

Health Benefits of Cilantro



Cilantro, also known as coriander, has been used for centuries as a food flavoring and traditional medicine. The fresh leaves are used as a flavoring and the seeds are considered spices. Native to southern Europe and Asia, seeds have been found in Egyptian tombs.

Studies demonstrate essential oils and flavanols with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that have also been shown to help lower high cholesterol and blood pressure. Cilantro seeds have been used in the making of perfumes, cosmetics and herbal medicines.

WHAT MAKES CILANTRO GREAT?

Nutrition

1 cup raw cilantro greens provides 16 calories, <1 gm protein, <1 gm fiber and no fat or cholesterol.

Vitamins

Cilantro leaves are rich in folate important for the formation of DNA and RNA, protein metabolism and regulating homocysteine levels. Maintaining low homocysteine levels may prevent damage to artery walls and risk of heart attack and stroke. Vitamin K is important for blood clotting and heart and bone health.

Vitamin C in cilantro is essential for wound-healing and neutralizing damaging free radicals. Other antioxidants in cilantro include beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin.

Minerals

Cilantro is a good source of potassium which helps to regulate fluid balance and blood pressure. Other minerals in cilantro include calcium, phosphorous, magnesium and sodium and small amounts of iron, copper, zinc and the antioxidant, selenium.

Fiber

Although not high in fiber, adding fresh cilantro greens contributes to the daily fiber recommendation of a minimum 25 to 38 grams of fiber per day. Some sources recommend an optimal intake of 40-60 grams of dietary fiber per day.

BUYING & USING CILANTRO

Fresh cilantro leaves are often used in Mexican foods such as salsa and guacamole. The seeds (coriander) are used in Indian curry, as well as soups and stews.

Fresh cilantro should be bright green with no bruising or browning. Remove browned leaves and stems, rinse and drain. Cut the amount needed with a sharp knife. Both the leaves and stems can be added to recipes. Because of the tender leaves, fresh cilantro leaves are added to raw foods such as salads or salsa, or as a garnish after foods have been cooked on tacos and burritos.

The bright, citrus flavor of fresh cilantro may help to reduce the use of sodium or salt.

Coriander seeds are often used in pickling. Coriander powder is one of the main ingredients used in the preparation of *garam masala*.

Some people have described the taste of cilantro as “soapy” possibly due to genetic variations. For those who have this genetic trait, try substituting fresh parsley or basil with a splash of lemon juice. Caraway, cumin, and curry powder are good substitutes for coriander seeds.

Cilantro can be grown in planter gardens outdoors in summer, or on windowsills. Plant seeds in well-drained soil in full sun, but be advised, plants will bolt if they get too warm. Avoid harvesting more than a third of the plant at one time. Planting new seeds each week will provide a full season of cilantro harvest.



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Cilantro Jalapeño Hummus

thegardengrazer.com

Ingredients:

15 oz can garbanzo beans
 1-3 Tbsp aquafaba*
 ¼ cup fresh cilantro (more to taste)
 1-2 jalapenos, (stems & seeds removed)
 ¼ cup fresh lime juice (about 2 limes)
 2 Tbsp tahini (ground sesame seeds)
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 ½ tsp ground cumin
 ¼ tsp fine grain salt to taste

* **Aquafaba** is the thick liquid found in canned beans. It is rich in fiber which has leached from the bean during processing. Aquafaba helps to thicken the hummus.

Directions:

1. Open the can of garbanzo beans and reserve at least 3 Tbsp aquafaba. This is the thick liquid in the can which is high in fiber and nutrients. Then rinse and drain beans to remove sodium. If beans are sodium-free, this step is not necessary.
2. Add all ingredients to a high-speed blender or food processor. Blend until creamy, about 20-30 seconds, stopping to scrape down the sides as needed.
3. Taste and adjust flavors if desired. Refrigerate before serving.

Jalapenos can vary in spiciness so start small and increase the amount as desired. Adding seeds back in will add spiciness.

Other canned beans can be substituted for garbanzo beans such as black beans, pinto beans, white beans or a mixture of each.

Cilantro Lime Rice

icanyoucanvegan.com

Ingredients:

1 cup basmati rice
 1½ tsp fresh lime zest
 ½ tsp sea salt
 2 tbsp vegan butter
 1½ cups water
 ½ Tbsp fresh lime juice
 ½-1 cup fresh cilantro, roughly chopped

Directions:

1. In a medium-sized non-stick pot, add first 6 ingredients to a pot (**except** cilantro).
2. Bring to a boil and cover with a lid. Once boiling, reduce heat to a simmer (low setting) and stir. Allow to cook covered for 10-15 minutes.
3. When rice is cooked, stir in fresh cilantro and garnish with an extra squeeze of lime (if desired). Serve.

Cilantro Dressing

frommybowl.com

Ingredients:

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| ¼ cup cashews, soaked overnight* | Juice of 1 lime |
| ¼ bunch cilantro, roughly chopped (stems and leaves) | 1 tbsp rice vinegar (or the juice of another ½ lime) |
| 1 large jalapeño pepper | ½ tsp salt |
| | ½ cup water |

Directions:

1. Wash veggies. Trim off ends of the jalapeño pepper, slice through center and remove seeds. Chop into 1" pieces.
2. Add all ingredients to blender and process until smooth and creamy, about 45-60 seconds.
3. Serve room temp or refrigerate. Store leftovers in an airtight container in fridge for up to 7 days.
4. Serve with beans, tacos, rice bowls, fajitas, burritos, enchiladas, salads or veggies.

If you have a nut allergy, vegan mayo or silken tofu can be substituted for cashews. If using mayo, reduce salt to ¼ tsp.

* If you forget to soak cashews ahead of time, either pour hot water over them and let sit for 30 minutes, or microwave them in water for 3 minutes and let sit until soft.

REFERENCES

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