

# Did You Know?



## Celery Seed *Apium graveolens*

- *Apium graveolens*, has three distinct cultivated varieties that are grown for different culinary and medicinal purposes. Celery seed however, comes from the original species known as smallage or wild celery. The rest of the plant is bitter and not edible.
- Cultivated varieties of celery are:
  - *Apium graveolens* var. dulce is the familiar plant with the long stems (petioles) that are commonly eaten raw or are cooked in soups and stews.
  - *Apium graveolens* var. rapaceum is also known as celeriac or root celery. This plant has an enlarged root tissue which is cooked in soups and stews or grated raw on salads.
  - *Apium graveolens* var. secalinum, is called smallage, cutting or leaf celery. It has slender stems (petioles) which are often hollow. The leaves are primarily used for a garnish or medicinal purposes.
- Woven garlands of wild celery have been found in tombs in ancient Egypt, indicating one type of historical use. Around 573 BCE, Greek winners of the Nemean Games wore wreaths of smallage leaves.
- Celery seed was first used as a medicinal plant and is believed to be the plant mentioned as salinon in Homer's 'Odyssey' in 850 BCE. This was pungent and bitter and used only for medicine.
- Over thousands of years, celery seed has been used to treat a wide variety of conditions ranging from skin disorders, colds, bronchitis, and the flu. It has also been used to treat anxiety, arthritis, gout and high blood pressure.
- The Greeks used celery seed to create a particular wine and Romans used celery seed for flavoring food.
- In 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy, celery emerged as a true vegetable and the above mentioned types were described in horticultural literature.
- The flavor of celery seed is much like celery. In addition, it has a savory and earthy quality. When ground, it can also be bitter.
- Often used whole, celery seed is commonly used in brine and pickling spice blends, herbal seasoning blends, marinades, dry rubs, and dressings for coleslaw and potato salad.
- Ground or powdered celery seed is used in smooth sauces like ketchup and barbecue sauce.
- Though small, celery seeds are nutrient dense, being rich in calcium, manganese and iron. The minerals in celery seed are said to support bone health and blood sugar regulation.

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