

HEALTH

Edited by Suzanne Harrison suzanne.harrison@scmp.com

TCM

Rose Tse and
Angela Collingwood
info@shen-nong.com

Open sesame

Black sesame is called barbarian's hemp in Chinese because of its similarity in appearance to the plant. Since it was brought to China in 119BC, black sesame has been highly regarded as having powerful health benefits.

There's a folktale about a Chinese woman who not only lived to a ripe old age as a result of eating black sesame, but was able to walk 480km a day and run as fast as a deer.

According to an ancient Chinese text, black sesame could be boiled and made into tablets to improve the skin.

Sesame is consumed worldwide. However, in China the black variety is considered potent and this relates partly

to its colour. In traditional Chinese medicine theory, black denotes water in the five-elements theory. Water, in both Chinese and western medicine, has a strong relationship with the kidneys.

In Chinese medicine, however, the kidneys also store *jing*, which is the essence of life. *Jing* controls birth, development and maturation. If a person's kidneys are strong, it's said that they will stay youthful for longer.

However, from the point of view of modern, western medicine, black sesame is thought to contribute to longevity partly because of its vitamin E content.

In Chinese culture, a combination of black sesame and rice powder is often eaten as a beauty formula to enhance the skin's appearance. To make it,

stir-fry 60g black sesame and 15g glutinous rice over a low heat (without oil) for about five minutes or until the heat releases their fragrance. Be careful not to let it burn.

Grind the rice and toasted seeds with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water in a blender or food processor. Pour the mixture into a medium-sized pan with one cup of water.

Cook over medium heat for about 10 minutes, stirring constantly to avoid burning. Add rock sugar or other condiments to taste. It's a tasty dessert, but it must be eaten fresh.

This mixture is also said to be good for treating constipation, which needs to be corrected to help improve the skin.

Please consult your medical or TCM practitioner before taking any medicine.