

Did You Know?



Caraway *Carum carvi*

Caraway is a biennial and is related to dill, cumin, fennel and anise. It thrives in a sunny, dry location.

The fragrant, white, umbel flowers of caraway mature into crescent shaped fruit (seeds) which have five pale ridges. The “seeds” are actually half of the caraway fruit, which splits down the middle and strongly resembles cumin seeds. The seeds have a distinctive fragrance when crushed.

The common name seems to come from the Arabic name for the seed karawya. In Persia, it is known as meridian fennel and Persian cumin.

Caraway has been used for 5000 years, dating back to Stone-Age lake dwellers in Switzerland. It is perhaps the oldest spice native to Europe. The Netherlands, Poland, Germany, Finland, and Canada produce caraway commercially.

The flavor of caraway has been described as delicate anise, nutty, peppery, and warm. Historically, it has been used in both savory and sweet dishes.

Caraway flavors sausage, sauerkraut, soups and stews, cheeses, breads and cakes. Seeds coated with sugar are used for comfits and to decorate cakes and cookies. Caraway seeds are what gives rye bread its distinctive flavor.

It has long been a tradition to serve a small bowl of caraway seeds with baked apples. In Scotland, a piece of buttered bread dipped into caraway seeds is called salt water jelly.

Kummel is a caraway-flavored liqueur from Germany and Russia. Aquavit is a Scandinavian spirit flavored with a variety of herbs, including a significant amount of caraway. Brennivin is produced in Iceland.

Caraway has been used historically to aid digestive disorders such as flatulence and indigestion. The seeds are known to have antioxidants and flavonoids.

The leaves can be used like parsley and roots, also edible, can be eaten like parsnips.

Ripe seeds should be scalded with boiling water to destroy hidden insects, followed by drying in the sun for 2-3 days.

Love potions included caraway as the ingredient that kept couples faithful.

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