, Asian, and Caribbean cooking, and rich in minerals, vitamins, and antioxidants, cilantro can provide a healthful boost to many a meal.

But did you know that cilantro is well known for its medicinal properties as well? Hailing from the Apiaceae family of herbs, which includes about 3,700 plant species, cilantro is abundant in therapeutic elements that scientific studies suggest may help keep the body robustly nourished and free of toxins. Because it's loaded with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, cilantro is a top pick when it comes to perking up foods with a little extra nutrition as well as taste.



Often referred to as a "Super herb," cilantro packs a pretty big punch considering its size. Cilantro contains vitamins A and K, as well as high levels of vitamin C and the trace mineral manganese. Cilantro also contains an impressive line-up of other vitamins and trace minerals such as B vitamins, calcium, iron, zinc, phosphorus, potassium, and magnesium.

Cilantro is such a powerful antioxidant that it's often used as a natural preservative, its oil helping to inhibit oxidation and prevent spoilage in food. There are also antibacterial elements within cilantro that studies have shown can help prevent various bacterial infections.

Researchers from the University of California, Berkeley, published a paper in the Journal of Agricultural Food Chemistry back in 2004 that showed inhibition of many different varieties of bacterial infections using cilantro extracts. A major constituent of cilantro, referred to in the study as "dodecanal," was found to be twice as effective at killing Salmonella compared to common antibiotic drugs.

Cilantro for Detox: Flush Out Those Toxic Heavy Metals

It's an unfortunate fact that our world is polluted, and we inadvertently ingest all sorts of chemicals, including toxic heavy

metals like aluminium and lead. But the good news is that science has uncovered some powerful substances that may be able to help, cilantro potentially being among these. Numerous studies have shown that regular consumption of cilantro may help to cleanse the body. It does this by aiding the body in its natural elimination of heavy metals by binding to and eliminating them from both the digestive tract and any other tissues where they may have accumulated.

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There are many reasons why it's so important to keep your body free of heavy metal toxins. If you don't, they could end up negatively affecting your brain, muscle tissue, endocrine system, and even bone structure. Toxic metals that get into these areas can lead to impaired organ function, hormone imbalances, and oxidative stress, which can lead to chronic inflammation and other damage.

According to Dr. Yoshiaki Omura, MD, Director of Medical Research at the Heart Disease Foundation in New York, people who take antibiotic drugs are actually worsening their chances that heavy metals will build up inside their bodies and cause long-term harm. Research that Dr. Omura helped author revealed that cilantro can help undo this damage and help those with chronic health problems caused by antibiotics to recover.

Keep Your Tummy Happy with Cilantro

Beyond its heavy metal busting abilities, cilantro has long been used as a natural remedy for upset stomach, including bloating and gas, heartburn, and stomach cramps. Cilantro also has another leg up on many other herbs: it may aid in the body's natural production of digestive enzymes - helping to speed up the breakdown of food, as well as support its rapid and thorough assimilation into the digestive tract. When eating spicy foods (as most Indians are fond of doing), cilantro can also help "cool" them down and make them more digestible. (In this case "cooling" referring to flavor temperature, not the actual physical temperature of food.) This simple mechanism of helping to "neutralize" the impact of spices on the body while at the same time supporting and enhancing their benefits suggests that cilantro really is something of a class act when compared to its peers.

Those who suffer from chronic bloating, cramps, and generalized abdominal pain may also benefit from consuming more cilantro, as might those who've recently developed food poisoning. Many of these conditions could be a factor of not eating enough natural produce with detoxifying elements, of which cilantro ranks among the most densely packed. Even when compared to other similar herbs like dill and eucalyptus, not a one of them was found to be anywhere near as potent or effective as cilantro.

There have been various studies done on this simple domestic herb, all showing that everything from neurological inflammation and skin problems to urinary tract infections and cardiovascular disease may be improved by consuming enough cilantro. Even cancer has a link to cilantro, with research suggesting that consuming more of this powerful herb may help to ward off or protect against colon cancer.

As you can see, this versatile herb has an awe-inspiring array of potential health benefits, many of which have been lost or overlooked over the years.

Here are our top 10 uses for cilantro:

1. Add cilantro into a stir-fry, toward the end of cooking to maintain the fresh flavor and oils that can stimulate digestion and minimize gastric distress.
2. Chop and toss into some of the fresh herb into guacamole.
3. Dab it. Essential oil of cilantro can be used topically to minimize skin inflammation. To use, add a small amount (a couple of drops) to your favorite cold sesame oil or almond oil for a light, soothing massage.
4. Throw a handful into a smoothie.
5. Stew a coconut curry. There's nothing like a warming, ginger-cilantro curry to nourish and soothe.
6. Chop it like salad and eat a whole bunch! Make it tasty with chopped peanuts, mango, and crisp green lettuce to boost gastrointestinal processes.
7. Season your dishes.
8. Finish sesame noodles with fresh, chopped peanuts and cilantro.
9. Garnish all your dishes with this nutritious herb.
10. Add cilantro to a fresh-pressed juice for a cooling effect for pitta doshas. According to Ayurveda, fresh cilantro is especially good for cooling down pitta in the digestive tract as well as topically for hot, itchy skin issues.

Simple Cilantro Recipes

Cilantro Pesto

Makes: about 2 cups

Ingredients

- 1 bunch cilantro
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 1/2 ounces pine nuts
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- Almonds (Optional)



Directions

1. Put the cilantro in a food processor and pulse until chopped. Add the garlic and pine nuts and pulse to combine. Add about half the

olive oil and blend until a paste begins to form. Add remaining olive oil and Almonds (Optional).

2. Taste, season with salt and pepper, and add pine nuts, garlic, salt or pepper as needed. Toss with pasta or serve on toasted bread.

Cilantro and Ginger Hummus

Ingredients

- 1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas (you can use dry and cook your own too)
- 1/2 cup tahini
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 1/4 cup cilantro
- Juice from 1/2 a lemon
- 1/4 cup water (or reserve the chickpea cooking water if you use dry beans)
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 teaspoon sea salt



Directions

First you need to peel off the chickpea skins. In a food processor blend the chickpeas until they are a coarse grain. Now add the tahini, garlic, ginger, lemon juice, cilantro and salt. Blend for a full minute or two. Now with the processor still running drizzle in the oil and then the water. For an even smoother, thinner consistency add more water.

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