



## CORIANDER

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**CORIANDER**, *Coriandrum sativum* L. (Mid. Pers. *k/gišnīz*, NPers. *gešnīz*, Kurd. *kešneš*, Taj. *kašnīj/z*, Bal. *kīnīč* and *gēnīč*, Rīšahri, *gešnī*, Azeri *gešnīz* and *gašnīš*), an herb indigenous to the Mediterranean area, the Caucasus, and Persia (Levey, in Kendī, pp. 326-27 no. 263) and valued for its aromatic leaves and seeds.

Early Persian sources deal mainly with the medicinal virtues of coriander. It is already mentioned in the *Bundahišn* (TD<sub>2</sub>, 16.17) as a vegetable (*tarrag*) eaten with bread. Mowaffaq Heravī (fl. ca. 370-80/980-90), author of the oldest treatise in Persian on materia medica, recorded (pp. 266-67, s.v. *kozbara*) a number of properties and uses of coriander (*gošnīz*), some of which are traceable back to Dioscorides (p. 305 no. 71). Ancient physicians and pharmacologists were not unanimous as to the nature of coriander (see, e.g., Ebn Sīnā, I, bk. 2, p. 348). According to Heravī, who characterized it as cold and moist in the first degree, the leaves are astringent and, if eaten, prevent vapor (*boḳār*) from ascending to the head. They are anaphrodisiac and in various mixtures (e.g., with barley flour) heal erysipelas. Their juice is effective against thrush (*rīš-e dāhān*) and aphtha (*qolā'*) and (with rose water in a mouthwash) against laryngitis. However, the juice of fresh coriander causes confusion, mental disorder, lethargy, amnesia, and hebetude (*kālīvī*); an overdose would be lethal. Taken with mucilage made from fleawort seeds (*bezr-ḳoṭūnā*), coriander soothes stomach irritation (*tabeš*) but may cause impairment of the vision (*tārīkī-e čašm*). Dried coriander (*joļjolān*, coriander seeds?), cold and dry in the second degree, is good against the torpor resulting from a plethora of



gall or phlegm and against epilepsy; it is also stomachic (for *joljolān* as sesame seeds, see, e.g., Ebn Maymūn, text, p. 29, s.v.; Renaud and Colin, p. 38, no. 367; Bīrūnī, pp. 137-38; cf. Kāšānī, I, p. 214; Tonokābonī, p. 248; for the most detailed account in Persian of the uses of coriander see ‘Aqīlī, pp. 745-46).

The medicinal use of coriander seems to have dwindled with time in Persia. In 1874, Schlimmer (pp. 157-58) noted that coriander, cultivated as a kitchen vegetable almost everywhere in Persia, was believed to be anaphrodisiac. In 1937 David Hooper and Henry Field reported (p. 106) that coriander seeds were smoked to relieve toothache and that an infusion of the leaves was believed to relieve headache. According to Ahmad Parsa (p. 52), an infusion of coriander seeds and jujubes is employed against colic at Torbat-e Ḥaydarī. Kurds use an infusion of coriander (*gežnēža*) leaves to relieve headache, toothache, and articular pains (Şafīzāda, p. 150). In Gīlān the juice of coriander (*h/kīl*) leaves is used as a mouthwash to heal eruptions (*jūš*) on an infant’s tongue (Pāyanda Langarūdī, p. 653). In Khorasan it is believed that eating too much coriander weakens the memory and causes amnesia (Şakūrzāda, p. 263). As a remedy for earache, a small amount of poppy seeds, opium, and coriander is burned with charcoal in the top of a water pipe, and the aspirated fumes of the combined drugs are blown into the aching ear (Şakūrzāda, pp. 251, 633).

Coriander has long been a popular herb in the culinary art of Persia (see, e.g., Boshāq-e Aṭ‘ema Šīrāzī, pp. 56, 82, 98), where it is extensively cultivated, especially in Azarbaijan. The leaves are harvested several times a year (Ṭabāṭabāī, pp. 713-16). Abūnaṣrī Heravī (p. 137) has provided instructions for its proper cultivation. [Cookbooks](#) from the Safavid period mention coriander as a condiment or ingredient in a variety of dishes (*kūkū*, *qalya*, *āš*) and pastries (see [Afšār](#), index, s.v.; see [cooking](#)). Mīrzā ‘Alī-Akbar, chef at the court of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah (1264-1313/1848-96), used it in *sabzī* pilaf, in *kūkū-ye sabzī*, in the Gīlakī dish *tūrš-e morġ*, in eggplant pickles, and in three kinds of dietetic *āš* (pp. 19, 26, 29, 61, 79, 80, 81). At present a kind of *āš-e gešnīz* is prepared for patients suffering from coryza, pneumonia, and some other infectious ailments. Coriander seeds are added to some vinegar pickles.



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