

## Food As Medicine

*Moringa oleifera*



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In a world full of drugs, pills, and quick fixes, it has become easy to treat many symptoms of disease. On the surface, it looks good, but in many cases, we neglect the root of the problem. Treating symptoms such as cramps, aches, and pains with anti-inflammatory, analgesic drugs make them feel better short-term but deceive us into thinking the underlying issues are resolved. Ignoring the true root of the issue is what leads to long-term, chronic disease. Healing the whole human requires whole foods and a holistic view of human health and wellness.

The healing benefits of many foods are present right upon extraction from the earth. One of the various healing plants is the highly valued moringa tree, said to carry the potential to save millions of lives. Native to India but planted

throughout the world, the moringa tree goes by many names. Of the thirteen species known, *Moringa oleifera* is the most common. Nutritional analysis suggests this nutrient-dense food contains a profile of essential nutrients and high levels of vitamin C, vitamin A, calcium, potassium, proteins, various phenolics, and a wealth of other vitamins and minerals. Different parts of the moringa tree such as the roots, leaves, stem, seed, bark, gum, flowers, fruit, and immature pods contain valuable medicinal properties employed in indigenous systems of medicine to treat various ailments.

## **Medicinal Value:**

### **Leaves:**

- Contain purgative properties
- Rubbed on temples to mend headaches
- Applied to sores to reduce swelling
- Used to treat fevers, sore throat, bronchitis, and infections
- Found to inhibit the growth of pathogenic microorganisms

### **Roots:**

- Contains anti-inflammatory, antifertility, carminative, vesicant, and rubefacient properties
- Cardiac and circulatory tonic
- Used to treat kidney, back, and articular pain, rheumatism, and constipation
- Antimicrobial

### **Stem Bark:**

- Used to heal tumors and ulcers
- Prevents tuberculous glands and enlargement of the spleen
- Relieves earaches and tooth cavity inflammation
- Contains antibacterial properties

### **Flowers:**

- Stimulant used to cure hysteria, tumors, enlargement of the spleen, inflammation, and muscle disease

- Lowers serum cholesterol, phospholipid, triglyceride, LDL, and VLDL levels
- Contains antibacterial and fungicidal properties

**Seed:**

- Made into extracts and ointments
- Effective on carcinogen metabolizing enzymes, antioxidant parameters, and skin papilloma genesis
- Contains antihypertensive and powerful water purifying properties

There are many ways to reap the benefits of moringa, but the most common methods include using it as a powder, steeping, brewing it into a tea, boiling, steaming, frying, or just eating it fresh.

- **Leaves** can be eaten fresh in salads, pasta, or rice dishes
- **Pods** can be boiled or steamed similar to green beans or asparagus
- **Seeds** can be eaten similar to peas or popped like popcorn
- **Powders** can add vibrant green color to soups, stews, and smoothies

Despite all that is already known about the benefits of moringa, future prospects are looking into its use to treat HSV-1, its niazimicin inhibitory mechanisms on tumor proliferation, synergistic and side effect neutralizing properties, coagulation mechanisms, and its use for the production of biogas, as a livestock fodder supplement, and as a crop growth enhancer. The possibilities of the moringa tree are endless and show great potential to benefit human health and have significant effects on malnutrition and disease prevention.

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