

Twak: Sweet and Spicy Cinnamon

By Lauri Rhymer

Cinnamon - who can resist it? It satisfies the most basic of joys, reminding us of all things sweet, warm, and cozy. It draws the attention of the taste buds and creates a tingling sensation deep in the abdomen.

Sugar and Spice

With its sweet *rasa* and *vipak*, cinnamon satisfies the sweet taste both on the palate and after digestion. Sweet is so alluring. Sweetness makes everyone smile, if only for a moment. It provides instant energy and helps focus attention. Sweet taste indicates substances that build up the body's cells and tissues, increasing the element of *kapha* in the body.

While many sweet substances are cooling, cinnamon produces a heating *virya* within the body. This internal heating sensation accounts for the spice's drying effects, and perhaps its ability to reduce blood sugar levels.

Tradition and Modern Medicinal Uses

Cinnamon's heating *virya* and drying qualities make it a natural for reducing congestion and mucus due to coughs and colds. Sitopaladi is a famous cold remedy made of cinnamon, cardamom, long pepper, bamboo, and sugar. The bark's drying qualities are also used in *kapha* disorders of the pelvic area, such as fibroids and cysts. Cinnamon reduces *ama*, promotes *agni* and improves digestion. Its warming qualities are also used to improve circulation and to promote joint health. Another reason to smile: its sweetness and cleansing qualities make the bark a natural for adding to Ayurvedic toothpaste!

Modern research suggests that cinnamon reduces blood sugar after meals in healthy people.¹ In people with diabetes, cinnamon not only lowers blood sugar, it improves lipids, including triglyceride and cholesterol levels.² Lab studies show that compounds in cinnamon have anti-bacterial,³ antioxidant⁴ and anti-inflammatory⁵ properties, and may reduce the swelling of injured brain cells.⁶

Cinnamon in the Kitchen

There is a way to get the best out of cinnamon – the medicinal qualities and the comfort food deliciousness. Cooking with this bark offers more than just great taste; it brings trust, joy, and strength. Just try it! Here are a few ways to explore:

- Slice organic Granny Smith apples or other fruit and sprinkle with ground cinnamon.

- Steep cinnamon sticks, fennel seed, and coriander seed for an aromatic tea
- Warm milk in a pan just until the simmering point, and add a pinch of cinnamon powder and other sweet spices.
- Toast a slice of bread and sprinkle with cinnamon and natural sugar for a classic cinnamon toast
- Steam a cauliflower, and in the last 2 minutes add a few teaspoons of ground cinnamon with a pinch of salt.
- Bake a sweet potato slowly in the oven, then add a little *ghee* or oil and a dash of cinnamon to create a sweet and savory juice.

An Herb Within Reach

When it comes to buying cinnamon, not everything with the name cinnamon on the label is the true bark of *Cinnamomum zeylanicum*. Read the label carefully, and you will find that some products are actually acacia bark, a related shrub. Even so, cinnamon is accessible and available for everyone. It's within reach, right at our fingertips. If I had two herbs to travel with it would be Cinnamon and Triphala.

I suggest you make it a habit to enjoy a good quality cinnamon on a regular basis. Don't worry about anything that may create an obstacle to understanding what we put into our bodies, including how the intelligence of the herb, even in small amounts, can cause such a profoundly powerful effect on our human system. Just enjoy it. The warmth and the security in cinnamon is evidence itself.

References

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