

ARGAN OIL, GIFT OF NATURE

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BEAUTY CARE – AN AGE OLD TRADITION

Beauty secrets have long fascinated all cultures on the planet, from the East to the West, from the most primitive to the most sophisticated. Men and women had their customs and sacredly guarded magic potions, whether for their physical appearances, social rituals, or their overall well-being and ever-lasting youth.

In our society, the male figure who has moved away from these rituals, is slowly relearning about their body's well being, starting with their skin.

Our skin “contains” us and is our contact with the outside world. It stores our emotional past through a physical and vibrational form. When our skin is fully nourished (from the inside and the outside), our mood, our self-perception and the perception we have on life, as well as the way others perceive us are all affected. Therefore, it is essential for us to give it the best nutrients.

WHAT DOES OUR SKIN YEARN FOR?

After two centuries of a petrochemical and synthetic hegemony followed by their endless side effects (from allergic reactions to more serious symptoms), mankind has felt the need to return to Mother Earth – harmoniously associating beauty to health and pleasure while respecting human nature and the planet. As a result, more and more people are searching for health products that are environmentally friendly, with no chemical additives, based on clay, natural oils, high grade essential oils, organic plants, sea products (salts, algae, and mud), and bee products (wax, royal jelly, propolis, honey), etc.

Amongst these products, a very rare and precious oil has entered the North American Product. That oil is the argan oil.

ARGAN OIL, FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

It is one of the rarest oils on the planet.

Its cosmetic and therapeutic virtues have first been scientifically discussed in the 13th century by the eminent Egyptian doctor, Ibn El Baytar. In Morocco, it has been used on a daily basis for over thousands of years – whether for cooking, miracle remedies, or skin and hair care. It has only been about a decade that the great European perfumers discovered this oil that evokes, by its strength and polyvalence, a particular infatuation and pleasant surprises.

WHERE DOES THIS COME FROM?

Argan oil comes from the argan tree (*Argania spinosa* L.), a wild tree that usually exists in the south west of Morocco. However, in 2005, argan trees were discovered in the Rif Mountains – in the north of Morocco. There are argan trees in Mexico and Florida but they are sterile. The Argan tree is about 25 billion years old.

As of 1999, this tree, threatened by extinction, has been named a universal heritage by UNESCO.

The argan has not yet successfully been planted in other regions of the world even with genetic modifications.

ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE

Traditional extraction methods are laborious, lengthy, and require a very specific know-how. For many centuries, Berber women from the Atlas Mountains have been passing on this knowledge from generation to generation.

At the end of every summer the fruit is collected and the pulp is removed. The fruit of the tree resembles an olive that slowly turns yellow as it ages. Each pit is sundried and ‘decapitated’ to extract the kernel from the seed. It is then roasted (or not)* and grinded. Breaking the hard and thick pits with a sharpened rock is a very difficult task and requires a very precise technique – transmitted from mother to daughter. The grind is then cold pressed in a millstone, without any chemical solvents, from which this precious oil comes out, drop by drop. The residual paste can also be used for many cosmetic and domestic purposes. (Photos)

**Depending on whether the kernel has been roasted, two different oils are obtained with different colors and purposes. Roasted, the oil becomes brassy in color and has a subtle hazelnut smell. It serves dietary, culinary, therapeutic and cosmetic purposes. When it is not roasted, it has only a cosmetic use, a really powerful one!*

This oil is 100% natural and organic. Its fruits ripen in a semi-arid region, a land free of any chemical treatments and where the city’s pollution is miles away.

It is also important to acknowledge the goat – an essential participant in the proliferation of the tree**.

*** Goats climb up the argan tree and cling onto its branches to eat the pulp of the fruit. The spectacle of these goats acting like squirrels is absolutely enchanting and, to itself, justifies a trip down! It is the exceptional health of these "four-legged fruit pickers" that first sparked the scientists' interest for the argan tree. The poorest residents of the area would also pick up the rejected pits, wash and sundry them before breaking them to take the kernel and then proceed with their usual oil extraction.*

DID YOU KNOW?

It takes about two days of hard work to produce merely one liter of oil! One hectare of argan tree can produce up to 800 kg (1750 lbs) of nuts that provide about 40 kg (90 lbs) of kernels from which we can manually extract about 18 L (10 US gal) of Argan oil.

The oil has a very rich chemical composition which allows for its versatility and its effectiveness. It can be used, but not limited to, cosmetics, dietary and pharmacology.

Sixteen grams (a table spoon) of argan oil contains your daily requirements of the essential fatty acids your body cannot produce.

ARGAN OIL – A STAR

The cosmetic interest shown for argan oil is spurred from two essential aspects:

- It is extremely rich in vitamin E making it one of the best anti-oxidizing oils ***
- The presence of many non-saponifiers (equivalent to the amount found in avocado oil) which act as restructuring agents.

*** Oxidation implies the degeneration and aging of cells.

Argan oil is the only vegetal oil to offer this dual action: it slows down the physiological aging of cells and promotes regeneration.

It was only in the 1990s that scientists started looking into the argan tree- after they had studied the goats feeding off the fruit of the tree in the Essaouira region. It turned out that these goats had an exceptionally long life, were extremely prolific, and a much stronger immune system. After analyzing these results, scientists started looking into the local human population. The argan tree, a common food source to both humans and goats, had just been spotted and quickly became an intensive topic of research!

Results showing the anti-aging properties along with cellular reconstruction attracted European cosmetic and pharmaceutical laboratories. They would frugally add it to their upscale beauty products for dry and damaged skins.

Captivated by this oil, they had first bought it from the inhabitants of the region, then from recent cooperatives, and then would obtain it directly from the tree to extract the oil using more modern techniques. This brought the oil onto the international scene!

POPULARITY'S PRICE TO PAY

The argan tree is an endemic tree and grows in the wild. Sprouts grow from the seeds that fall on the ground.

Moreover, this tree grows in a restrained and semi-arid region. It has a primordial role in the regions fight against desertification and erosion.

It is a very rare product, governed by its wild state and, until last decade, used in harmony within its natural cycle.

However, by buying the fruit at such a larger scale, pharmaceuticals are breaking its natural cycle – fruits are picked before they are ripe, seeds are less and less available for the proliferation of the tree, and the goats, the sowers, are excluded.

The Argan tree, the last hope against the raging desertification is now seriously threatened.

Moreover, the socio-economic aspect of the region has also drastically changed.

Even though cooperatives (with mostly women workers) have increased the economic development of the region, the escalating price of the oil has made it inaccessible to the local population, who traditionally used it on a daily basis.

Finally, the modern extraction methods used in other countries does not guarantee the quality of traditional methods.

Therefore, whether it is for sanitary, environmental, or fair trade reasons, globalization might have serious long and short term consequences on the region, even after UNESCO labeled the tree as a universal heritage.

WHY IS ARGAN OIL SO POPULAR?

The beneficial properties of olive oil, avocado oil, raisin and peanut seeds can all be found in argan oil.

It is a source of beauty and vitality and contains anti-oxidant agents (cellular regeneration, anti-aging), emollient, astringent (tightens your skin), anti-inflammatory, moisturizing, nourishing, haemostatic, healing (scars, acne), anti-microbial (acts as a body antiseptic and to conserve the product).

Its effect on the skin is very strong, long lasting, and is noticeable on a short term. It balances the epidermis, slows down or prevents pre-mature aging of the skin, reinforces its elasticity and locks in the moisture, attenuates or removes wrinkles, protects your skin from external aggressions (the sun, wind, cold, solvent, detergents, chemical produces...), soothes irritations, and makes your skin look bright, smooth, and healthy.

Furthermore, it nourishes damaged hair and weakened nails.

In Morocco, it is traditionally used for skin treatments, massages or in the bath, as well as to soften hair and strengthen nails. It is used to treat chicken pox, acne, joint pain, and skin cracks.

In the kitchen, it is used in salads and couscous and adds a very fine and perfumed touch****. There is also the traditional 'amlou', which is an energetic mix that includes argan oil, honey, nuts and almonds – energy in a tablespoon that will keep you going all morning.

****Some fine dining and health oriented restaurants in Paris, London and New York can no longer do without a touch of argan oil in their finest dishes.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN INGREDIENTS?

Argan oil, of all oils, has the highest **vitamin E** (alpha-tocopherol) concentration – 620 mg/kg as opposed to the 320 mg/kg found in olive oil.

Vitamin F (linoleic acid) is the main factor in the oil's nutritious, therapeutic and anti-aging attributes. (34% ω 6 and 0.1% ω 3 + 8 essential fatty acids that the human body cannot produce.) **Vitamin A** (retinol) is an exceptional repairing agent.

Polyterpenes act as calming agents as well as restructuring and anti-septic agents.

Phenols reinforce the immune system while activating your circulation system.

Finally, a very rare molecule, the **phytosterol**, makes up 20% of the oil! It has exceptional anti-inflammatory (arthritis and rheumatism) and anti-cancerous properties (schottenol).

USEFUL TIPS

To strengthen your nails, soak them in a bowl of hot water with the juice from half a lemon and two grinded garlic cloves. After 20 minutes, dry your hand and massage them with 5 to 10 drops of non-roasted argan oil in a circular and slow movement. Massage your nails, cuticles, phalanges, and then front and back of your hand. You can do this one to twice per week, while you are watching a movie for example, for about a month. Then, you can do it once or twice a month to maintain the health of your hands and nails.

For smooth and soft feet, soak your feet in a bath of hot water with a cup of sea salt or Epsom salt. If you have many calluses under your feet, use a wet nail file and slowly scrub the callus (cover the file with some soap first and never use a dry file). Rinse and dry your feet. Massage the sole of your foot and your whole foot with some argan oil or the Arganat Power Cream – which is even more effective. Massage in circular motions to make sure the oil or cream penetrate your skin.

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