

Drumstick- The New Superfood

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SUMMARY

The concept of immunity boosting is spreading like a wildfire worldwide. As the mass devastation of COVID 19 is taking a toll on the human civilization, a healthy immune system is a major reason for the survivors. Hence, the internet search engines are filled with the questions regarding the immunity boosting foods. Drumstick is regarded one of the best foods for not only building immunity but preventing and curing nearly 300 diseases. It can also be considered as a superfood. All parts of the plant are used to cure different types of ailments. It is a commercial crop and grown by farmers to reap high benefits due its popularity in domestic and international market. It is also an eco-friendly crop which can be considered for sustainable farming.

INTRODUCTION

Amidst the Corona crisis, the UP government is preparing to launch a major plantation drive for the miracle superfood or say the new superfood “Drumstick” (also called as Sahjan, Moringa, horseradish tree, benzolive tree, etc) *Moringa oleifera* which is also a native of India. Superfoods are foods with high nutrient density (loaded with essential nutrients) to impart health benefits. The term ‘superfood’ seems to be first used in a Canadian newspaper in 1949 for muffins. But various organizations have disregarded the fact whether some of the so called superfoods provide the purported health benefits due to lack of scientific evidences and considered it as a marketing strategy for selling the products. Whereas, hailing from the texts of ancient Ayurveda, the plethora of health attributes of drumstick is time immemorial.

Moringa

It is undoubtedly a superfood with an impressive range of medicinal uses and is said to cure and prevent 300 illnesses in human beings. Different parts of this plant are used for the treatment of different ailments in the indigenous system of medicine. The **leaves** are an excellent source of protein, UFAs (alpha linoleic acid), vitamins (especially Vitamin A, B, C and D) along with folic acid, pyridoxine and nicotinic acid, minerals (calcium, iron, zinc, potassium, etc), carotenoids, fibers, etc which is quite unusual as a vegetable. As it contains lot of antioxidants and essential nutrients it is anti-carcinogenic, anti-diabetic, antiatherosclerotic, neuroprotectant, anti-inflammatory, cardio protective, hepatoprotective and protect against ulcers. The different parts of this plant are used for the cure of arthritis and joints disorders, malnutrition, blindness, diabetes, high blood pressure, anemia, urinary tract problems, kidney stones, to induce lactation in nursing women and related ailments. Leaves of moringa also treat night blindness and improve memory. It acts as a good agent to improve immunity and is effective to combat against diseases affecting the immune system like AIDS, COVID 19, etc.

Flowers of moringa are abundant in wide variety of nutrients including proteins, PUFA, K, Ca and antioxidants like alpha and gamma tocopherols. Beverage squeezed with flowers or decoctions can improve the quality and quantity of mother’s milk, hence called as mother’s best friend in Philippines. Flower powders are even more suitable for additives as it has no effect on food color and appearance. **Pods and seeds** are rich in dietary fibers, carbohydrates, proteins, etc including UFA especially oleic acid. These serve as a good food fortification in dairy and fish feeds. Seed powder mixed with daily food is found to increase the protein content in our daily dietary intake. The **roots** are anti-spasmodic. They decrease acidity in gastric ulcers. The roots are also enriched in alkaloids which makes it as a cardiac stimulant. The roots help to get rid of thyroid nodules, anabrosis, toothache, caries, rheumatism, dyspepsia, eye diseases, flatulence and gives relief in common cold. It can also destroy tumors. The **gums** produced from barks are anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and anti-inflammatory. It is used in pharmaceutical industries.

Moringa is used as a folk medicine for anaemia, asthma, arthritis, constipation, intestinal spasms and headache from ancient times. In ancient India, the leaves and fruits were used by kings for healthy skin and sharp mind. The leaves extracts used by warriors to get more energy and relieve pain caused during warfare. In a study

it was reported that 100% Pure Dried Moringa Leaf Powder contains 17 times Calcium of Milk, 15 times Potassium of Banana, 10 times Vitamin A of Carrot, 9 times Protein of Yogurt, 4 times chlorophyll of wheatgrass, 25 times Iron of Spinach, Vitamin A to Z, Omega fatty acids, oil and Zeatin.

CONCLUSION

Apart from medicinal qualities, moringa is an environment and farmer friendly tree. It is drought resistant and tolerate a wide range of soil and rainfall conditions. Despite small in size, the roots of the plant can anchor in the soil so hard that it can survive violent storms unlike many other plants. The officials of Kolkata have found that while many varieties of plants have been damaged by Amphan, moringa has been able to stand tall. It is lucrative for farmers as it grows very fast and economic benefit can be reaped within a year. It is 100 per cent commercial as every part could be used. In Kolkata, the state Panchayat and Rural Development department has taken up large scale cultivation of moringa under MGNREGA considering its economical viability, rich nutritious value and export potential particularly to the southern states and other countries particularly European. Moringa leaves solar dried powder has a very high demand in domestic and international market.

This tree is a special gift of nature bestowed to mankind. Its proper nurturing will lead to great health benefits.

“Moringa is the one plant that everyone should eat everyday.”

J. Plant

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