



Unique Medicinal Spices- “Marathi Moggu and Capers”

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ABSTRACT: Indian food habits are having medicinal values. Especially spices are the foundation of Indian food items. They not only impart taste but also they have medicinal benefits in keeping health in good condition. Marathi moggu is one such Indian spice which is mainly used in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Capers are spices used in India as well as in western countries. Many spices are being used in worldwide; our Ayurvedic classics have mentioned medicinal properties of almost all spices. Marathi moggu is more popularly used spice in India, and many a times other spices are sold as Marathi moggu in markets hence here in this article, attempt is made to present accurate source of Marathi moggu along with another widely used spice Capers with their medicinal values as mentioned in Ayurvedic classics.

KEY WORDS: Marathi moggu, Capers, Unique Spices, Ayurvedic spice, Indian spice

INTRODUCTION

India has wide diversity of community and all have different life style and different food habits. "Marathi Moggu" is dried capers (the buds and fruits), which is fairly easily available in Karnataka. Marathi moggu, Marathi refers to a language spoken in maharashtra. Moggu refers to unripened floral bud. Marathi moggu is a spice which when added to dishes gives a special flavour. It has to be used in a limited quantity and ground with other spices. In India, curry powder is prepared by adding maratha moggu, elaichi pineapple seeds, dhal chini, cloves etc. Maratha moggu has a mild and aromatic flavour, which gives it the distinctive flavour to food items and is used in preparation of Bisibelebath, Pulav and other puddings of Karnataka dish. And in Andhrapradesh, Maratha moggu is known as Andhra moggu. Marathi moggu is even used in Western dishes. there are many sources of plants are used as Maratha moggu in different regions.

MARATHI MOGGU

Tender fruits of Shalmali is used as Marathi moggu¹. It is popularly known Kapok buds market. These are dried buds of Kapok tree. It is basically the unopened floral buds of Kapok tree. It is dark brown in colour. Kapok buds are not eaten raw. They are always roasted and ground with other spices before adding to a dish. It is used in South India especially in Karnataka and Andhrapradesh. It is used in Chettinad cuisine.^{2,3}

Botanical source of these kapok buds is *ceiba pentandra*⁴. In Ayurvedic classics it is one of the varieties of shalmali known as Koota shalmali. In market is is sold as Sinhal Marathi moggu/Indian caper.

The properties of Koota shalmali is mentioned in ayurvedic texts is, It possess Katu rasa (Pungent taste), Ushna veerya (Hot in potency), and Kapha vatahara (Pacifies Kapha and Vata). Its actions are Bhedana (Purgative Action), usefull in disorders of Liver, spleen, disorders of alimentary canal, Anaha (Distension of

abdomen), Malabanda (Constipation), Raktavikara (Disorders of blood), Meda roga (Disorders related to fat metabolism), shoolahara (Relieves stomach pain).⁵ One of the study revealed the anti oxidant property of raw and germinating *Ceiba pentandra* (Kapok) seeds¹¹

ANOTHER SPICE- CAPERS- (*Capparis spinosa*)

Most of capers as those salty, slightly astringent and pungent, pea-sized, dark green things used as a seasoning or garnish in Mediterranean dishes- especially in Sicilian and southern Italian cooking, like chicken piccata (slice of meat). Unopened flower buds of *Capparis spinosa*, the caper bush, a perennial plant in the caper family Capparidaceae. They are found wild throughout the Mediterranean and other areas. The immature flower buds are a dark, olive green and about the size of a fresh kernel of corn. Because they're small and delicate, they have to be harvested individually by hand, instead of by machine, each morning just as they reach the proper size. The buds are dried in the sun, then brined or packed in salt, or pickled in a salt and vinegar solution. Capers are categorized and sold by their size, with the smallest sizes being the most desirable.⁶

The unopened flower buds are laxative. They are used internally in the treatment of cough and externally to treat eye infections. The buds are a rich source of compounds known as aldose-reductase inhibitors- it has been shown that these compounds are effective in preventing cataracts. they are said to ease stomach pain. A decoction of the plant is used to treat vaginal thrush. The leaves are bruised and applied as a poultice in the treatment of gout.⁷

The flavor of caper may be described as being similar to that of mustard and black pepper.

The strong flavor of the caper, likened to peppery mustard- Pungent aroma, is due to an enzymatic reaction with a mustard oil glycoside named glucocapparin (methyl glucosinolate) that is released from plant tissues when crushed. This reaction liberates the very pungent methyl isothiocyanate that gives capers much of their flavor. An additional component of the plant that gives it a unique flavor is rutin which is often seen as crystallized white spots on the surfaces of individual caper buds.⁸

Recent research showed that the hydro alcoholic extract of *Capparis spinosa* has shown the anti cancer activity. The quercetin in *C. spinosa* extract had significant anti-tumor effects and may be regarded as an ideal natural drug for cancer therapy¹².

Capparis spinosa is equated with the thorny shrub Himsra mentioned in ayurvedic texts⁹.

Another source, Kareera plant *capparis aphylla* Roth. Belonging to Capparidaceae family, is sold as Marathi moggu in market. The floral buds of Kareera are used as pickles as well as medicines. In ayurvedic texts the properties and medicinal values of Kareera is mentioned as, It is having Katu (Pungent), Tikta (Bitter) taste, ushna veerya (Hot in potency), Bhedya (having pharmacological action like Purgative) and it is used in treatment of piles, visha(poisonous effects), Shotha (Oedema) and Vrana (Wounds)¹⁰.

In India, Other spices are also used along with Marathi moggu are, Kankola (*Piper cubeba*), Jatipatra (*Myristica fragrans* Houtt.), Star anise flower, black pepper and dalchin etc.

DISCUSSION

The edible buds and fruits are usually commercialized in brine for food industry, at high price. Marathi moggu is popularly used in south India especially in Karnataka and in Andhrapradesh. In Indian food habits are always added with spices which have high medicinal values. The immature pods of the Koota Shalmali is Marathi

moggu - a spice used in the preparation of biryani in the southern parts of India. This is considered as an aphrodisiac in Punjab area & is a common ingredient in pulav and other puddings. As Marathi moggu is used in India, similarly *Capparis spinosa* is being used in Western Dishes. However, *Capparis spinosa* and other species like *Capparis aphylla* are also used as spice in India. Marathi moggu is also known as Andhra Moggu. It is mostly used in Andhra Pradesh recipes using rice and meat.

The spices like Kankola (*Piper cubeba*), Jatipatra (*Myristica fragrans* Houtt.), star anise flower, black pepper and dalchin etc. are different from Marathi moggu, sometimes they are sold as Marathi moggu in markets hence earlier it created like confusion with regional variations. All these spices have been mentioned in Ayurvedic texts with detailed medicinal values. These spices help in In reducing flatulence, in the treatment of rheumatism, anemia, arthritis and gout. Further medical uses include for improving liver functions, wound healing, eye problems etc.

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FIGURES

Unripened floral buds of *Ceiba pentandra*

Floral buds of *Ceiba pentandra*



Flowers and Unripened floral buds of *Capparis spinosa*

