

Red Bush Tea (Rooibos Tea)

We all know that a nice cup of tea is a British favourite.

Have you ever thought about trying a different cuppa?

Rooibos tea for example is more than just a hot drink; it can actually contribute to daily health and to a beauty plan.

The history of Rooibos tea starts at the turn of the 19th century when the indigenous people of the Cederberg region in the Cape (South Africa) discovered tea making from the wild growing red bush *Aspalanthus linearis* plant. Rooibos means "red bush". The fine needle-like leaves were harvested, chopped with axes and bruised with hammers and then left to ferment in heaps, relying on the sun to dry the leaves – this resulted in an aromatic and flavourful tea.

In 1930 a medical doctor and nature lover, Dr. P le Fras Nortier recognized the value of this agricultural crop. Soon after Rooibos tea was farmed commercially. Today Rooibos Tea is internationally available and recognized for its health benefits.

Here are the benefits of Rooibos Tea:

- Acts as an antioxidant that slows the aging process, prevents cancer and lowers the risk of cardio-vascular disease. Rooibos is packed full of flavonoids which are powerful antioxidants and have more antioxidant activity than vitamin C. Therefore the antioxidant activity of Rooibos is much stronger than that of black or green tea
- Acts as a digestive aid and is anti-spasmodic, therefore it relieves stomach cramps and colic in babies
- Relieves allergies
- Soothes skin irritations when applied directly to the affected area
- Replenishes iron levels by increasing absorption of iron
- It is Calorie free
- Boosts the immune system
- Aids health problems like insomnia, irritability, headaches, nervous tension and hypertension
- It has a low tannin content (only 1-4%), containing less than half the amount of tannins than regular black tea. It is also the absence of the tannins that give Rooibos its natural sweet flavour.
- It contains no colourants, additives or preservatives or caffeine, making it a completely natural product. Because Rooibos contains no caffeine, it can be freely drunk by pregnant women and children
- It contains no oxalic acid, making it a good option for individuals suffering from kidney stones
- It contains copper, iron and potassium
- It contains healthy skin minerals: zinc, sodium, zinc and alpha-hydroxy acid. The cosmetic industry is increasingly using Rooibos as a natural additive in skin preparations
- It contains calcium, fluoride and manganese for strong bones and teeth
- Rooibos tea has a soothing effect on the central nervous system

If Rooibos is brewed or boiled for longer than ten minutes, the antioxidant activity becomes much higher.

Rooibos tea is also used to marinade meat and can be added to many a recipe.

For the perfect summer cooler, experiment, used cooled Rooibos tea and fruit juice on ice.