





Return to Nature With Bamboo

Bamboo, a Chinese symbol for long life and an Indian symbol of friendship, is a natural resource that supplies food, shelter and income to more than 2.5 billion people worldwide.

From the true grass family *Poaceae*, bamboos are some of the largest woody perennials. Found in diverse climates, including Northeast Asia, northern Australia, sub-Saharan Africa and the U.S. Southeast, these plants are very tree-like in appearance, yet grow taller each year rather than wider in diameter, like ordinary trees.

Facts

Low in calories and fat, this healthy ingredient packs a fibrous punch that helps to lower cholesterol and protect against colon cancer. In addition, bamboo is rich in potassium—640 mg per cup—which helps to maintain normal blood pressure and a healthy heart rate. With a crispy, fresh flavor, this Asian-cuisine staple adds beneficial nutritional value, as well as interesting texture, to any meal.

In the kitchen

Bamboo shoots—the new culms, or stem of the plant, that grow out of the ground—commonly are used in Asian stir-fry recipes and are available at Asian supermarkets. Fermenting the sap of young stalks creates a sweet wine called *ulanzi*, and bamboo leaves are an ingredient in a green-colored Chinese liquor called *zhūyèqīng jiǔ*. Pith is the soft, spongy substance found in the center of the stem and can be served as a condiment.

Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong features Braised Shark's Fin Soup With Bamboo Pith on its menu. Under its Pacific Rim Cuisine selection, the Hyatt Regency Waikiki Resort & Spa in Honolulu serves Kung Pao with bamboo shoots, water chestnuts and vegetables. Known as *Kua Poo Kua Gai*, Salad of Crab and Chicken With Bamboo Shoot is offered to guests at The Ritz-Carlton Bali in Indonesia. See also **Portobello-tofu Stir Fry With Bamboo Shoots**, courtesy of Chef Chad Luetjhe at Red Mountain Spa in St. George, Utah.

Quick Facts

- Bamboo-fiber paper has been made in China for centuries, and a coarse variety continues to be used to create joss paper, or spirit money, which is used in Chinese ceremonies.
- Popular houseplants sold as “lucky bamboo” actually are an entirely different species called *Dracaena sandersoniana*.
- The giant panda that is native to China and the spider monkey feast on bamboo shoots, stems and leaves as their major food source.
- After surviving the atomic blast at Hiroshima in 1945, bamboo provided the first regreening to the area.
- Aside from its culinary uses, bamboo forms a light, exceptionally tough and hard wood that surpasses the tensile strength of mild steel. In addition, it can be used to make blinds, utensils, diesel fuel, flooring, furniture, medicine, musical instruments and more.
- This hardy plant is the fastest-growing variety on the planet. Some species grow as much as 3–4 feet a day.



Photo courtesy of Red Mountain Spa.

In the spa

Commonly utilized for its clarifying properties, bamboo helps to return the skin to a healthy state. With the Bamboo and Rice Facial Polisher, from B. Kamins, Chemist, gently cleanse and buff away dirt. The Roger&Gallet Paris Gentle Nature Body Care Range With Bamboo Sap capitalizes on the powerful replenishing benefits of sugars and minerals in bamboo sap that restore skin elasticity. The line features body lotions, shower creams and firming soaps. Try the Bamboo Cream Peel from CA Botana International Inc.'s Doctor D. Schwab anti-aging product line, which features ground dried bamboo shoots as an exfoliator. Biotone Spa's Green Tea & Lime Leaf body butter, hydrating lotion and salt glow contain bamboo to soothe and invigorate.

The Watermark Hotel and Spa on the River Walk in San Antonio, Texas, blends bamboo, ground walnut and lemongrass essential oil to refine skin's tone and texture with its Bamboo Lemongrass Scrub. The Bamboo and Ginseng Body Polish at Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, Washington, delivers bamboo beads, ginseng and ginkgo in lavender water for cell regeneration. The combination of bamboo and green tea in the San Francisco-based The Nob Hill Spa's Bamboo Green Tea Scrub cleanses and revives. At The Anodas Spa at Nora Beach Resort & Spa in Bophut, Koh Samui, Thailand, Chum Chun—a quenching organic facial—hydrates a dull, congested complexion with bamboo shoot extract.

The hardy food

Tossed in a salad or mixed into a stir-fry, bamboo adds nutritional value with texture and a light taste. Soothe and renew the skin by including bamboo in body scrubs and polishes for nurturing exfoliation. Even enhance a spa's décor with flooring, accents or furniture made from this durable, sustainable crop. ✂

Portobello-tofu Stir Fry With Bamboo Shoots

From Chef Chad Luethje
at Red Mountain Spa in St. George, Utah

Makes 2 servings

Marinade

- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
- ½ teaspoon minced gingerroot
- 1 pinch crushed red pepper
- 2 portobello mushrooms, stemmed
- ¼ cup firm tofu
- sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon minced gingerroot
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon broccoli florets
- 1 tablespoon sliced water chestnuts
- 4 ears baby corn
- 1 tablespoon bamboo shoots
- 1 tablespoon red bell pepper, diced or julienned
- 1 teaspoon julienned carrot
- 2 tablespoons bean sprouts
- reduced-sodium soy sauce, to taste



1. **For Marinade:** Combine sesame oil, soy sauce, balsamic vinegar, minced gingerroot and crushed red pepper.
2. Marinate mushrooms and tofu separately for about 15 minutes, then drain excess marinade.
3. Preheat a wok or sauté pan, and add enough sesame oil to coat. When oil begins to smoke, sauté minced gingerroot until it begins to brown. Add minced garlic, and continue to sauté until garlic just begins to brown.
4. Add all vegetables except for bean sprouts, and sauté until broccoli begins to soften.
5. Add tofu and mushrooms. Season with reduced-sodium soy sauce. For more ginger flavor, add more sautéed minced gingerroot or ground dry ginger.
6. Add bean sprouts just before removing from heat.
7. Serve on plates.