

History and Making of Clove Oil

(*Syzygium aromaticum*)

History

Clove oil was first noted in 207 BC in the writings of China's Han Dynasty (Second Imperial Dynasty in China). It was found that cloves grew wildly and vastly in Spice Islands, known as Molucca Islands in Indonesia. It was first known as an herb to treat bad breath due to its aromatic scent. When one chewed on a clove, they noticed that the herb also had a numbing effect that helped in the healing of toothaches.

Centuries later, the Arabs traded this aromatic herb with the Europeans. It was considered an exotic herb due to its perfume scents. This exotic and very expensive herb was traded with other also noted to be found on the Spice Islands. Cinnamon, Nutmeg, Pepper, Mace and Ginger were just a few of these herbs. Europe was known to use these herbs as currency to be used in trade with items such as livestock.

Later in the 1500's, the Portuguese took over the trade for these herbs after conquering the Spice Islands and continued with their trade through to the end of the Middle Ages.

Saint Hildegard of Bingen used cloves in her recipes to help heal ailing followers. She included cloves in her dressings for salads for aromatic flavor, in her nerve cookies and for rheumatism and arthritis for its numbing properties.

Michael Castleman, The Healing Herbs: The Ultimate Guide to the Curative Power of Nature's Medicines (Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press, 1991), 115.

Selma Hudson, About Spices (Chicago: Melmont Publishers [1971]), 33.

J. H. Parry, The Age of Reconnaissance (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson [1963]), 145

Dr. Wighard Strehlow & Gottfried Hertzka, M.D., Hildegard of Bingen's Medicine (Bear & Company [1988]), 61, 85, 107.



The *Syzygium* genus belongs to the Myrtle family. These plants are flowering plants native to Middle Asia, Pacific Asia, Africa, the Spice Islands and Australia. Malaysia has the highest level of diversity of this genus.

Kingdom: Plantae

Clade: Angiosperms

Clade: Eudicots

Clade: Rosids

Order: Myrtales

Family: Myrtaceae

Genus: *Syzygium*

Species: *S. aromaticum*

Making Clove Oil

Making Clove Oil is a simple task. You will need dried cloves, olive oil, mortar and pestle, bottles (with stoppers) and funnel (optional).

Boil your mortar, pestle, and jars for 10 – 15 minutes to sterilize and sanitize. I like to warm up my cloves in a pan before I crack them. The heat will “break out” the aromatic scents of the cloves. Warm your cloves in a skillet for just a few minutes. You don’t want to roast them, just warm their seeds. Transfer the cloves to your mortar and, using your pestle, press down gently to crack the shells. You do not need to ground the cloves down to powder. Just crack them enough to release their aroma. Add your cracked cloves to your bottles. Fill each bottle with olive oil and cork it. Set your oil in a warm dark place for a minimum of a week. If you wish to have stronger clove oil, let it sit 2-4 weeks. Once I have my oil, I will usually strain out the cloves from my bottles and transfer the oil to a new bottle. It is usually recommended to use olive oil instead of other oil bases, but you can use almond oil or another oil if you are allergic to olive oil.

Clove Oil Uses

Medicinal: disinfect the mouth, numbing agent, anesthesia for humans and animals, antioxidant, boosts the immune system, antifungal, antianxiety, improves memory, assists in healing skin dis-orders and disease.

Culinary: flavor hams, used in pies, teas, breads and baking.

Other Uses: perfume, oil diffusers, repels insects, removes mold