

CAYENNE



Capsicum frutescens

[KAP-sih-kum froo-TESS-enz]

(*C. annuum* var. *annuum*)

Family: Solanaceae

Names: Tabasco pepper, African pepper, Aji Dulce, Bird Pepper, Capsicum, Chabai Achong, Chile, Chillies, Filfil, Filfil Darah, Hungarian Pepper, Kirmizi Biber, La Chiao, Mexican Chili, Paprika, Peppers, Piment De Cayenne, Piment Doux, Pimiento, Red Pepper, Sakaipilo, Sili Biberi, Sweet Pepper;

Description: Cayenne pepper is a finely ground powder prepared from the seeds and pods of various types of chili. The cayenne variety is commonly called 'Bird Chili', and the botanical name variously given as *C. minimum* or *C. baccatum*. As most powders are blends, the names of the varieties used are not very important in cooking. The capsicums used are the small-fruited varieties, thinnish tapered seed pods up to 5 inches long and 1 inch in diameter. Cayenne is made from the ripened fruit, varying from red to yellow. The powder is red or red-brown in color. Some cayennes include the ground seeds and are hotter than those which exclude them. It is a

small, rather stiff plant reaching 2 ½ feet. The flowers are white drooping, ½ inch long. The leaves are narrow, bright green, ¼ inch long, with a pointed tip, 1-6 inches long.

Cultivation: Requires a very warm sunny position and a fertile well-drained soil. Tolerates a pH in the range 4.3 to 8.3. This species is a frost-tender perennial that is usually cultivated as an annual. The growing plant is a good companion for eggplant. Sow seeds in late winter to early spring in a warm greenhouse. The seed usually germinates in 3 - 4 weeks at 70-75°F. Seeds need light to germinate. Prick out the seedlings into individual pots of reasonably rich soil and grow them on fast. If trying them outdoors, then plant them out after the last expected frosts and give them the protection of a cloche or frame at least until they are established and growing away well. The fruit should be harvested when fully ripe and dried in the shade. The pods can be hung to dry by stringing a heavy thread through the base of their stems.

History: South American Indians were enjoying hot pepper meals by 5000 BC. Members of the genus *Capsicum* are native to the Western hemisphere and were misnamed "pepper" by the Spanish explorers when they first encountered the herb, thinking it was the peppercorn of India. The name is from the Greek *kapto*, "I bite," and it often called the biting plant. Cayenne pepper took its name from Cayenne in French Guiana where supplies originated. It is a close relative of the sweet red bell pepper and the chilli pepper, *Capsicum annuum*, and bought cayenne may also contain some of each type. Cayenne is less fiery than some varieties of chilli and is widely used in European, Creole, Cajun, Mexican and East Asian cuisines. It is the principal ingredient of

hot Tabasco sauce, hence one of its common names. In some places, red peppers are carried in amulets for protection. In Mexico, a branch was brushed against a sick person and then buried, to carry away the illness. There is a legend that if someone happens to die on the prairie, the vultures will not touch the body if the person had eaten a lot of cayenne. In the West Indies it was so popular that the natives had no fear of yellow fever as long as they carried the herb. It is a favorite food of the Hunza.

Chemical Composition: Cayenne has a similar chemical structure to other capsicums. It has a high vitamin C content, and also contains vitamins A, B and E. The pungency is due to the active ingredient, capsaicin, and the red pigment is capsanthin. Also present are other pigments, proteins, carbohydrates, fiber, moisture and a fixed oil.

Properties: stimulant, carminative, tonic, sialagogue, rubefacient, anti-catarhal, anti-emetic, anti-microbial, diaphoretic, digestive, antiseptic

Energetics: spicy, hot

Meridians/Organs affected: kidney, lungs, spleen, stomach, heart

Medicinal Uses: Cayenne is the preferred species of *Capsicum* for medicinal use. Those in climates that eat more hot peppers have less chronic obstructive lung disease than those on blander diets. Externally, cayenne makes an excellent liniment for poor circulation, unbroken chilblains, sprains and painful joints. Internally, small doses of cayenne stimulate the appetite and act as an internal cleanser. Cayenne brings blood and body heat to the surface, stimulating sweating and cooling the body. It regulates the blood flow, equalizing and strengthening the heart, arteries, capillaries and nerves. It is a good tonic and is specific for the circulatory and digestive system. It may be used in flatulent dyspepsia and colic. It is used for treating debility and for warding off colds.

Eating hot peppers temporarily boosts the body's metabolic rate by about 25%. Cayenne acts as an energy stimulant, slightly encouraging the adrenals to produce cortisone.

The dried fruit is a powerful local stimulant with no narcotic effect, it is most useful in atony of the intestines and stomach. It has proved efficacious in dilating blood vessels and thus relieving chronic congestion of people addicted to drink. It is sometimes used as a tonic and is said to be unequalled in warding off disease (probably due to the high vitamin C content). Used externally, it is a strong rubefacient stimulating the circulation, aiding the removal of waste products and increasing the flow of nutrients to the tissues. It is applied as a cataplasm or liniment. It has also been powdered and placed inside socks as a traditional remedy for those prone to cold feet. These pungent fruited peppers are important in the tropics as gastrointestinal detoxicants and food preservatives.

Capsaicin has been found to reduce "substance P," a chemical that carries pain messages from nerve endings to the skin to the central nervous system. Clinical trials showed that 75% of the people who applied a capsaicin cream on their shingles disease experienced substantial pain relief with only an occasional burning sensation. It is being investigated for use on other painful skin problems, such as diabetic nerve damage, psoriasis, and post surgical pain, and has been developed into Zostrix, an over-the-counter cream. A small amount of cayenne stabilizes blood pressure and reduces excessive bleeding anywhere in the country.

The leaves have been used to treat toothache.

Combinations:

Gargle in laryngitis: myrrh

Dosage: Begin with small to moderate doses, gradually increasing the amount used. If used carefully in this way, cayenne pepper can heal stomach ulcers.

Infusion: pour a cup of boiling water onto ½ - 1 tsp of cayenne and leave to infuse for 10

minutes. A Tbsp of this infusion should be mixed with hot water and drunk when needed
Tincture: take ¼-1 ml of the tincture 3 times a day or when needed

Flower Essences: For those with stagnation, an inability to move forward toward change. Cayenne flower essence provides a catalytic spark to the soul who may be stagnating in its growth cycle. Cayenne is an important general remedy for many life circumstances, as well as in many therapeutic processes. It stimulates an energetic response in the body and soul, helping to overcome apparent blocks to progress and transformation. Cayenne ignites and sparks the soul with its fiery essence. The individual becomes more awake, and more capable of initiating and sustaining spiritual and emotional development.

Ritual Uses: Planet: Mars; Element: Fire; Gender: Hot. Sign: Aries. Part Used: Fruit. Basic Power: Protection. Use in charm bags and amulets for protection. Burn mixed with other herbs to fumigate and exorcise a place. This smoke can be quite stinging to the eyes, so light it and then vacate the premises. Carry the herb to protect the mind from envious thought.

Other Uses: The growing plant repels insects.

Culinary Use: The bouquet is dusty but slightly aromatic. The flavor is hot, pungent and biting, although not as powerful as the hotter chilies. It should not be used to the same degree as paprika, which it resembles, for it is much stronger. When used as a condiment it should be sprinkled sparingly. It should be kept in a dark container as it is affected by sunlight, and bought in small quantities as it deteriorates rapidly, losing its pungency. It can be used as a spice in cooking, or as a condiment at the table, generally with seafoods, such as oysters, sardines, smoked salmon and trout, scallops, fried mussels, crab, lobster and crayfish. It may be sprinkled over soups and hors d'oeuvres. It can be eaten with eggs cooked in any way, and egg dishes such as omelettes and soufflés. It is good with meat

roasted, grilled, fried or stewed. It can be sprinkled on bacon prior to frying and used in the dusting flour for fried chicken, fish and vegetables. It adds piquancy to stews, casseroles and sauces, especially cheese, barbecue and shellfish sauces. It can be used in the making of biscuits, marinades, pickles, ketchups, chutneys and smoked foods. It is an ingredient of Worcestershire sauce.

Recipes:

Tuna Paté

7 oz can tuna fish
1 clove garlic, crushed
½ tsp cayenne
2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
2 oz cream
1 drop Tabasco sauce
freshly chopped parsley
salt and pepper to taste

Drain the tuna fish. Mash with all the other ingredients. Turn into a dish and refrigerate for at least 3 hours. (Creative Cooking with Spices)

Cayenne Jump-Start

1 cup chamomile tea
1 cup apple cider vinegar
2 tsp cayenne powder
1 tsp ginger powder
1 tsp horseradish

Add vinegar, cayenne, ginger and horseradish to freshly brewed chamomile tea. Cover. Let steep for 10 minutes. Strain. Put 1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon of the tea in tomato or vegetable juice. Take every 2-4 hours as needed for cold or flu. Take a smaller dose to get going in the morning instead of drinking coffee. This can be taken in grape juice also. (An Herbal Feast)

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