

TAKE A DILL

This pretty herb with its distinctive taste offers many health benefits. **Poornima Makaram** finds out more



Cultivated since ancient times in the Mediterranean and east European regions, the fernlike dill is also mentioned in old Egyptian medical texts as the herb that soothes. The leaves and seeds of this wonderfully aromatic herb are edible and filled with many amazing medicinal properties. Dill is a rich source of vitamin A, calcium, manganese and iron. It is a versatile herb that can be used to flavour many dishes to make them more interesting. Almost every cuisine around the world has recipes with dill in them, including seafood, soups, salads, dips and traditional Indian curries. Many Indian mums mix dill in rotis when their fussy children refuse to eat it as a plain vegetable. Dill leaves make very good mouth fresheners due to their anti-microbial powers.

Dill power

Enumerating the many benefits of dill, Mumbai-based nutritionist and dietician Kajal Thosani says, "Dill helps reduce sugar levels, and is thereby effective at keeping diabetes in check. It prevents flatulence and helps maintain a healthy digestive system. Dill is also high in calcium, essential for healthy teeth and bones. It is even given to lactating mothers as it increases the secretion of milk." Kajal also recommends it to

weight-watchers: 100 g of dill just packs 42 calories. "It can make even health food more palatable, and is a plus for someone on a diet," says Kajal.

"Dill is effective in relieving headaches and fighting nervous exhaustion. Besides this, it is also known to be a powerful antioxidant and rich in cancer-fighting properties. All this makes it a wonder herb!"

Dill can also be dried and preserved for later use, although it is

Creamy dill potatoes

- 250 g baby potatoes
- 250 g thick hung yoghurt
- a few dill leaves, chopped
- ½ tsp paprika powder
- salt, to taste
- a few spring onions, chopped

- 1** Boil the baby potatoes in water until they are cooked, but still firm.
- 2** Peel and cool to room temperature.
- 3** In a bowl, combine the yoghurt with dill, paprika and salt.
- 4** Add the potatoes and chopped spring onions, and stir lightly.
- 5** Serve immediately as a starter, or as a snack when hunger pangs strike.



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usually available in most Indian cities throughout the year and is best eaten fresh. Keep it in an airtight zip bag in the refrigerator, and consume quickly before the leaves start yellowing. Dill is also added to food just before eating to preserve aroma and freshness.

Red flags

So does this 'wonder herb' have any negatives? Well, as it has a strong herbal taste, you will need to watch the amount of dill you add to any dish while cooking. Too much of it can make your dish taste medicinal. ●