



maca powder

What is Maca?

Maca is a root vegetable belonging to the same family as cabbage, broccoli and radish.¹ The maca root grows underground and swells during growth, forming a storage organ like a turnip.² Maca is a hardy plant, native to the Andes.



It grows at high altitudes of between 4000-4500m³ in extreme conditions of intense sunlight, strong winds and low humidity, as well as daily temperature fluctuations of 20°C to -10°C.⁴

Thought to have been cultivated for over 2000 years, maca has been used for food and medicinal purposes since the pre-Columbian era.⁵ The Spanish settlers soon came to value maca; shortly after their conquest, Spanish livestock was reproducing poorly at altitude. The local Andeans recommended maca as a fertility enhancer, which proved to be a very successful suggestion, saving the herds.⁶

Legend has it that Inca warriors used to consume maca as an energy source before going into battle. They were, however, prevented from consuming it after conquering a city, in order to protect women from their sexual impulses.⁷

Processing

Our maca is grown organically at altitude in Peru. The crop takes around 8 – 9 months to grow and is harvested in May or June, when most of the plant's leaves are still growing. Each plant is dug out individually, using a cashu. The cashu is a specially designed tool with a curved blade, designed to protect the maca root during excavation.³



Once the maca is harvested, it is left out to dry under the sun for 10 – 15 days. The farmers cover the maca at night to avoid rain and frost damage. They also keep the maca's leaves on for this stage of the process, as they feel it makes the roots taste sweeter.³

When the maca crops are dry, they are weighed and cleaned before being sorted for quality. They are washed again before being cut, then dehydrated at under 45°C. Finally, the maca is milled until it resembles the vibrant yellow powder that goes into the Naturya pouches.³

The Science

Maca is an adaptogen, which means it helps the body adapt to stress. Maca contains plant sterols, which help the body produce the appropriate level of hormones⁸ and can reduce cholesterol.⁹ It is

traditionally believed that maca can enhance fertility.¹⁰ Evidence suggests that maca can increase the libido and sperm count in men,^{11 12} reduce sexual dysfunction in postmenopausal women¹³ and possibly boost female fertility.¹⁴ It is thought that maca also acts as a hormone stabiliser and may be able to alleviate menopausal symptoms.⁸



Our maca powder is nearly 10% protein and contains seven of the essential amino acids³, which help to build and repair tissues in the body. Maca has long been thought of as a fine source of energy and a recent study showed that regular supplementation could provide an endurance boost for athletes.⁷

Maca has antioxidant qualities, with the capacity to scavenge free radicals and protect cells from oxidative stress.¹⁵ Maca contains high levels of calcium and iron, which are needed to ensure healthy bones and to transport red blood cells around the body.¹⁶ Maca has also displayed an anti-tiredness effect and is said to possess antidepressant properties.⁴

How to enjoy Maca

Maca has been used as an ingredient for centuries. The most common use for maca is to throw it into a blender with a heap of other ingredients and create a smoothie. It's perfect as part of a breakfast blend, a post-workout shake, or an antioxidant smoothie. Great with cacao, maca tastes lovely in a warm drink during those long winter evenings. If you're feeling peckish and a drink won't suffice then maca can be stirred into yoghurt, or combined with a spread to slaver over toast. Maca is a useful baking ingredient and can be used in all kinds of dessert recipes, from cookies to brownies and everything in between!

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