From Terry:
It is my pleasure today to introduce a special guest, Chris Kilham, the Medicine Hunter. Chris explores the world in search of plants with medicinal powers. He has the unusual title of “Explorer in Residence” at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he teaches the popular ethnobotany course, The Shaman’s Pharmacy™. As the author of 14 books, Chris uses his experiences traveling the world in search of natural medicines to illuminate the unknown. An advocate for the rights of indigenous peoples and preservation of tribal wisdom, Chris is a certainly a bridge between worlds.

Chris is a rising star in national media. He is the host of Medicine Trail™, a series of television specials on medicinal plants shot on location around the world. The first two programs, shot in Peru and Malaysia, are currently in international distribution, with more Medicine Trail specials upcoming. Additionally, he has appeared many times with America’s Doctor™, Dr. Mehmet Oz, on his popular television show. Chris has a blog on the FOX News Website, and has been featured in many entertaining TV segments with Dr. Manny Alvarez. CNN has called Chris “The Indiana Jones of natural medicine,” and I think that is an accurate description of this botanical enthusiast, world traveler, and wilderness adventurer.

Today, he is going to share with us information on the amazing Peruvian power plant—Maca!

KEY WORDS
maca, energy, endurance, erectile dysfunction, libido, hyposexual, stamina, strength, SSRI, depression, female sexual dysfunction, athlete, exercise

A Special Report By Chris Kilham, Medicine Hunter

Maca, Vitality Secret of the Inca

From the high Peruvian Andes mountains comes maca, a plant reputed to enhance overall vigor, and supported by modern science for exactly that purpose. Since 1997, I have personally investigated maca agriculture in the Andes over twenty times, and have studied both the available history and science on this plant. Furthermore, I have used maca almost every day since that time. As a result of such intensive immersion, I have come to believe that this plant offers exceptional benefits to overall health and well-being.

In this issue of Terry Talks Nutrition, I will explore the history behind this truly amazing plant, its medicinal uses, and why it can make a tremendous difference in your personal strength, stamina, endurance and outlook.

What is Maca?

Maca, Lepidium meyenii, is the only cruciferous plant native to Peru. The cruciferous plants include rapeseed (the source of canola oil), radish, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, watercress and a number of other important food crops. Maca is an annual plant that produces a radish-like tuber which matures within approximately seven months after seeds are planted. The root of maca is typically dried and stored, and will keep without spoiling for seven years.

History of Maca Use

Maca is believed to have been cultivated in the Junin plateau of Peru’s Central Highlands as far back as 2,000 years ago. The Inca were sophisticated architects, builders, and cultivators of the land. Among the many treasures held by the Inca and garnered by the Spanish was maca. When Spanish conquistadores ventured into the high altitude of Peru’s central highlands, they became concerned for the health and fertility of their livestock, especially their horses. In the highlands, there were no grasslands for grazing, and the thin air and hostile climate produced a precipitous drop in animal fertility. The Inca recommended that the Spanish feed their horses the root-like maca, which grew abundantly in the area. The Spanish followed this advice, and were thus able to keep their horses well nourished and return their fertility back to normal. The Spanish were deeply impressed.

The Spanish found strong, healthy babies and adults in the hostile highlands, a condition attributable to a diet consisting mostly of maca. The Inca, and subsequently the Spanish, consumed maca as a staple food, and fed it to livestock. The Spanish didn’t have to look long to figure out that whatever was in maca that enhanced animal fertility might likely promote a sexual effect in humans. The Inca considered maca to be a gift from the gods, along with potatoes and corn. Maca was so highly prized by the Inca, that at the height of their civilization, it was used as a form of currency. The Spanish, plunderers of all Incan riches, discovered in maca a worthy aphrodisiac.

During the height of the Incan empire, legend has it that Incan warriors would consume maca before entering into battle. This would make them fiercely strong. But after conquering a city the Incan soldiers were prohibited from using maca, to protect the conquered women from their powerful sexual impulses. Thus from as far back as five hundred years ago, maca’s reputation for enhancing strength, libido and fertility was already well established in Peru. (Hermann, NRC, Johns, Leon)

Maca’s Expansion Beyond Peru

Today maca is popular in Peru among both native and non-native people, and the effects of maca are creating market demand in Japan, Europe and the United States. Maca cultivation is on the increase, a number of government experts and agencies are actively promoting maca agriculture and development, and maca is poised to be a major botanical product on the international herbal scene.

Maca grows in a limited geographic area at elevations between 10,000 and 15,000 feet. The primary area of maca cultivation is the Junin plateau, where approximately one thousand acres of maca are grown annually, mostly in small family plots. Agricultural experts predict that the acreage dedicated to maca cultivation will steadily increase to meet vigorous market demand. Former Agriculture Minister Rodolfo Munante says about maca “This

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magnificently improved cycling time performance, and improved self-rated sexual desire score compared to the baseline test. (Stone et al)

Yet another maca sex study involved victims of SSRI antidepressants who had experienced a decrease in sex drive related to use of those medications. Daily intake of three grams of maca daily resulted in improved sex drive, and improved overall sexual satisfaction. (Dording et al) And lest you think maca is only for men, over 75% of the people in this study were women.

**Conclusion**

Results of animal and human studies clearly show that maca, whose reputation for sexual enhancement and improvement of overall vitality goes back to Incan history, lives up to its reputation under scientific scrutiny. Maca has never demonstrated any toxicity of any kind, and is safe for everyone. Consumed daily, maca can make a dynamic contribution to health, and can significantly boost overall vitality and well being.

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**Chris recommends this Maca formula. Look for it at your local health food store.**

**Organic Whole Maca (Lepidium meyenii) Extract 1500 mg**

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**The Science of Maca**

The most referred to paper on maca originated from Naples, Italy and was published in Food Chemistry in 1994. (Leon) Chemical composition of *Lepidium meyenii* describes the rich nutritional value of maca, and describes how the Peruvians in the Central Highlands can subsist on this tuber. Dried Maca weighs in at about 59% carbohydrate, and has a protein value of slightly more than 10%. It possesses a higher lipid content than other root crops at 2.2%, of which linoleic acid, palmitic acid and oleic acid are the primary fatty acids. Maca is also a rich source of sterols, including sitosterol, campesterol, ergosterol, brassicasterol and ergostadienol. From a mineral standpoint, maca exceeds both potatoes and carrots in value, and is a good source of iron, magnesium, calcium, potassium and iodine.

What nutrients in maca promote its reputed sex-enhancing effects? The plant sterols listed may possibly be some of the chemical agents of desire, as may be isothiocyanates discovered in the root. Isothiocyanates are protective compounds found in other cruciferous plants including horseradish, mustard, and radishes. These compounds induce protective Phase 2 enzymes which fight cancer by detoxifying carcinogens and eliminating them from the body. Maca contains benzyl thiocyanate and p-methoxybenzyl isothiocyanate. Though these compounds occur in small amounts, they may enhance fertility.

According to folklore, maca is just about a panacea. Today in the markets of Peru maca is sold for its strengthening and stamina-promoting effects, as an aphrodisiac and a fertility-enhancer. Locals promote maca as a laxative (probably due to its fiber content), and as a cure for rheumatism and respiratory disorders. Drugstores sell maca in capsules for stamina and improved sexual function. Peruvians attribute remarkable benefits to maca, claiming that maca stimulates metabolism, perhaps due to thyroid-stimulating iodine; regulates hormonal secretion, possibly due to certain isothiocyanates and sterols; improves memory, maybe due to certain amino acids; combats anemia, most likely because of its high iron value, and fights depressions, perhaps due to amino acids and minerals.

**Macca and Sexual Function**

Of the numerous claims made for maca, those which have been corroborated in the lab concern energy, stamina, libido and sexual function. In experiments conducted with rodents, animals fed maca demonstrated increased energy and stamina, and exhibited an increased exponential in sexual activity as compared with non maca-fed animals. Though no formal studies have been conducted on maca’s use for hormonal enhancement, some physicians claim success with maca for exactly this purpose. (Zheng et al)

One double-blind clinical trial of 50 Caucasian men affected by mild erectile dysfunction showed that daily intake of maca improved overall sexual satisfaction, enhanced erectile function and improved overall psychological well being. (Zenico et al)

A study investigating the effect of 14 days of maca supplementation on endurance performance and sexual desire in trained male cyclists resulted in significantly improved cycling time performance, and improved self-rated sexual desire score compared to the baseline test. (Stone et al)

References


References


