

Sorrel Drink History

In Trinidad and Tobago, the sorrel plant is a household name, however it gets more attention during the Christmas season when its edible petals are used to make one of our favorite Christmas drinks, simply called “**sorrel**”. Jamaicans also lay claim to the “sorrel drink”.

This drink is affectionately called by other names reflecting its country origin. For example, in Latin America, it is referred to as *agua de flor de Jamaica*; in North Africa, it is called *karade*; and in the Ivory Coast, this red beverage is called *da bilenni* (where the plant itself is called “da”). However, most people only think that this plant is useful only to make this drink. For this reason, the rest of the flower is discarded without much thought. Now, you will be surprised as to the value and wide use of this popular plant.

Cooking with Sorrel

The sorrel or roselle type (*hibiscus sabdariffa* L.) is most exploited for its calyces and fiber. The commercial interest of this crop is mostly in its red pigmented calyces. The calyces are separated from its capsules by hand or with the use of a simple hand-held gadget. The brilliant red colour and unique flavour of the sorrel or roselle calyx makes it useful in food preparation. The calyx is used to prepare herbal drinks, teas, beverages, jams, jellies, syrup, marmalades, wine, gelatin, pudding, cakes, ice cream, sherbets, butter, pies, sauces, tarts, desserts, etc. It is definitely a useful flavouring or colouring.

The Nutritional Value of Sorrel

Nutritionally, it's calyces have higher amounts of ascorbic acid than guava and orange (about 100g more). The calyces have three times more vitamin C than black currant and nine times more than citrus fruit. It's orangy to red colour pigment offers a good source of antioxidant. Thus, sorrel calyces have been known to treat high blood pressure, heal sores and ulcer. Its seeds are high in protein, dietary fiber, and minerals (such as phosphorus, magnesium, and calcium). The seeds also have aphrodisiac properties.

The sorrel is indeed a versatile flower and very useful in food preparation. It is a perfectly healthy flavoring option and natural substitute for food colouring. It is available in many places where it is grown fresh and in large quantities in the market. It is also available in a dried form. You might be able to find dried sorrel petals in Chinese groceries and in a Caribbean supermarket near you. So, the next time you make your favorite sorrel drink, you might consider there might just be more other meals you could make with this versatile flower.

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<http://www.simplytrinicooking.com/2012/12/sorrel.html#ixzz3H26y95YT>