

Salvia officinalis - Sage Medicinal and Culinary Uses

Common Sage, Garden Sage, Meadow Sage, Scarlet Sage and True Sage

Sage has one of the longest histories of use of any culinary or medicinal herb. It was used by the ancient Egyptians as a fertility drug. Since then it has been used for most symptoms common to mankind. "Why should a person die when sage grows in his garden?" This saying originated in the middle ages at the famous medical school of Salerno Italy. Sage has enjoyed a high reputation as a health giver since antiquity, to judge by its Latin name *salvia* which means healthy.

Sage has been used as an aqueous decoction, a tea, steam inhalation, alcoholic tincture, fresh tincture and fresh leaves for the treatment of:

- bleeding wounds, ulcers and sores
- hoarseness, coughs, sore throats, and asthma
- rheumatism, sprains, swellings
- dysmenorrhoea, menstrual irregularity, amenorrhoea, excessive menstrual bleeding
- night sweats of tuberculosis and menopausal sweats because of its anti-hydrotic action
- strengthening the nervous system, improving memory and brain function

Salvia divinorum

Diviner's Sage, Ska Maria Pastora or Seer's Sage is a psychoactive plant that can induce "visions" and other hallucinatory experiences. Its native habitat is in a cloud forest in the isolated Sierra Mazteca of Oaxaca, Mexico. Mazatec shamans have a long and continuous tradition of using *Salvia divinorum* during spiritual healing sessions. It is understood to be of low toxicity and low addictive potential and research has shown that it may serve as a potent addiction treatment therapy. It remains legal in most countries including the United States.

Culinary Uses of Sage

Sage was not used as a food flavouring until the 17th century when it was boiled with minced calves heads, brains and vinegar to prepare a sauce to use with pieces of veal. Today *Salvia officinalis* is the sage most often used for cooking. As a member of the mint family it is highly aromatic and is best used when fresh. The best way to crush sage leaves is to rub them between your hands. The flowers may be used and have a more delicate flavour. Stems or leaves may be tossed on hot charcoal where they will add a wonderful aroma to grilled dishes.

Culinary sage has generous quantities of vitamins A and C and can be used in a myriad of recipes. Because of its strong flavour it should be used sparingly. It is commonly used for sausages and stuffing a pork roast or poultry but may be added to soups, pestos and brown butter sage sauce is great over gnocchis.

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