

Detox your Body with Wasabi Rhizome

The Wasabi rhizome, the underground fleshy stem of the wasabia japonica plant, is prized not only for its fiery flavour but also its effect in detoxifying the liver. However, make sure that you are getting the real McCoy since many restaurants in the USA do not use the genuine paste.

The wasabi is a plant of the cruciferous family, the same family as cabbage, broccoli, turnip, radish, horseradish and mustard, and is native to Japan and Korea and now grown on the Pacific coast of Canada. It grows best in temperate to cold climates, especially in mountainous areas where there are plenty of cold streams.

Anybody who regularly enjoys sashimi and sushi should be familiar with the wasabi rhizome, that green lump of paste lying on the side of the plate. It is hot and fiery, although not in the same way as the chilli pepper that is fiery on the tongue and in the mouth. This tends to affect the sinuses more, and leaves a sweetish taste once the initial heat has dissipated. However, it is not always what it should be.

The last comment there refers to the practise, especially in the USA, of using dyed common horseradish as wasabi paste, so be careful of that since the two are not equivalent in the health benefits they impart to your body. Although of the same family as the horseradish, and sometimes termed the Japanese horseradish, ordinary horseradish does not have the same health benefits as genuine wasabi, and does not contain the same active ingredients so do not confuse the two.

Real wasabi is normally used grated, and there are specific techniques that should be used to grate wasabi rhizomes to bring out the fullness of the flavour. True grated wasabi should be of a natural pale greenish color rather than the brighter green normally associated with sushi restaurant wasabi.

Traditionally, wasabi rhizome is used as a condiment with sushi, although their leaves can also be used in salad dressings and or as a delicacy pickled in soy sauce or sake brine. The genuine vegetable is difficult to cultivate which explains why ordinary horseradish is dyed and used in its stead, and the vast majority of non-Japanese do not know the difference because it is likely to be all they have consumed under the name of wasabi. The health benefits of the genuine article, however, are considerable greater.

So that's what it is, but what does it do? What are the health benefits of wasabi rhizomes and why are they considered to be so good for your liver? Wasabi rhizomes contain substances that are very effective in detoxifying you liver, and that are also very strong antioxidants that provide you with good overall health benefits in their capacity to destroy the free radicals created by the pollution of modern living.

The active antioxidants in the rhizome are precursors of isothiocyanates, which are known as phytochemicals. These are chemicals that can protect or prevent diseases through its antioxidant properties. The term 'precursor' means that the isothiocyanates are synthesized by your body from the nutrients contained in the wasabi rhizome. Other examples of phytochemicals that you may have heard of are carotenoids, flavonoids and polyphenols that also possess antioxidant properties.

Other antioxidants are vitamins A and E, which is why these are used in anti-wrinkle creams, since their anti-oxidant effect helps to prevent the free radicals destroying the skin cells in the dermis and epidermis that leads to the wrinkles associated with aging. Wasabi is equally effective as an antioxidant, although it has other properties that are important to your liver.

The liver is your body's chemical plant. That is where most of the chemical reactions take place that are essential for life. If your liver is unhealthy you can develop diseases such as hepatitis and cirrhosis, and a healthy liver is essential for life let alone a healthy life. Wasabi helps to detoxify and clean out your liver.

Apart from creating the wide variety of enzymes needed to process your food, and controlling the vast majority of the biochemistry of your body, your liver is also your detoxification plant that converts toxins into biodegradable molecules that your waste disposal system can evacuate without harm. This occurs in two phases.

Phase I converts the toxin to a form that your body can further process (the bioactive form), and Phase II breaks it down into a form that your kidneys can handle and eject it in your urine. Isothiocyanates are involved in the production of the enzymes that enable the chemical reactions of Phase II to proceed. They allow your body to cleanse itself of toxins, and without this process you would be less healthy and more prone to cancers and other undesirable conditions and diseases in your body.

It is becoming more important in this modern age with its increasing natural and synthetic pollution that your liver is working at peak efficiency. Your

liver is equally as important to you as your heart and brain, and without it you cannot survive. Wasabi also contains glucosinolates that help the isothiocyanates to induce the production of Phase II enzymes, and it is general believed that eating this tuber cab help protect you against stomach, colon and breast cancers as well as help your cardiovascular system and blood clotting.

An interesting fact is how wasabi rhizome came to be traditionally served with raw fish. The isothiocyanates precursors, and the glucosinolates that wasabi also contains, apparently help to destroy the bacteria associated with raw fish, and help prevent disease and illness. It was likely found healthier to include a dollop of this green paste with your sushi than not, and so the use of common horseradish might be somewhat questionable if it has less of an effect.

Make sure, therefore, that your have the real thing, and apart from any specific health considerations associated with eating raw fish, you are best advised to take it as a supplement to help Detox your liver rather than visit sushi bars for your consumption. It will also help your wallet!

About the Author

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