



ELITE

Personal Training and Fitness Solutions

HEALTH TOPIC OF THE WEEK

5/1 - Cinnamon

Introduction

Our February 13th Health Topic reviewed the health benefits of cinnamon. Have you read it? If not, check it out! See Health Topic of the Week 2/13 - Cinnamon and Cognitive Function. Cinnamon is an aromatic spice that comes from the inner bark of cinnamomum trees. Use of cinnamon dates back to ancient history. The spice is referenced in Egyptian embalming, Greek mythology and biblical writings. Cinnamon was a major trade item and status symbol in the Middle Ages. Cinnamon has origins in China, with cultivation spreading to other parts of the world in the 1800s.



Types of Cinnamon

The Cinnamomum genus has over 300 species. *C. zeylanicum* or *C. verum* is commonly called Ceylon cinnamon. It is considered "true" cinnamon. This species is native to Sri Lanka and Southern India. Other notable species include *C. aromaticum* (cassia), *C. burmannii* (Indonesian cinnamon), *C. loureiroi* (Saigon or Vietnamese cinnamon) and *C. tamala* (malabathrum).

In the United States, cassia cinnamon dominates the market, and "true" cinnamon is not well known. Cassia is native to China, Southeast Asia and Myanmar. It is less expensive and more widely available than true cinnamon. The bark is typically thicker and has fewer essential oils and complex aromatic characteristics. Cassia is more common in baked goods, desserts, candies and curries due to the stability of the aromatics. It is also more suitable long term on shelves as the flavor degradation isn't as noticeable.



C. loureiroi (Saigon cinnamon) is closely related to cassia but has a higher percentage of essential oils. Primarily from Vietnam, production shifted to Indonesia and Sumatra during the Vietnam War. It became available again in the U.S. in the early 21st century. China Tung Hing is a rarer variety of cassia. It has characteristic sweet and peppery aromatics.



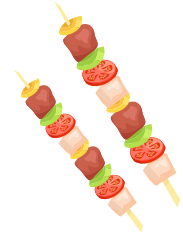
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There are no standards for cinnamon labeling. Much like coffee and other commodities, naming varies. You may see any of the various names or countries of origin mentioned above. Most of the time they are simply labelled as cinnamon.



Cinnamon as a Flavoring

Cinnamon bark is sold ground or in stick form. It is one of the few spices that can be consumed directly. This spice is used in a variety of sweet to savory dishes. You will see cinnamon in confections, hot beverages, cereals, complex spice blends and even seasonings for meats like chicken and lamb. Cinnamon is also commonly used in processed food and beverages.



Aromatics

Essential oils in cinnamon bark have various chemical compounds that affect aromatics. This explains why the smell of cinnamon can differ. It depends on the plant species and its environment.

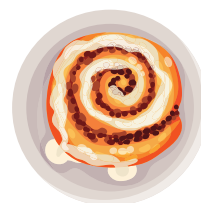
We experience aromatics through our olfactory sense in two ways. Initially, we experience aromatics through orthonasal olfaction, or smell through the nose. Once we eat and start chewing our food, aromatics are further released and experienced through retronasal olfaction. Aromatics are released in the mouth and travel up the retronasal passage in the back of the mouth into the nasal cavity to the olfactory epithelium.

A characterizing aromatic compound in cinnamon is cinnamaldehyde. In extracted form, it is an oily yellow liquid with strong warming, sweet and basic cinnamon characteristics. Think cinnamon gum or red-hot candies. Cinnamaldehyde is one of the compounds linked to increased blood flow in the body. In processed food, it is used as an inexpensive and recognizable cinnamon flavoring. Cinnamaldehyde can also be used in increasing amounts to create the extreme "hot" sensations in cinnamon candies and sweet goods.



Cinnamon Pairings

Cinnamon species can have woody, sweet, fruity, floral, citrus, peppery and other spice notes. Cinnamon flavors can be paired with other foods and flavors based on similarities in their aromatic components. For example, curries are a mix of many different spices. They work well because they all have similar woody and floral aromatic compounds. The fruity notes of cassia cinnamon allow for perfect pairing with sweet foods and flavorings in baked goods, desserts and vanilla.



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Cinnamon and Emotions

We may not be aware of it, but marketing techniques appeal to our memories and emotions. The goal is to tap into subconscious connections to increase sales. When presented with similar products and prices, emotional connections tend to be the deciding factor. Scent is a powerful tool. It allows quick connection to our emotions.

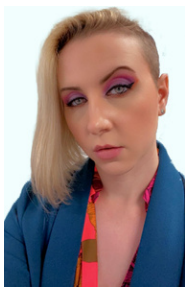
Familiar foods from our childhood and traditions evoke comfort. With the worldwide history of cinnamon, most people have positive emotional associations. Perhaps you recall holiday baked goods, a favorite family curry dish or candies you enjoyed as a kid.



Marketers are keenly aware of emotional connection. It's powerful. Studies have shown that cinnamon elicits feelings of warmth and comfort. This perception can increase the attractiveness of products containing cinnamon and thus increase sales.

If you've ever been to the mall and caught a tantalizing whiff of cinnamon and warm baked goods, you know they're hard to resist. Enjoy that baked treat occasionally. If it is a perpetual issue, recognize the association and try to avoid overeating sugary and processed foods.

Elite offers expert guidance on sustainable nutrition. This includes understanding the psychosocial aspects of eating and developing healthy eating habits. If you need advice in these areas, please contact our office.



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