

Rooibos: More than a tea, a powerful botanical with proven health benefits



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From bakery to dairy to beverages, unleash your product's potential with Rooibos Ltd Rooibos, a sustainably grown botanical with scientifically proven health and wellness benefits.

Protected by a Geographic Indication, Rooibos (*Aspalathus linearis*) is a unique plant that grows in just one place in the world: the rugged Cederberg region of South Africa's beautiful Western Cape.

Rooibos, naturally free from caffeine, low in tannin and known for its calming properties, has been used medicinally for centuries by the Khoi and San people of South Africa. However, in recent years its popularity has grown as consumers increasingly look for natural, trusted botanicals to ease the stress of modern life.

While many people have healthy associations with Rooibos, today's discerning consumers are going further, demanding science-backed ingredients that have proven health benefits. And thanks to a large and growing body of scientific research, the unique and powerful bioactive content of Rooibos is being revealed.

Rooibos is packed with bioactive compounds, antioxidants and flavonoids and has a completely unique composition. Aspalathin is a Rooibos flavonoid that is scientifically established to lower blood glucose levels and that, to date, has been found in no other plant¹.

One controlled clinical trial found that drinking fermented, traditional Rooibos significantly improved the lipid profile and redox status (both relevant to heart disease) in adults at risk of developing cardiovascular disease².

Scientific research also confirms its calming properties: Rooibos lowers the production of cortisol, the body's stress hormone, according to a peer-reviewed study,³ as well as reducing oxidative stress and inflammation.⁴

All the botanical benefits in a pure powder

The benefits of Rooibos are so great that forward-thinking brands around the world are looking to use the plant in their food and drink products – not just in tea.



To make it easier for manufacturers to unlock Rooibos' active molecules and share the concrete health benefits with consumers, Rooibos Ltd has developed a range of powdered extracts made from 100% pure Rooibos using a gentle, solvent-free, and water-based processing technique.

These extracts create endless opportunities for product developers to add the functional benefits of Rooibos to almost any type of food, drink, supplement, or personal care product, which is well in line with consumer trends.



Forty-four percent of the global population say they are making greater efforts to seek out functional food and drink products positioned around active ingredients, according to research by FMCG Gurus.⁵

Rooibos Ltd's shelf-stable, water-soluble powdered extracts retain the full complexity of Rooibos' flavour and aroma profile – characterised by its honey, woody and herbal-floral notes – as well as its distinctive red colour and its scientifically proven functional health benefits in an easy-to-use and soluble concentrated format.

Rooibos ripens during the hottest months of the South African summer, and it is then that the harvesting, oxidation and drying under the searing African sun takes place. These harsh summer conditions also subject Rooibos to environmental stresses, such as extreme heat and a lack of water, stimulating antioxidant content.

Rooibos Ltd's fermented Rooibos extracts are guaranteed to contain a minimum of 26% polyphenols – including all the precious phenolic compounds found in the unprocessed Rooibos plant – and its green Rooibos extract, made from 100% unfermented Rooibos, packs in 30% polyphenols.

Versatile and easy-to-use

A look at some possible product launches using Rooibos Ltd Rooibos reveals the cross-category versatility of these extracts, from a sweet and spicy Rooibos marinade for meat to a Rooibos-infused vermouth, and from baking mixes to flavoured yoghurts.

Even within the tea category, brands are experimenting with formats, such as ready-to-drink iced Rooibos tea and Nespresso-compatible Rooibos pods. In the personal care category, brands are leveraging the botanical's antioxidants for skin and hair benefits by adding the bioactive compounds to shea butter-based moisturising cream and even shampoo.

Sustainability: At the heart of Rooibos Ltd's operations

While consumers want products that can provide tangible health benefits, sustainability is no less important. In fact, sustainability is set to be a defining trend for the tea industry in the coming years, according to market researchers at Mintel.

“Beyond eco-friendly packaging, there is a growing need for brands to address the environmental impact of tea sourcing and to address what is being done to protect the planet and the farmers,” says associate director Julia Buech in a 2022 Mintel report entitled The Future of Tea.⁶



Sustainability is at the heart of Rooibos Ltd's operations from field to factory, and brands that source Rooibos from Rooibos Ltd can be sure they are using an ingredient that delivers on consumers' environmental expectations.

In addition to having an entire technical department dedicated to developing sustainable farming techniques and working with local Rooibos farmers to implement these practices, Rooibos Ltd's factory is based on circular economy principles.

Its factory is equipped with a grey water system to reuse water and, with one of the largest solar installation systems in southern Africa, it is close to achieving carbon neutrality.

Rooibos Ltd cultivates its tea sustainably, harnessing the South African sun to naturally dry the stems and leaves, and it offers a wide range of third-party certifications – EU and USDA organic, UTZ, Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, and Fair Trade USA – to allow brands to create products that are demonstrably sustainable, transparent and fair.

Like other Rooibos producers, Rooibos Ltd also gives 1.5% of the farm gate price of Rooibos to the Khoi and San indigenous communities of South Africa in recognition of their traditional knowledge and use of the plant.⁷

Rooibos Ltd: Your partner in both tradition and innovation

Rooibos Ltd is not only the biggest Rooibos producer in the world, it is also the oldest and has played a pivotal role in transforming Rooibos from a little-known herbal drink to an internationally known botanical.

While the Khoi and San indigenous people of South Africa wild harvested Rooibos leaves and stems, drying and fermenting them in the sun, it was thanks to the work of Olof Bergh, a direct ancestor of Rooibos Ltd's current managing director, and the botanist, Dr Pieter le Fras Nortier, that Rooibos production could be scaled up to meet global demand. Together, Nortier and Bergh developed a seed scarification technique that allowed Rooibos to be cultivated on a large scale, bringing Rooibos tea to the world.

For almost 70 years, Rooibos Ltd has amassed knowledge and skills in Rooibos production and processing, giving it unique insights into this on-trend botanical ingredient.

Today, Rooibos Ltd is at the forefront of research & development, spearheading innovation efforts and implementing rigorous quality control measures. Its vertically integrated operations mean it exercises control over every step, from harvesting and drying to processing and packaging, allowing brands to offer only the best Rooibos to consumers.



Key takeaways

- Consumers are looking for functional ingredients that provide health benefits, but these must be backed by science.
- Thanks to its high and unique antioxidant content, Rooibos has scientifically proven benefits to improve cardiovascular health and reduce stress and inflammation, among other benefits.
- While Rooibos has a natural positioning in tea and beverages, it's functional benefits can be added to almost any food, drink and nutraceutical category, from bakery and dairy to savoury sauces and supplements.
- Rooibos Ltd is the oldest Rooibos supplier in the world and has played a pivotal role in its commercialisation. Today it offers brands reliable supplies of sustainably farmed and responsibly harvested Rooibos.



Sources

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⁴ "Studies of anti-inflammatory effects of Rooibos tea in rats", DOI: 10.1111/j.1442-200X.2009.02835.x

⁵ <https://fmcggurus.com/reports/fmcg-gurus-how-has-covid-19-changed-consumer-behaviour-global-report-2021/>

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⁷ 'Rooibos tea profits will be shared with Indigenous communities in landmark agreement', <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03374-x#:~:text=Under%20the%20rooibos%20agreement%2C%20the,region%2C%20north%20of%20Cape%20Town.>

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