

# All About TARRAGON

Tarragon is a species of perennial herb in the sunflower family. It is widespread in the wild across much of Europe, Asia, and North America. There are many variations of the plant. One subspecies, French tarragon (*Artemisia dracunculus* var. *sativa*) is the most commonly used for culinary use because their leaves are most aromatic. Tarragon has an aroma that is similar to anise and vanilla. French tarragon leaves produces the same mouth-numbing sensation as with a Sichuan peppercorn. When purchasing tarragon, look for fresh leaves with no discoloration or wilting.

Tarragon is a spring and summer herb. Tarragon grows around three feet in height with many slender branches. The leaves are long, green and glossy. While other subspecies of tarragon can produce flowers, French tarragon, however, seldom produces any flowers or seeds.

## Health Benefits

For the ancient Romans and Greeks, tarragon was used more for its pain killing abilities than for its culinary appeal. Today, it is also used as an appetite stimulant and digestive tonic. Tea made of tarragon is used in treatment of insomnia and hyperactivity. While a person will likely never eat enough tarragon in one sitting to have much of a nutritional impact, tarragon leaves are rich in iodine, mineral salts and vitamins A and C.

## Culinary Uses

- Tarragon is the main flavoring component of Béarnaise sauce.
- Fresh sprigs of tarragon are steeped in vinegar to produce tarragon vinegar.
- Tarragon is used to flavor a carbonated soft drink, Tarkhuna. This drink is popular in countries such as, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and the Ukraine.
- Tarragon is one of the main ingredients in Chakapuli, a popular Georgian stew.



- In Slovenia, tarragon is used in a variation of the traditional sweet nut roll, called potica.
- In Persian cuisine, tarragon is part of the sabzi knordan, a platter of fresh vegetables and herbs that is served alongside meals.

## Fun Facts

The name tarragon in Arabic is “turkhum” which means dragon. The name is likely to have been attained from its serpentine shaped roots or because it was used to treat bites and stings of venomous animals.

Tarragon is one of the four fine herbs of French cooking along with chives, chervil, parsley and thyme.

There is a legend which states that if a flax seed is placed into a radish root or sea onion and then planted to the ground, tarragon will grow from it.