



Superfoods Fact Sheet

Maca

(*Lepidium meyenii/peruvianum*)



Part Used: Root

Maca is grown in the high Andes, is a native of Peru and has been cultivated for thousands of years for its life-enhancing properties that are only just beginning to be explored in the West.

Similar to the radish or turnip family it is a biennial root vegetable that grows over 8,000 feet altitude and is also called Peruvian ginseng, as it shares many of ginsengs benefits. It is dried at low temperatures and ground.

History and Traditional Uses

According to archeological evidence maca has been cultivated for approximately 2,600 years. The immense maca-growing fields became part of the Incan empire and legend has it that at the height of the Incan empire Incan warriors would consume maca before entering into battle to gain both stamina and strength and enable them to fight fiercely. After the battle was another matter however, as it heightens the sexual desire of men and was prohibited in order to protect women.

Today descendants of the Incas, the Quechua people, still grow maca from anything between 9,000 to 14,000 feet above sea level. The area where it grows is barren and inhospitable, exposed to intense weather and big temperature swings.

It has been used medicinally for centuries to enhance fertility in both humans and animals and was valued to such an extent that it was used as currency at one point, and sent to the Spanish government as tribute in post-conquest times.

Even today it is still a vital and valuable commodity for the indigenous peoples of the Andes, and as news of its remarkable properties as a stamina and strength enhancer, as well as its effects on libido spread the demand across the world has grown hugely.

Health Benefits

Maca is an adaptogenic root which balances the hormonal, nervous and cardiovascular systems in addition to its powerful strength and stamina enhancing properties and offers an energy boost without the crash.

As an adaptogen maca increases:

	Energy	Endurance
	Oxygen in the blood	Physical strength
	Libido	Neurotransmitter production
Supports:	Endocrine system inc. pituitary	Adrenals
	Thyroid	Healthy hormone production
Improves:	Mood	

It has stress-busting properties due to its beneficial phytosterols and alkamides, compounds which are thought to underpin and strengthen the endocrine system. They help the body adapt and respond to stress without overstimulating or inhibiting normal functions, bringing the body back into a balanced state.

Very little research has yet been conducted on maca, but animals studies suggest its reputation as an aphrodisiac and libido and fertility enhancer are true, and it also nourished the prostate gland in men.

A study published in Menopause in 2008 found that postmenopausal women also benefited from maca powder, although the mechanism for all these effects is not understood.

It is also good for stimulating and nourishing the hypothalamus and pituitary, the 'master' glands of the body.

Amongst the many conditions that maca has been known to help are:

Anaemia	Fatigue and chronic fatigue
Depression	Infertility and sterility
Malnutrition	Lack of libido
Menopausal symptoms	Menstrual disorders
Poor memory	Stress and tension
Tuberculosis	Stomach cancer
Thyroid support	

Some of the many benefits of Maca include:

- overall stress protection;
- aids in sleep, cures insomnia;
- quicker injury recovery;
- increases metabolism, may help with weight loss / obesity;
- improve sex drive & cures erectile dysfunction;
- reduces the risk of developing diabetes;
- may ease symptoms of arthritis & joint pain;
- improve workout performance, endurance, stamina, strength & muscle gain;
- raises testosterone in men & eliminates hormonal problems in women;



- reduction of allergies to dogs, cats, seasonal pollens, etc;
- may slow the progression of Alzheimer's when combined with Rhodiola Rosea;
- reduces the regularity & severity of asthma attacks;
- increases brain function leading to better mental clarity & perception;
- cellulite reduction, eases symptoms of Crohn's & IBS , eliminates constipation;
- may cure chronic fatigue, relieves depression, aids in detoxification;
- lowers high blood pressure, lowers cholesterol, increases energy levels;
- can benefit macular degeneration & night vision loss;
- psoriasis relief, may reduce scars, relieves thyroid & Hashimoto's disease;

Maca taken prior to exercise from a carbohydrate angle will improve workout performance by supplying muscles with much needed glycogen – an effect utilized by Incan warriors!

It will also provide mental clarity and/or focus and a positive mental outlook.

There are reports that maca increases metabolism to help lose weight and has a balancing effect on the the thyroid as well as increasing the body's glucose tolerance.

Nutritional Benefits

Dried maca is made up of approximately

- 59% carbohydrates
- 8.5% fibre
- 10% protein - 20 aminos including 7 essential aminos
- 2.2% fatty acids



It has a higher lipid (fat) content than other root vegetables and includes linolnic, palmitic and oleic acid.

It is a rich source of plant sterols including sitosterol campesterol, ergosterol, brassicasterol and ergostadienol.

Rich in minerals such as calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, sulphur, sodium, iron and trace minerals including zinc, iodine, copper, selenium, bismuth, manganese, tin and silicon, it also contains Vitamins B1, B2, C and E.

It is considered a good re-mineraliser as magnesium and calcium within maca is very bioavailable

How To Use

Maca is considered a warming food and is easy to stir a tsp into a bowl of vegetable soup or add a teaspoon to any herbal tea or smoothie mix or nut milk. It combines particularly well with vanilla, coconut and cacao, having a unique malted flavour.

It is usually available as a raw, gelatinized powder, making it easy to use and store.

For the best benefits for health issues use consistently for 120 days and then take 30 days off, before commencing the regime again. 15 gm a day is the best dosage.

Be warned, consuming large amounts of Maca can cause wind!

Maca comes in three colours – red, black and yellow maca. There is no difference between them. It is also available in many health foods stores in chocolate or energy bars, combining the benefits of maca with those of cacao!

