

Top Five Health Benefits of Marjoram

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✓ Fact Checked

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › The marjoram plant (*Origanum majorana*) is an aromatic herb known for its aromatherapeutic and culinary uses
- › Marjoram can be used in cooking, or in aromatherapy in its essential oil form. Depending on how it's used, marjoram is known to provide a variety of health benefits
- › The herb has a long history of use in folklore medicine for gastrointestinal, ocular, nasopharyngeal, respiratory, cardiac, rheumatologic and neurological disorders
- › Pharmacological activities include antioxidant, hepatoprotective, cardioprotective, antiplatelet, gastroprotective, antibacterial and antifungal, antiprotozoal, antiatherosclerosis, anti-inflammatory, antimetastatic, antitumor, antiulcer and anticholinesterase inhibitory activities
- › Marjoram is closely related to and often confused with oregano, and the two plants will cross-pollinate if grown close together, making proper identification near-impossible

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Sweet marjoram (*Origanum majorana*) is an aromatic herb native to the Mediterranean region known for its aromatherapeutic and culinary uses. Its botanical name means "joy of the mountain" in Greek, and was used to make wedding wreaths, as Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, was believed to wear wreaths made with marjoram.¹

Marjoram is classified as a perennial, and can grow as high as 2 feet tall, and sometimes a little bit higher. It has woody square stems, an upright appearance and opposing pairs of leaves.² It's closely related to (and often confused with) oregano, because of their similarity in appearance.

To make things even more confusing, their botanical names defy logic. *Origanum vulgare*, which is commonly known as the common oregano, is also known as wild marjoram. It can be very tricky, so thorough research must be done first before you purchase either of these plants.

Also keep in mind that oregano and marjoram will cross-pollinate, so if you grow them near each other, you'll end up with a cross that will make proper identification near-impossible.

Top 5 Health Benefits of Marjoram

Marjoram can be used in cooking, or in aromatherapy in its essential oil form. The herb also has a long history of use in folklore medicine for gastrointestinal, ocular, nasopharyngeal, respiratory, cardiac, rheumatologic and neurological disorders, just to name a few.³

Its pharmacological activities include antioxidant, hepatoprotective, cardioprotective, anti-platelet, gastroprotective, antibacterial and antifungal, antiprotozoal, antiatherosclerosis, anti-inflammatory, antimetastatic, antitumor, antiulcer and anticholinesterase inhibitory activities.⁴

Oregano, meanwhile, is known for its antioxidant and anticancer activities, with the highest antioxidant activity found in *Oregano fulgare* ssp. *Hirtum*, and the lowest in *Oregano vulgare* L.⁵ Depending on how it's used, marjoram is known to provide the following health benefits:^{6,7}

- **Improved digestive function** — When used to make tea, marjoram can improve your digestion by increasing production of digestive enzymes that help break down food.

In addition, marjoram tea can help alleviate common digestive disorders such as flatulence, constipation, diarrhea and stomach cramps.

- **Protection against common illnesses** – Marjoram contains various compounds that have effective antibacterial, antiviral and antifungal properties. As such, it can help reduce your risk of diseases such as the common cold, measles, mumps, influenza, food poisoning and various staph infections.
- **Improved heart health** – Marjoram can help improve your overall cardiovascular health by maintaining normal blood pressure levels, which lowers your risk of hypertension. It's also known for helping reduce the buildup of cholesterol in your arteries, which can prevent heart disease.
- **Anti-inflammatory effects** – When added to food, marjoram can help reduce your risk of developing inflammatory reactions. It can help with conditions such as asthma, fever, muscle aches, sinus headaches and migraines.
- **Psychological well-being** – Marjoram, in its essential oil form, can help uplift your mood and improve your psychological well-being. It can be used to help relieve insomnia and reduce stress and anxiety.

The Various Uses of Marjoram

The beauty of marjoram is that it can be added to various dishes that use different cooking methods, such as:

- **Soups** – It gives vegetable soups more flavor⁸
- **Roasted meats** – Marjoram can add an herbal aroma to roasted meats, such as chicken⁹
- **Sautéed vegetables** – Side dishes such as sautéed vegetables become more flavorful with a dash of marjoram¹⁰
- **Marinades** – Upgrade the taste of your marinated meat and fish dishes by adding marjoram to the marinade¹¹

Adding marjoram to your garden can reap benefits as well. Not only does it create a beautiful atmosphere, but it also helps attract butterflies and other insects that feed on pests and decomposing matter, and help pollinate plants.^{12,13}

Oregano can be used as a substitute for marjoram if you don't have it in storage at the moment. Just remember that although these two plants are very similar in appearance, they do differ in flavor. Oregano has a stronger pine taste, while marjoram is sweeter and milder. If you want to use oregano in place of marjoram, only use small amounts to mellow out its strong taste.¹⁴

How to Grow Marjoram

Marjoram is quite easy to grow in the comfort of your own home. It can be placed in an indoor container, window box or outdoors in your garden. For basic instructions, see the video above. While marjoram can grow in almost any type of soil, for best results, use sandy and fast-draining soil, as the plant only requires minimal watering. If the soil is too wet, the quality of the plant will suffer.¹⁵

Plant marjoram seeds during the late winter or early spring, because the extremely cold temperatures will damage the plants and may even cause seedlings to die out.¹⁶ If you're just starting out, plant indoors first and when the snow has melted, transfer the plants to your outdoor site. Make sure the location has plenty of sunlight. When grown in shade, the plant tends to lose its flavor.¹⁷

Start planting seeds by placing them just beneath the surface of the soil. As the seedlings grow, thin them out so that they're spaced about 10 inches apart. The plants are ready for harvesting once they reach a height of 3 inches. To get the best flavor, harvest before the flowers start to open.

Once picked, dry the plant to seal in taste and aroma. An easy way is to simply group several stems together in a small bundle, and hang it upside down in a dark room with good ventilation. Once dry, remove the leaves from the stem. Crush or grind the dry leaves before using.¹⁸

Try This: Spicy Roast Chicken With Tomatoes and Marjoram

This recipe from Bon Appétit¹⁹ uses marjoram to provide the chicken with a wonderful aroma and flavor once it's roasted. With the addition of tomatoes and red pepper, this dish is not only delicious, but warm and inviting as well.

Spicy Roast Chicken With Tomatoes and Marjoram

Ingredients

- 24 ounces of cherry **tomatoes** (about 4 cups), stemmed
- 1/4 cup of coconut oil
- 5 **garlic** cloves, pressed
- 1 1/4 teaspoons of dried crushed red pepper
- 2 tablespoons of chopped fresh marjoram
- 4 **pasture-raised chicken** breast halves with ribs
- Himalayan salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Procedure

1. Heat the oven to 450 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Toss the tomatoes, coconut oil, garlic, crushed red pepper and 1 tablespoon of marjoram in a large bowl.
3. Place the chicken slices on a rimmed baking sheet.
4. Pour the mixture over the chicken, while arranging the tomatoes in a single layer on a sheet around the chicken breasts.
5. Sprinkle the chicken generously with salt and pepper.
6. Roast until the chicken breasts are cooked through and the tomatoes are blistered, about 35 minutes.

7. Transfer the chicken to plates and spoon the tomatoes and juices over.
Sprinkle the plates with the remaining marjoram and serve.

Marjoram Essential Oil Has Unique Benefits, Too

Marjoram oil happens to be popular among aromatherapy enthusiasts, and is known for providing a warm, spicy, woody and camphoraceous scent that can provide a vast array of benefits, such as:²⁰

- **Analgesic** – Helps alleviate pain related to colds, fevers, inflammation and headache.
- **Antiseptic** – Applying marjoram essential oil on wounds can help prevent them from becoming infected and developing tetanus.
- **Antibacterial** – Helps kill bacteria that may cause various skin and digestive infections.
- **Carminative** – Can help solve digestive problems such as flatulence by relaxing the muscles in the abdominal region.
- **Diuretic** – Can help increase your frequency and quantity of urination, thereby helping improve your ability to eject excess water and harmful toxins from your body.

Before using marjoram essential oil (or any essential oil), you need to be aware of any potential allergic reactions. If you have any pre-existing medical conditions or are pregnant, it's important to visit your doctor first and let them know of your intention to use marjoram essential oil.

Once you've gotten permission from your doctor, do a skin patch test on your arm. Place a drop of the oil on your arm and check for any allergic reaction or irritation. Should something occur, stop using the oil immediately.

Sources and References

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