

Goji Berries

Gou Qi Zi, translated as goji berry, aka lycium or wolfberry, is a 12–15 foot bush growing naturally on the hillsides of cool, fertile valley regions in Mongolia and Tibet. Research on Tibetan medicine (conducted by Tanaduk Botanical Research) speaks of the 41 classified varieties of this highly cherished berry of which phang.ma is the principle type. Yearly festivals in Tibet honor the plump Gou Qi Zi berry which grows in abundance around old monasteries in fertile regions there. The Goji Berry Cooperative, a fair trade organization, provides an outlet for Tibetan and Mongolian berries which ensures the safety, tradition, continuation, growing, and proper handling of this treasure. All goji types have a certain ‘signature,’ not unlike the grape varieties in the wine industry. Goji berries are shaken onto screens so that no discoloration occurs during the drying process.

Goji, the “happy berry,” is a superior fruit due to its tonic nature of radiating good health and vitality. This fruit of longevity corrects and balances many chi deficiencies. Low-level energy conditions such as insomnia, anxiety, and nervousness are helped by the blood clearing and regulating properties of goji. It stimulates T-cell function (which helps conditions of anemia) by building blood and encouraging lymphocyte activity. It keeps the blood clean and supports the circulatory system. Kidney and adrenal stress and weakness, showing up as dry eyes, chronic dry cough, thirst, low grade fever, high perspiration, and soreness in the back, knees and legs are helped by proper water hydration, nourishing adaptogenic foods, rest, and proper exercise. Goji is a good adjunct in alleviating this series of conditions. Goji helps support proper digestion and assimilation of nutrients which is fundamental to our health.

Goji contains 250 IUs of carotene (beta & mixed) per gram (20 grams serving is 5000 IU) with particularly high levels of zeaxanthin, making it quite rich in carotenoids. Goji contains nearly all the amino acids (protein building blocks), many minerals (including Ca, Mg, P, Ge, Cr, Se, Zn, Cu), vitamin E, essential fatty acids, vitamin C, and a wide array of rich polysaccharides (long chain sugars in a water soluble nutrient matrix) and flavonoids (plant pigment nutrients), particularly the anthocyanins. The latter work on capillary and collagen structure, inflammation, bacterial, viral, and immune function modulation, and cardiovascular conditions. These phytonutrients (called polysaccharide glyconutrients) inhibit lipid peroxidation. They contain SOD (superoxide dismutase) and increase their levels, and they contain glutathione-rich components to keep cells working at optimal levels. They help support the building of muscle tissue, repair and restore DNA, and support our general well-being.

Traditionally, goji is used in both China and Tibet in wines, soups, teas, and rice porridge. The bright red berry is truly the happy berry!