



WHAT ARE YOUR ALCOHOL LIMITS TO MAINTAIN HEALTH?

search articles... 



LOTUS MEDICAL  **OUNCES \$125 + TAX MIX & MATCH APRIL SPECIAL** [CLICK HERE!](#)

Home / Articles / Cuisine / Cuisine / [Maca mania](#)

 Print
  Send
  Share
  Comment
  Font
  Font Size

 Like 4
  Tweet 8
  Pin it 1
  Give

Thursday, March 7, 2013

Maca mania

New Incan superfood stirs mixed emotions in Boulder

By Abby Faires

There's a new "Incan superfood" popping up around Boulder. "Incan" because it's a Peruvian root plant, which grows exclusively in the Andes and has been cultivated for more than 2,000 years, and a "superfood" because gram for gram, the plant packs a ton of nutrients.



Photo courtesy of Nativas Naturals

Maca, the mighty superfood, has hit the shelves of Boulder, and it comes bearing a number of red flags. Traveling all the way to Peru to import the plant uses fossil fuels to make the transcontinental trip. Secondly, local herbalists say that maca is just a fad; moreover, they say the amount of maca being added to Western products is trivial. And lastly, many say that maca is an illusion; it's not the end-all, be-all solution.

Maca, or *Lepidium meyenii*, is being sold by several natural grocers in town, including Lucky's Market, Alfalfa's Market and Whole Foods. All three companies offer maca as a supplement in pill and powder form. Alfalfa's juice bar offers it as a smoothie add-in, and both Alfalfa's and Whole Foods carry a number of raw cereals, chocolate bars and protein bars that feature maca as an ingredient. The words "raw," "energy" and "vitality" are all splattered across packages, accompanied by messages of maca's alluring ability to boost libido and increase stamina.

"That's the problem with maca," says Lisa Ganora, director of the Colorado School of Clinical Herbalism (CSCH). "It's the newest fad."

Kevin Lubovich, a natural living expert at Lucky's Market, agrees.

"Everyone is always looking for something new," says Lubovich. "We're always chasing the illusion, thinking of what's next — what's the next new thing, and there's always something. It's just like it was with chia seeds, then amaranth and quinoa. Now it's maca."



Japango
SUSHI RESTAURANT
BOULDER'S SUSHI

Find us on Facebook



Boulder Weekly




Boulder Weekly

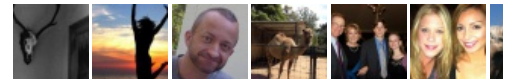
"Boulder County Transportation is requesting t

Read more (via Boulder Cycle Sport): <http://bit.ly/1K1v1v1>



 about an hour ago

3,608 people like Boulder Weekly.



 Facebook social plugin

EnjoyLife, take a WALK



comfortableshoes.com

ON THE DOWNTOWN MALL & IN THE VILLAGE

ONE
BOULDER FITNESS

Fitness for the Heart of DOWNTOWN BOULDER



Studies have suggested that maca has energizing and fertility-enhancing properties, and it can help sexual dysfunction, osteoporosis, memory and exposure to UV radiation. And neither Lubovich nor Ganora disagree with the evidence. They just argue that the amount of maca being added as an ingredient to raw bars, granola and smoothies is trivial.

"It's like having a big dinner and calling two peas on your plate your serving of vegetable," says Lubovich. "You know, it's like adding spirulina and bee pollen to bars. It looks good, but it's such a small amount, it's trivial."

Mc LeBel, brand communications expert for Nativas Naturals, a company that has been bringing raw maca powder to North America since 2003, disagrees with Lubovich.

"We promote getting a lot of diversity in your diet," says LeBel. "Even if it is in small quantities, maca makes up a significant amount of nutrients that your body can and will use."

Dried maca powder is more than 10 percent protein and contains seven essential amino acids. As a root crop, maca contains five times more protein than a potato and four times more fiber, according to a report published by *BeWell/Buzz* magazine.

"Maca is definitely a unique food, and there is nothing like it as far as the chemistry and complexity of nutrients," says LeBel. "It's like comparing apples to oranges or gojis to oranges in a sense."

Ganora argues that while maca can be very powerful, dandelion root, which can be grown in Boulder, is just as good.

"We're Americans, so it's like, 'Ahhh, what can we have next?'" she says. "But just 'cause it's from the Andes doesn't mean it's any better than what's under your feet. You don't need to go all the way to the Andes for it, you know. You can grow a root in your backyard."

Alanna Whitney, an herbalist and student at CSCH, agrees with Ganora.

"The herbs that are popular are faddist," she says. "They're Amazonian and fancy and exciting. But people don't realize that something like chamomile can be super powerful."

For both Whitney and Ganora there is an ethical component that comes with North Americans traveling all the way to Peru to extract maca.

"You gotta think about the rattled-out, gas-guzzling trucks you're driving to reach these farmers, the middlemen you are using to do business and the airplanes you're flying home," Ganora says. "You gotta think, 'Is that really the best way that I can heal myself?'" A statement made by Zach Adelman, the founder of Nativas Naturals, was featured in the company's July newsletter speculating on the impacts of global warming on the maca growing season.

"The harvest season has been getting later and later into the winter," he wrote. "I suspect that the change is due to global warming. It's alarming that environmental problems generated so far away in industrialized nations could be impacting the Andes ecosystem and the native people inhabiting this remote place."

When asked about their company's carbon footprint on the region, LeBel, the company's spokesperson, found it difficult to come up with a solid answer.

"It's hard to get around the issue of 'These are international foods, and we do source them from faraway places,'" says LeBel. "But in doing so, our emphasis is primarily on making sure the sustainability of that harvest and the sourcing of that product is as good as it can be."

LeBel says that one of the biggest reasons maca is becoming increasingly popular is that consumers are becoming more aware of what they're eating and the impact it can have on their health.

"I think people in general are starting to look for health through their food," says LeBel. "Food is medicine, and more and more people are reading labels closer."

Herbalists like Ganora, however, fear that consumers are missing a piece of that label: the vast distances that companies are trekking to bring these superfoods home.

"There really is no separation between human health and environmental health," says Ganora. "It's about being your own authority and experimenting and educating yourself about what's good for you."

Respond: letters@boulderweekly.com

Related content

- [Needling disputes](#)
- [Go east, young beer drinker](#)
- [Theater | Week of August 9,](#)
- [Tidbites | Cuban cafe opens on](#)
- [2009 Boulder County People of](#)
- [Upcoming Events | Week of April](#)

Related to:

[maca](#) [superfood](#) [root](#) [health](#) [boulder](#) [plant](#)

RATING

Average Reader Rating



POST A COMMENT

Also in Cuisine:

- ▶ New looks for fall
- ▶ Back on the market
- ▶ Holy diver
- ▶ Boulder County businesses: Waiting it out in the 'war zone'
- ▶ How locavores are the new gun nuts
- ▶ Beef goes upscale
- ▶ GABF 2013: The big beer run
- ▶ The woman who's changing the definition of 'foodie'
- ▶ Boulder County hop growers contribute to craft beers
- ▶ Gourmet camp food: Better dining under the stars

Also from Abby Faires:

- ▶ Personal healing and preservation: An herbalist's manifesto
- ▶ Reflections from road royalty
- ▶ The gut as a second brain
- ▶ Beetle-mania
- ▶ Boulder's Best Mixologist competition takes local one sip further
- ▶ Forest Service says when trees die, people die
- ▶ Searching for a road home
- ▶ An unbalanced equation
- ▶ Educational: Life after high school
- ▶ Quinoa conundrum

[HOME](#) | [NEWS](#) | [VIEWS](#) | [ENTERTAINMENT](#) | [ADVENTURE](#) | [CUISINE](#) | [BOULDERGANIC](#) | [ADVERTISING INFO](#) | [ARCHIVES](#) | [ABOUT US](#) | [CONTACT US](#) |

© 2013 Boulderweekly.com
690 South Lashley Lane, Boulder, CO, 80305
Phone: (303) 494-5511 / Fax: (303) 494-2585

Powered by
WeHaa