



Taken from: www.nutrition-and-you.com/capers.html

Unique, piquant flavored capers are flowering buds of a low-growing caper shrub. The buds, indeed, are one of the most desired ingredients in the kitchens all around the Mediterranean basin. The buds botanically belong to the family of *Capparaceae*, in the genus: *Capparis*. Scientific name: *Capparis spinosa*. The plant is a spiny, trailing, deciduous shrub native to the Mediterranean. It prefers warm humid climate and grows in abundance all over the Cyprus, Italy, Greece, North African and some Asia Minor regions. The shrub begins producing flower (caper) buds from third year of plantation. In general, their small cream colored buds are gathered by handpicking in the early morning hours of the day, which otherwise would unfold into a beautiful whitish-pink four sepal flower with long tassels of purple stamens. Soon after harvesting, the buds are washed and allowed to wilt for few hours in the sun before putting them into jars and covered with salt, vinegar, brine, or olive oil.

Health Benefits

- Being flower buds, capers are in fact very low in calories, 23 calories per 100 g. However, this spice-bud contains many phytonutrients, anti-oxidants and vitamins essential for optimum health.
- Capers are one of the plant sources high in flavonoid compounds **rutin** (or rutoside) and **quercetin**. Capers are in-fact very rich source of quercetin (180 mg/100 g) second only to tea leaf. Both of these compounds work as powerful anti-oxidants. Research studies suggest that quercetin has anti-bacterial, anti-carcinogenic, analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties.



Healthy Foods

Health Benefits: Capers

- Furthermore, rutin strengthen capillaries and inhibits platelet clump formation in the blood vessels. Both these actions of rutin help in smooth circulation of blood in very small vessels. Rutin has found application in some in trial treatments for hemorrhoids, varicose veins and in bleeding conditions such as hemophilia. It also found to reduce LDL cholesterol levels in obese individuals.
- The spicy buds contain healthy levels of vitamins such as vitamin A, vitamin K, niacin, and riboflavin. Niacin helps lower LDL cholesterol.
- Furthermore, minerals like calcium, iron, and copper are present in them. High sodium levels are because of added granular sea salt (sodium chloride).
- Caper parts have been used to relieve rheumatic pain in traditional medicines.
- The spicy caper pickles traditionally added to recipes as appetite stimulant. In addition, they help relieve stomachache and flatulence conditions.