Cashew nut oil

Anacardiacea

The tree

Native to northeastern Brazil, the cashew tree was discovered by the Portuguese in the 16th century. The Tupi Indians called it "Acaju". The Portuguese later introduced it into their African and Asian colonies, starting with Mozambique and the Indian state of Kerala. Today it is still cultivated in Brazil, western Africa and India, mainly for its nuts, but also for its cashew apples. India is one of the world's largest cashew nut producers.

The cashew tree is cultivated primarily for its fruit, which is composed of a perishable "false fruit" or "cashew apple" and a hard-shelled nut. The cashew kernel is extracted from the nut.

It is the cashew nut that begins growing first. Once it has reached full size, the peduncle expands and develops quickly to become a "cashew apple", also called "false fruit". The nut then loses its moisture, becoming smaller and harder. At this stage, it accounts for only 10% of the weight of the whole fruit.

The cashew apple is very juicy, sweet, delicately scented and acidic. It is an excellent source of Vitamin C, containing 9 times more than an orange.

Oil Extraction

Cashew nut kernels are pressed to extract an edible vegetable oil of excellent quality. The entire cashew nut oil production process is done by hand, out of necessity - since the kernel cannot be extracted using traditional crushing techniques - but also by choice.

Respect for the ecosystem and participation in the development of the local economy are high on the list of AFRICAJOU's priorities.

Adopting a fair trade approach, the company thus provides work for local producers in Senegal and Africa.

The cashew nuts are harvested when the cashew apples fall to the ground. They are then set to dry for a few days.

The shelling process is long and many precautions must be taken. Prior to shelling, the nuts are sorted according to their size before being cooked in oil (the traditional manner) or preferably steam cooked in a boiler. Shelling is done by hand using a strong, short stick. The use of shelling tables has improved productivity. The kernels are then either sun-dried or placed in a special tray drying oven. Finally, the last step is to remove the skin from the nuts. This delicate operation is also done by hand, using small knives or by rubbing the nuts between the fingers.

Transforming the nuts into oil

AFRICAJOU is committed to producing high quality oil with all its nutrients intact. For this reason, it produces first cold

pressed virgin oil without additives.

Virgin cashew nut oil comes from a single cold pressing. Kernels are pressed using either a hydraulic press or a mechanical press with a slowly rotating screw.

Composition

The cashew kernel is very rich in:

- Essential fatty acids - especially oleic and linoleic acids - 77%
- Protein - 21 %
- Vitamins A, D, K, PP, E
- Mineral salts: calcium, phosphorus, iron

Cashew nut oil contains mainly unsaturated fatty acids, but also sterols and unsaponifiable matter (0.9 to1.8%). The oil is dark yellow in color.

It is a precious oil, rich in Vitamin E (21.5mg/100g).

Fatty acids:

Palmitic acid	C16:0		9.0 %
Palmitoleic acid	C16:1		0.3 %
Margaric acid	C17:0		0.1 %
Stearic acid	C18:0		9.0 %
Oleic acid	C18:1		57.01%
Linoleic acid	C18:2	w6	22.5%
Alpha-linolenic acid	C18:3	w3	1.3%
Arachidonic acid	C20:0		0.6%
Gadoleic acid	C20:1		0.1%

Sterols

Beta-sitosterol	82.5%

Traditional qualities and uses

The cashew has medicinal properties and countless uses in traditional pharmacopoeia. Traditional Indian medicine, known as Ayurvedic medicine, for instance, uses it for fighting kidney problems, arthritis, rheumatism, and eczema, as well as for lowering bad cholesterol levels and treating eye problems.

The oil is traditionally used for culinary purposes or applied locally on psoriasis and eczema or to promote the healing of

lesions.

Culinary Use

An excellent cooking oil

Nutritionally speaking, high oleic acid content (57%) makes cashew oil a premium source of energy while also stimulating the immune system.

Cashews are also rich in protein (21%) and contain 7 of the essential amino acids that the body can neither produce nor synthesize itself.

Finally, the presence of trace elements (mainly potassium, phosphorus and magnesium) and B vitamins contributes to maintaining a healthy nervous and muscular system.

The oilcake contains 36% protein and 41% carbohydrates and is thus an excellent source of nourishment.

Cosmetic uses

High unsaturated fatty acid and vitamin E content make cashew nut oil a valued ingredient in cosmetics.

Unsaturated fatty acids restore moisture and suppleness to damaged skin.

Vitamin E, a natural antioxidant, plays a role in the prevention of skin aging.

- Essential fatty acids, especially linoleic acid, account for roughly 25% of the cashew nut's composition. These poly-unsaturated acids contribute actively to the development of the skin's outer layers. They thus help promote the elasticity of the skin, as well as having an "anti-aging" effect on dry, damaged skin, in particular by ensuring a partial improvement of its structure.

- Cashew oil is also rich in vitamin E, which works naturally to protect cells and tissue against damage caused by oxidation, by neutralizing free radicals. The vitamin E naturally present in cashew nut oil acts as an anti-free-radical agent. Free radicals are responsible for aging of the skin, since they alter its phospholipidic structure. It thus plays an active role in the prevention of skin aging.

On account of its high unsaturated fatty acid and vitamin E content, and the synergetic action of its constituents, cashew oil is valued in cosmetics. It is added to the formulation of day creams, anti-wrinkle creams, tired and dry skin care treatments. It is also used for hair care, in hand or lip balms, as massage oil, and in sun and after-sun care products.