

Did You Know?



Tarragon, *Artemisia dracunculus*

- While the exact origin of the name remains a mystery, *dracunculus* means little dragon. One theory is that it was used to fight off dragons in the Middle Ages. Another theory suggests that the name refers to the serpentine shape of the roots.
- French tarragon, designated by the cultivar 'Sativa,' has a subtle anise or basil-like flavor and is typically the variety used in cooking.
- French tarragon is well known for adding flavor to eggs, poultry and fish. The versatile tarragon flavor also pairs well with fruit such as strawberries, mustards in salad dressings or on chicken, potato and chicken salads, and is a primary ingredient in Béarnaise sauce.
- Popular in the middle east and eastern Europe, tarragon is used in many traditional dishes. It is used as a side dish in Iran (sabzi khordan or fresh herbs). in stews and in Persian-style pickles.
- A green carbonated soft drink called tarhun, found in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, is flavored with tarragon.
- Potica, is a traditional nut roll sweet cake flavored with tarragon from Slovenia.
- Since tarragon is a delicately flavored herb, fresh tarragon is often preferred over the less flavorful dried tarragon. In fact, some chefs feel the fine and subtle characteristics of fresh tarragon is lost in the drying process and will not use it dried.
- French tarragon does not produce seed and is propagated by cuttings or divisions. It is best grown in full sun and well-drained soil kept on the dry side. Cut back several times during the growing season to maintain healthy growth for the season.
- Russian tarragon produces seed and has a bland, less desirable flavor so is not used for culinary purposes.
- Mexican tarragon, *Tagetes lucida*, is in the marigold family. It is often substituted for French tarragon and is said to have a stronger flavor with cinnamon overtones. It is sometimes grown instead when growing conditions for French tarragon are unfavorable.
- Perennial French tarragon thrives in a sunny location with rich, well-drained soil and good air circulation in areas with high humidity.
- Tarragon put in shoes before a long walk was thought to give the walker strength for the journey.
- American cookbook author, teacher, and syndicated columnist, James Andrew Beard was quoted as saying, "I believe that if ever I had to practice cannibalism, I might manage if there were enough tarragon around."
- "A Béarnaise sauce is simply an egg yolk, a shallot, a little tarragon vinegar, and butter, but it takes years of practice for the result to be perfect" according to French chef and restaurateur Fernand Point.

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