

COMPOSITION OF ARGAN OIL

Fatty acids	%
Unsaturated fatty acids:	
Palmitic acid	14
Stearic acid	5
Polyunsaturated fatty acids:	
Linoleic acid	37
Alpha-linolenic acid	< 0.6
Monounsaturated fatty acids:	
Oleic acid	43.5
Sterols	%
Schottenol	48
Spinasterol	42
Delta 7 Avenosterol	5
Sigmastra-8,22-dien	5
	mg/kg
Tocopherols	720
Polyphenols	60
Sterols	3200
Triterpene alcohols	1800

Berber cold pressed extra virgin ARGAN OIL healthy oil from a biologically pure region

The argan tree (*Argania Spinosa*) is one of the few still living tree species from the tertiary era and can be found only in southwest Morocco. This holy, wild tree, which grows from seven to ten metres high, is considered a real Moroccan miracle due to its extraordinary characteristics. It does not fear drought nor high temperatures up to 50°C. It lives from 150 to 200 years and if it dies, it can revive in seven years. Due to its strong root system, it is effective in preventing erosion, preserving fertility of the soil and limiting the advance of the desert. Argon oil, which is extracted from its fruits through cold pressing, is considered real "fluid gold" possessing a thousand health benefits.

Already in the past, Phoenicians were involved in the trading of the Moroccan argan oil. The argan tree was first mentioned in international documents by a well-known Egyptian doctor Ali Ibn Radouane back in the 11th century, when trade with medical products had already spread around the world. Doctor Ibn Radouane mentioned the treatment of the ears and stomach with the argan oil, which was brought to Egypt from the far western portion of Maghreb.

In the 18th century, during the reign of Sultan Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, the French diplomat De Chenier dedicated enormous attention to the argan tree in his reports. The American diplomat Thomas Barkely, whom President George Washington had sent on a mission to conclude a peace treaty between the two countries, also reported with great interest on the argan tree in 1786.

In 1867, the first Moroccan delegation participated in the international fair in Paris. They brought with them their exquisite products, the most important being the argan nuts which caused a lot of admiration among the visitors. In 1998, UNESCO added the argan tree to the World Heritage list, while in 2001, home institutions and foreign partners (among them Terre et Humanisme) organised the first festival dedicated to the argan tree. Many important deci-

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sions were reached during the festival, such as long-term development of the underdeveloped Berber regions, protection of the environment and preservation of the argan tree.

The Berbers from Morocco use the argan oil in their daily diets and in traditional medicine. It is served already for breakfast together with home baked bread; pieces of bread are dipped into argan oil and honey. The Amlou sweet is considered a real delicacy. It is composed of argan oil mixed with honey and almonds and gives energy and strength (also an aphrodisiac). In home cooking as well as in exquisite restaurants argan oil is added to food which has been prepared in steam, roasted or grilled to enhance its flavour and provide several additional vitamins.

In the traditional Berber pharmacy, this noble and rich oil is intended for everyday use - for internal as well as external treatment. It is used also on babies to protect against external influences. Body oiling is also an ancient Indian ayurvedic medical treatment, providing energy to the body and enhancing one's well-being. The massage using argan oil, which needs to be gently applied, helps one lose weight, improves the firmness of the skin and relaxes the spine. Argan oil is easily absorbed into the skin, leaving no greasy marks. It is also one of the most important oils for making the skin look younger and is used also for the treatment of various skin diseases. The high content of vitamin E (twice as high as in olive oil) has strong antioxidant properties. Vitamin E is important for the development and maintenance of the functions of the nerve and the muscle systems. Argan oil contains more than 80% mono- and polyunsaturated fatty acids, which have beneficial effects on rheumatic conditions and cardiovascular diseases. Additionally, they neutralise free radicals, protect connective tissues, stimulate oxygen in the body, improve brain capacity and have a beneficial influence on the liver and digestion. The high content of linoleic acid helps to regulate the blood levels of cholesterol. Studies have shown that 16 g (2 table spoons) of argan oil satisfies the body's daily needs for essential linoleic acid.

One litre of oil is obtained from approximately 40 kg of fruit, which involves 16 hours of manual work. As the nut shells are very hard, the Berber women still crack them manually using stones. The nut contains

up to three kernels. Fresh kernels are cold pressed to obtain the nutritious and highly recommended argan oil.

Advice on use of argan oil in nutrition:

Argan oil is added to dishes previously cooked in steam, roasted or grilled. A few drops suffice for meat or fish. The combination of argan oil and lemon juice is an ideal salad dressing.

Advice on use of argan oil in face and body care:

- A gentle evening massage of the face with circular movements is recommended for all types of skin. If you have very dry skin, also use the oil in the morning.
- If you have dry, brittle, dull looking hair, apply the oil over the entire scalp and leave it on for 30 minutes or overnight and then wash it off with a mild shampoo. Your hair will become shiny and strong.
- If you have brittle nails, it is recommended that the oil treatment be used once a week. Soak your hands in a mixture composed of 50 % argan oil and 50 % lemon juice for 15 minutes.
- You can also apply argan oil to chapped lips, massaging them gently (one lip against the other).
- Apply the oil to your body after bathing or showering through a gentle massage. This will nourish and moisturise your skin and improve its firmness and elasticity, making it velvety.
- For exfoliation (removal of dead corneous cells from the skin), use a mixture of an equal part of argan oil and salt from the Dead Sea.

The companies Argana d. o. o. support the endeavours of the Berber Moroccan women in founding associations and thus becoming increasingly more independent. They are also involved in the development of educational centres.

The project deserves all our support, as it is aimed at preserving as many areas overgrown with argan trees as possible, thus also preserving the green belt at the gateway of the desert.