

Did You Know?



Annatto, *Bixa orellana*

- An orange-red dye or colorant, flavoring for food and healing agent derived from the seeds of the achiote tree, an evergreen native to tropic and subtropic zones of the Americas
- Spiny red fruits contain the seeds and the reddish pericarp that surround the seed contains the annatto or color
- Foods colored with the annatto pigment range from yellow to deep orange and include chorizo sausage, cheese (like cheddar and American), smoked fish, popcorn, oil, butter, margarine, rice as well as processed products like snacks and breakfast cereals
- Historically used to create a face or body paint by rainforest tribes and natives of the Caribbean; Applying the paint lips dubbed achiote tree the lipstick tree; annatto paint was also used as a sunscreen, bug repellent, food and medicine
- Aztecs enhanced the color of hot chocolate with annatto
- Commonly used in Mexican cooking, especially in the Yucatan where it is toasted and ground into a paste; also common in Caribbean and Filipino dishes
- In large amounts, the flavor has been described as earthy, slightly peppery and sweet flavor; As a colorant, it has no discernable flavor
- Available powdered or pre-ground, whole seeds, paste, blocks and flavored oil
- Can be found in skincare products
- Is antimicrobial and high in antioxidants and carotenoids