The Many Benefits of Garlic

Vampires abhor it; Italians love it. We’re talking about garlic. It’s a tiny bulb that has taken over the flavor of many cuisines. Let’s explore the many benefits of garlic.
What Is It?

Garlic, a member of the Allium family, is a close relative of the onion and shallot. It’s a bulb that grows underground. It produces a stalk atop which a flower blooms. The bulb is usually around one to two inches in diameter and produces a number of lobes or cloves. Garlic cloves can be consumed fresh or dry or made into a powder.

It’s used as a seasoning for foods in a variety of cultures and offers many significant health benefits. It also produces some undesirable effects, namely bad breath. Yet when you discover just how fantastic garlic is for a variety of health issues and maladies, the potential for bad breath may be forgiven.

History

Garlic is considered to be one of the oldest cultivated plants. In fact, experts tell us that the ancient Egyptians cultivated garlic more than 5000 years ago. They placed it in the tombs of the Pharaohs and it is said that they gave it to their slaves to help them stay strong and productive. Greek and Roman athletes ate garlic before competing.

Garlic eventually spread across Europe and made its way across the sea to China and India where it was adopted for medicinal and culinary purposes. Today China, India, and South Korea are top producers of garlic.

Health Benefits

The health benefits of garlic are vast and are still being discovered by the scientific and medical communities. We do know that garlic:

- Lowers blood pressure
- Works as an anti-inflammatory in the body and may help with heart disease
- Is an anti-viral, anti-bacterial, and anti-fungal – it may even be effective at fighting the common cold.
- Has been shown to reduce the risk of certain types of cancer.
- May regulate blood sugar levels and boost metabolism
- And many studies have shown that it reduces cholesterol.

Fun Facts

Garlic does not fend off vampires. Nor does it protect you from werewolves or demons. It may however, help you out of a bad date if your partner dislikes the smell of garlic on your breath. Some cultures believe that it stimulates blood flow and is an aphrodisiac. If
you’re afraid of garlic, then the psychological term for your fear is alliumphobia. And if you adore garlic, then you might enjoy celebrating National Garlic Day on April 19th.

**How To Eat**

Garlic is often added to a dish in its raw or powdered form. When it’s raw you’ll likely chop or crush it and then sauté it in oil for a few minutes to release the flavor. Then your other spices and seasonings are added. For example, if you’re making spaghetti sauce or stir fry you’d likely chop the garlic and add it to olive or peanut oil. Once the garlic has softened and begun to brown you’d add your other vegetables. Powdered, you can make salad dressings, dips, and soups. There are literally thousands of recipes to try if you want to add more garlic to your diet.