

Argan Oil *Argania Spinosa*

Parts Used: Fruit kernels

ALTERNATE NAMES:

Moroccan olive oil and argane oil

INCI NAME:

Argania Spinosa Kernel Oil

Derived from the crushed fruit and nuts of the Argan tree that is indigenous to Morocco, argan oil has been valued by the Berbers since ancient times for its nutritive, cosmetic and medicinal properties.

Botany:

The argan tree is a pre-historic species indigenous to southern Morocco. As the only major plant in this semi-desert area, the argan tree has a unique, deep and wide reaching root system critical for maintaining groundwater levels, preventing erosion and desertification.

It is extremely well-adapted to drought and other environmentally difficult conditions found in the growing region between Essaouira and Agadir in the Sous valley. Acting as a natural barrier against the neighboring Sahara desert, the argan forest, listed by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) as a World Heritage region, contains more than 20 million trees spreading over approximately 800,000 hectares.

History:

Argan oil was sold in Moroccan markets before the Phoenicians arrived and referenced during the Middle Ages by Ibn-el-Beithar in his "Traité des simples," in 1219 and by Moorish diplomat and author, Leo Africanus, in 1510.

Recently, the Moroccan government has encouraged Berber women to form cooperatives whose goal is to commercially produce argan oil with eco-friendly techniques in a sustainable business model. Monies earned by the cooperatives, exclusively run by Berber women, go back into the community to provide education for tribal women and children, contribute to reforestation and benefit the rural Moroccan socioeconomic structure as a whole. The result is an international endeavor to protect and save this very important natural resource.

Characteristics:

Argan oil, a nutrient-rich, non-fragrant plant oil, is expressed from green kernels of the thorny argan tree, found mostly in Morocco and sparsely in Algeria and Israel. The tree produces a fruit with a green, fleshy exterior like an olive, although larger and more round. Inside, there is a nut with an extremely hard shell, which in turn contains one to three almond-shaped kernels that are pressed to extract the precious oil - the rarest vegetable oil due to the scarcity of these trees in the world. Every part of the tree is useable - the wood for fuel, the leaves and fruit are forage for goats and the oil, extracted from the fruit kernels, has been valued by the Berbers since ancient times for its nutritive, cosmetic and medicinal properties.

The kernel will keep for 20 years unopened; dry-pressed oil will keep 12–18 months unopened. Argan oil is slightly darker than olive oil, with a reddish tinge and a light, nutty aroma. Although milder in flavor than sesame or walnut oil, it has a characteristic nutty taste.

Constituents:

Argan oil contains a high level of oleic and linoleic acid and is rich in phenols. It is exceptionally rich in natural tocopherols, (vitamin E), phenolic acid, carotenes, squalene, essential fatty acids, and 80% unsaturated fatty acids.

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Cosmetic Grade

Argan oil, called Moroccan “liquid gold”, is an incredibly rich source of Vitamin E and essential fatty acids. It is one of the oldest known beauty preparations used by ancient Berbers of Morocco for its natural hydrating and revitalizing properties for skin, hair and nails.

The unroasted oil is recognized as a fundamental element in cosmetic care due to natural antioxidant benefits and anti-inflammatory properties.

Argan oil is increasingly popular worldwide as the key ingredient in several beauty products promoting its use to reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, strengthen elasticity, protect against stretch marks, and improve the skin's overall health and vitality.

Highly moisturizing and nourishing, in its natural state argan oil absorbs quickly.

Argan oil is reportedly ideal for makeup and skin care products, body lotion, body wash, shampoo, conditioner, and nail treatments.



Culinary Grade

Argan oil enhances the taste and aroma of many dishes with its characteristic nutty flavor. Chefs worldwide consider argan oil a rare delicacy with an exotic flavor that makes recipes exciting and interesting.

The roasted fruit of the tree yields a valuable fatty oil that is traditionally used for cooking. European and Moroccan science confirms that the oil from the kernels has desirable nutritional properties.

According to documented health studies, argan oil can be used as a dietary supplement and is claimed to have various medicinal properties, such as lowering cholesterol levels, stimulating circulation and strengthening the body's natural defenses.

In traditional Moroccan cuisine, argan oil from roasted fruit kernels is used for dipping bread, drizzling on couscous, in salads or soups and similar uses.

It is used primarily as a seasoning rather than for cooking since it is not heat stable.



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