

Chocolate Mint

Family	LAMIACEAE
Botanical	Mentha x piperita 'Chocolate'
Parts Used	Whole herb
USDA Hardiness	3-11
Light	Full sun to light shade
Soil	Moist and fertile
Duration	Perennial
Propagation	Stems root easily in water. Divide root balls or runners.
Water	Moist
Growing	<p>Mint can quickly overrun a planting bed, spreading by above- and underground stems. Keep it in check by planting in containers or beds bordered by sidewalk or driveway, or by planting in partially submerged pots in planting beds. Leaf flavor turns bitter when flower buds appear. Mint is generally pest-free.</p> <p>Frequent cutting keeps mint looking attractive. As with basil and other flowering herbs grown for their leaves, remove flowers as they appear, and pinch back the stems to encourage shorter, bushier growth.</p>

Medicinal Uses	Anti-inflammatory, anti-viral, and anti-mutagenic qualities
Benefits	<p>Aides with respiratory disorders, anti-inflammatory activity, gets rid of nagging headaches, helps people with insomnia, helps with asthma, helps with eczema, increases bone strength, helps with hypertension, helps combat allergies, helps combat aging, eases severe stomach cramps, brings relief to asthmatic and other similar conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•boosts the immune system of human body
Preparation	<p>Peppermint is used as an essential oil, taken in capsules, extracts, and most often herbal tea.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For cramps try boiling peppermint leaves in hot milk or hot water.•Soak cotton balls or rags with peppermint (or clove) oil and place them where ants may be entering or hiding out.•Take a quick whiff of peppermint oil for nausea.•Diffuse peppermint oil in aroma lamps to clear the air in stuffy rooms.•A few drops of peppermint essential oil in a cold compress cools the body and relieves a tension headache.

Fines Herbes

Culinary Uses

The leaf, fresh or dried, is the culinary source of mint. Fresh mint is usually preferred over dried mint when storage of the mint is not a problem. The leaves have a warm, fresh, aromatic, sweet flavor with a cool aftertaste, and are used in teas, beverages, jellies, syrups, candies, and ice creams. In Middle Eastern cuisine, mint is used on lamb dishes, while in British cuisine and American cuisine, mint sauce and mint jelly are used, respectively.

Potted Chocolate-Mint Puddings

Ingredients:

1/4 cup plus 2 Tablespoons sugar
3 Tablespoons cornstarch
1 Tablespoon plus 1-1/2 teaspoons unsweetened cocoa power
Salt
1-1/4 cups heavy cream
1-1/4 cups whole milk
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
6 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped (1 cup)
1/2 teaspoon pure mint extract
1 Tablespoon plus 1-1/2 teaspoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
10 chocolate wafer cookies
Garnish with sprigs of mint

Directions:

Whisk together sugar, cornstarch, cocoa and 1/8 teaspoon salt in a medium saucepan. Combine cream, milk and vanilla in a liquid measuring cup.

Pour 1 cup cream mixture into sugar mixture and whisk until cornstarch is dissolved. Add remaining cream mixture and whisk until smooth. Bring to a boil, whisking constantly, and cook until thick, about 5 minutes. Reduce heat to low and add chocolate. Whisk until chocolate melts, about 1 minute.

Remove from heat. Add mint extract and butter, and whisk until butter melts. Quickly divide pudding, whisking as you work to prevent sides from setting up, among eight 4 ounce glass votive candle holders, leaving 1/2" of space at the top. Refrigerate until set.

Just before serving, pulse cookies in a food processor until finely ground. Top each with 1 Tablespoon ground-cookie "dirt," and garnish with a planted mint sprig. Serve chilled.

Historical Facts

A cross between *Mentha aquatica* (watermint) and *Mentha spicata* (spearmint) Chocolate mint is a hybrid variety of mint. Mint hybrids occur commonly and although species within *Mentha* have origins within Europe, Africa and Asia, they have been naturalized in temperate regions of North America and Australia.

Additional Tips

Nutrition Facts

An excellent source of minerals like potassium, calcium, iron, manganese and magnesium. 100 g fresh herb provides 569 mg of potassium. Potassium is an important component of cell and body fluids that helps control heart rate and blood pressure. Manganese and copper works as co-factors for the antioxidant enzyme, superoxide-dismutase.

Further, it is rich in many antioxidant vitamins, including vitamin A, beta carotene, vitamin-C and vitamin E. The leaves of mint also contain many important B-complex vitamins like folates, riboflavin

and pyridoxine (vitamin B-6); and the herb is an excellent source of vitamin-K.