

Bay Laurel Leaves, Tea & Essential Oil Health and Beauty Benefits

Fast Facts

Bay Laurel	
Name	Bay Laurel
Scientific Name	<i>Laurus nobilis</i>
Origin	Eastern Mediterranean and the East coast of the Black Sea
Colors	Green when young turning shiny black–blue when ripe
Shapes	Small, shiny black berry–like drupe about 1 cm (3/8 in) long
Flavor	Sharp, bitter, pungent
Aroma	Herbaceous, spicy, slightly floral, and somewhat similar to oregano and thyme
Health Benefits	Prevents Cancer, Provides Respiratory Relief, Regulates Menstruation, Offers Pain Relief, Heals Wounds, Supports Digestive Health, Potent Insect Repellent, Promote Hair Growth, Alleviates Symptoms of Rheumatism and Arthritis, Reduces Stress and Anxiety

The bay laurel tree is an evergreen shrub that is indigenous to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region but nowadays is mostly cultivated in Europe. Many types of plant leaves are referred to as “bay leaves”, but the true bay laurel leaf is scientifically known as *Laurus nobilis*. Many other leaves have similar appearance and aroma to true bay laurel leaves, but don’t have the same nutrient content or chemical composition.

Bay laurel leaf essential oil is derived from the bay laurel tree, through steam distillation. This essential oil is commonly confused with bay leaf (*Pimenta racemosa*) essential oil. Although these two essential oils share similar qualities and properties, they come from two very different plants. Bay leaves can come from several different plants.

- Bay laurel leaf, also bay, bay leaf, bay leaf laurel, laurel, Grecian laurel, true laurel, sweet laurel, sweet bay, bay laurel, wreath laurel, Apollo laurel, Greek laurel and royal bay (*Laurus nobilis*, Lauraceae). Fresh or dried bay laurel leaves are used in cooking for their distinctive flavor and fragrance. The fresh leaves are very mild and do not develop their full flavor until several weeks after picking and drying.
- California bay leaf, also California laurel, Oregon myrtle, and pepperwood (*Umbellularia californica*, Lauraceae), is similar to the Mediterranean bay laurel, but has a stronger flavor. It is the sole species in the genus *Umbellularia*. A large hardwood tree native to coastal forests and the Sierra foothills of California, and to coastal forests extending into Oregon. It is endemic to the California Floristic Province.
- Indian bay leaf, tejpat, tejapatta, Malabar leaf, Indian bark, Indian cassia, or malabathrum (*Cinnamomum tamala*, Lauraceae) Differs from bay laurel leaves, Indian bay leaves are about

twice as long and wider, usually olive green in color and have three veins running the length of the leaf. Indian bay leaves have a clove-like aroma with a hint of peppery taste similar to cinnamon (cassia) bark, but milder. It can grow up to 20 m tall. A tree native to India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and China.

- Indonesian bay leaf or Indonesian laurel (*salam* leaf, *Syzygium polyanthum*, Myrtaceae) The leaves of the plant are traditionally used as a food flavoring to meat and, less often, to vegetables. This herb has been shown to kill the spores of *Bacillus cereus*. Native to Indonesia, Indochina and Malaysia, a species not commonly found outside Indonesia.
- West Indian bay leaf, Bay rum tree, the leaf of the West Indian bay tree and ciliment (*Pimenta racemosa*, Myrtaceae) It is used in cooking and an essential oil is distilled to produce a fragrant cologne called bay rum; is used in culinary applications (especially in Caribbean cuisine). Native to the Caribbean region.
- Mexican bay leaf (*Litsea glaucescens*, Lauraceae). An evergreen tree or shrub 3–6 meters (9.8–19.7 ft.) high in the genus *Litsea*. Distributed by Mexico and Central America. It is native from southern North America, mostly in Mexico.

DESCRIPTION OF BAY LAUREL

The bay laurel is an evergreen shrub or small tree, variable in size and sometimes reaching 7–18 m (23–59 ft.) tall. The genus *Laurus* includes four accepted species, whose diagnostic key characters often overlap.

The bay laurel is dioecious (unisexual), with male and female flowers on separate plants. Each flower is pale yellow–green, about 1 cm ($\frac{3}{8}$ in) diameter, and they are borne in pairs beside a leaf. The leaves are glabrous, 6–12 cm (2–5 in) long and 2–4 cm ($\frac{3}{4}$ –1+ $\frac{5}{8}$ in) broad, with an entire (whole) margin. On some leaves the margin undulates. The fruit is a small, shiny black berry-like drupe about 1 cm ($\frac{3}{8}$ in) long that contains one seed.

THE ECOLOGY OF BAY LAUREL

Laurus nobilis is a widespread relict of the laurel forests (also called *laurisilva* or *laurissilva*, a type of subtropical forest) that originally covered much of the Mediterranean Basin when the climate of the region was more humid. With the drying of the Mediterranean during the Pliocene era (in geology, the time from 5.333 million to 2.58 million years BP), the laurel forests gradually retreated, and were replaced by the more drought-tolerant *sclerophyll* plant communities (vegetation that is adapted to long periods of dryness and heat) familiar today.

Most of the last remaining laurel forests around the Mediterranean are believed to have disappeared approximately ten thousand years ago, although some remnants still persist in the mountains of southern Turkey, northern Syria, southern Spain, north-central Portugal, northern Morocco, the Canary Islands and in Madeira.

THE PHYTOCHEMISTRY OF BAY LAUREL

The most abundant component found in bay laurel leaf essential oil is *1,8-cineole*, also called *eucalyptol*. The leaves contain about 1.3% essential oils (*ol. lauri folii*), consisting of 45% *eucalyptol*, 12% other *terpenes*, 8–12% *alpha-terpinyl acetate*, 3–4% *sesquiterpenes*, 3% *methyl eugenol* (allylveratrol), and other α - and β -*pinenes*, *phellandrene*, *linalool*, *geraniol*, *terpineol*, and also contain *lauric acid*.

Both essential and fatty oils are present in the fruit. The fruit is pressed and water-extracted to obtain these products. The fruit contains up to 30% fatty oils and about 1% essential oils (*terpenes*, *sesquiterpenes*, alcohols and ketones). The chemical compounds *lauroside B* and *myrcene* (a

monoterpene), a component of many essential oils used in perfumery, have been extracted from *Laurus nobilis*.

THE MODERN USES OF BAY LAUREL

CULINARY USES

Bay laurel leaves were used for flavoring as far back as ancient Greece. The plant is the source of several popular herbs and one spice used in a wide variety of recipes of many European cuisines, particularly among Mediterranean cuisines. The bay laurel leaf is aromatic and commonly used in cooking. It can be used whole or in a dried or ground form. Most commonly, the leaves are added whole to Italian pasta sauces.

The leaves are most often used whole (in a *bouquet garni*, a bundle of herbs tied with string) and removed before serving (they can be abrasive in the digestive tract), unless used as a simple garnish. Whole bay laurel leaves have a long shelf life of about one year, under normal temperature and humidity.

Whole bay laurel leaves are used almost exclusively as flavor agents during the food preparation stage. They are used in soups, stews, brines, meat, seafood, vegetable dishes and sauces. Ground bay laurel leaves, however, can be ingested safely and are often used in soups and stocks, as well as being a common addition to a Bloody Mary (cocktail). Dried laurel berries and essential oil can both be used as robust spices, and the wood can be burnt for a strong “smoke” flavoring.

ORNAMENTAL USES

Laurus nobilis is widely cultivated as an ornamental plant in regions with Mediterranean (or oceanic climates), and as a house plant or greenhouse plant in colder regions. It is used in topiary to create single erect stems with ball-shaped, box-shaped or twisted crowns; also for low hedges. However it is slow-growing and may take several years to reach the desired height. Together with a gold form, *L. nobilis* “Aurea” and a willow-leaved form *L. nobilis* f. *angustifolia*, it has gained the [Royal Horticultural Society's](#) (RHS) [Award of Garden Merit](#) (AGM).

One of the most important pests affecting ornamental laurels is caused by *Trioza alacris* (Triozidae, one of seven families collectively referred to as “jumping plant lice”), which induces the curling and thickening of the edge of the leaves for the development of the insect's nymphs (juvenile), eventually creating a decaying gall (swelling or growth). The species is also affected by *Coccus hesperidum* (soft scale insect in the family Coccidae, an agricultural pest, particularly of citrus and commercial crops).

INSECT REPELLENT USES

Bay laurel leaves can also be used scattered in a pantry to repel meal moths (of the family Pyralidae, its larvae are pests of stored foods, namely milled plant products), flies, and cockroaches. In 2011 study Mediouni–Ben Jemaa and Tersim found the essential oil to be usable as an insect repellent.

ENTOMOLOGY USES

Bay laurel leaves have been used in entomology as the active ingredient in “killing jars”. The crushed, fresh, young leaves are put into the jar under a layer of paper. The vapors they release kill insects slowly but effectively and keep the specimens relaxed and easy to mount. The leaves discourage the growth of molds.

They are not effective for killing large beetles and similar specimens, but insects that have been killed in a cyanide killing jar can be transferred to a laurel jar to await mounting. There is confusion in the literature about whether *Laurus nobilis* (bay laurel) is a source of cyanide to any practical extent.

As a source of cyanide, bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis*) is often confused with the unrelated cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), which contains dangerous concentrations of *cyanogenic glycosides* together with the enzymes to generate the hydrogen cyanide when the leaf is physically damaged. However, there is no evidence that cyanide is relevant to the value of bay laurel leaves in killing jars.

SECULAR USES

Bay laurel leaves are used in Eastern Orthodoxy, one of the three main branches of Christianity alongside Catholicism and Protestantism, liturgy. Its theology and practices are similar to those of the early Church. To mark Jesus' destruction of Hades and freeing of the dead, parishioners throw bay laurel leaves and flowers into the air, letting them flutter to the ground.

OTHER MODERN USES

Bay laurel leaf essential oil is a secondary ingredient, and the distinguishing fragrant characteristic of Aleppo soap. This soap is a handmade, hard bar soap associated with the city of Aleppo, Syria. Aleppo soap is a hard soap made from olive oil and lye, though classified as a Castile soap, it is distinguished by the inclusion of bay laurel leaf essential oil.

THE HISTORY OF BAY LAUREL

ANCIENT GREECE

The ancient Greeks considered it to be a potent medicine capable of protecting them against the plague and other diseases. Bay laurel was valued for its anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties and used for insect stings.

In ancient Greece, the plant was called *daphne*, after the mythic mountain nymph, the naiad Daphne. In the myth of "Apollo and Daphne", the god Apollo fell in love with Daphne, a priestess of Gaia (Mother Earth), and when he tried to seduce her she pleaded for help to Gaia, who transported her to the Island of Crete.

In Daphne's place Gaia left a laurel tree, from which Apollo fashioned wreaths to console himself. Other versions of the myth, including that of the Roman poet Ovid (Pūblius Ovidius Nāsō), state that Daphne was transformed directly into a laurel tree.

Bay laurel leaves were used to fashion the laurel wreaths of ancient Greece, a symbol of highest status. A wreath of bay laurels was given as the prize at the Pythian Games (one of the four Panhellenic Games) because the games were in honor of Apollo, and the laurel was one of his symbols. Recipients of laurel wreath were kings, priests, prophets, scholars, poets, athletes and soldiers.

According to the Syrian poet Lucian (Lucian of Samosata), the priestess of Apollo known as the Pythia (the Oracle of Delphi) reputedly chewed laurel leaves from a sacred tree growing inside the temple (at Delphi) to induce the *enthusiasmos* (trance) from which she uttered the oracular prophecies for which she was famous.

Some accounts starting in the 4th Century BC describe her as shaking a laurel branch while delivering her prophecies. Those who received promising omens from the Pythia were crowned with laurel wreaths as a symbol of Apollo's favor.

ANCIENT ROME

This symbolism carried over to Roman culture, which held the laurel as a symbol of victory. It was also associated with immortality, with ritual purification, prosperity and health. It is also the source of the

words *baccalaureate* (undergraduate degree) and *poet laureate*, as well as the expressions "assume the laurel" and "resting on one's laurels".

The Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder stated that the laurel for "profane" uses, such as lighting it on fire at altars, was strictly forbidden. He also listed a variety of conditions which bay laurel leaf essential oil was supposed to treat: paralysis, spasms, sciatica, bruises, headaches, catarrhs (congestion), ear infections and rheumatism.

Laurel was closely associated with the Roman Emperors, beginning with Augustus (Caesar Augustus, also known as Octavian, the first Roman emperor). Two Laurel trees flanked the entrance to Augustus' house on the Palatine Hill in Rome, which itself was connected to the Temple of Apollo Palatinus, which Augustus had built. Thus, the laurels had the dual purpose of advertising Augustus' victory in the Civil Wars and his close association with Apollo.

Suetonius (Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus) relates the story of Augustus' wife, and Rome's first Empress, Livia (Livia Drusilla, empress from 27 BC to AD 14), who planted a sprig of laurel on the grounds of her villa at Prima Porta after an eagle dropped a hen with the sprig clutched in its beak onto her lap. The sprig grew into a full-size tree which fostered an entire grove of laurel trees, which were in turn added to by subsequent Emperors when they celebrated a Roman *triumph* (a civil ceremony and religious rite held to publicly celebrate the success of a military victory in service of Rome).

The Emperors in the Julio–Claudian dynasty (comprised the first five Roman emperors: Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero) all sourced their laurel wreaths from the original tree planted by Livia. It was taken as an omen of the impending end of the Julio–Claudian dynasty that in the reign of Nero (Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, the fifth Roman emperor) the entire grove died, shortly before he was assassinated.

Rome's second Emperor Tiberius (Tiberius Caesar Augustus, reigned from AD 14 until 37) wore wreaths of laurel whenever there was stormy weather because it was widely believed that laurel trees were immune to lightning strikes, affording protection to those who brandished it. One reason for this belief is because laurel does not burn easily and crackles loudly when on fire. It led ancient Romans to believe the plant was inhabited by a fire demon, and was therefore "immune" from external threats like fire or lightning.

In modern day Italy laurel wreaths are worn as a crown by graduating school students.

ANCIENT TO MODERN EAST ASIA

An early Chinese etiological myth (origin myth) for the phases of the moon involved a great forest or tree which quickly grew and lost its leaves and flowers every month. After the Sui (581–618 AD) and Tang (618–907 AD) dynasties, this was sometimes connected to a woodsman named Wu Gang, sentenced to cut a self-repairing tree as punishment.

The tree was originally identified as a 桂 (*gui*) and described as the osmanthus (*Osmanthus fragrans*, now known in Chinese as the 桂花 or "*gui flower*"), whose blossoms are still used to flavor wine (Cassia wine, osmanthus wine, or Kuei Hua Chen Chiew) and confections for the Mid–Autumn Festival (also known as the Moon Festival or Mooncake Festival).

However, in English, it is associated with the well-known cassia (*Cinnamomum cassia*, known in Chinese as the 肉桂 or "*meat gui*"), while in modern Chinese it has become associated with the Mediterranean bay laurel. By the Qing dynasty (1636–1912), the *chengyu* (a type of traditional Chinese idiomatic expression consisting of four characters) "pluck osmanthus in the Toad Palace (or Lunar pareidolia, the pareidolic images seen on the face of the Moon)," 蟾宫折桂 (*Chángōng zhé gui*) an expression which

meant passing the imperial examinations (or the keju, a civil–service examination system), which were held around the time of the Moon Festival.

The similar association in Europe of laurels with victory and success led to its translation into Chinese as the 月桂 or "Moon gui".

MIDDLE TO MODERN FINLAND

The laurel leaves in the coat of arms of the municipality of Kaskinen (*Kaskö*), Finland may have been meant to refer to local flowering, but its origin may also be in the name of the family Bladh (*blad*, or "leaf"); two members of the family—a father and a son—who, at the time, acquired both town rights and the status of "staple town" for the village of Kaskinen located in the province of Western Finland that is part of the Ostrobothnia region.

THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF BAY LAUREL LEAVES, TEA & ESSENTIAL OIL

Bay laurel leaves are currently available fresh or dried. Many health food stores also sell them in powdered form. Bay laurel leaves contain vitamins, minerals and plant–based chemical compounds that protect our body from oxidative stress and are capable of fighting off bacteria, promoting diuresis, managing diabetes, improving cardiovascular health, reducing inflammation, respiratory problems and optimizing digestion.

Documented properties of bay laurel leaf for aromatherapy include analgesic, antibacterial, anticoagulant, antifungal, antineuralgic, antioxidant, antirheumatic, antiseptic, antispasmodic, astringent, carminative, cholagogue, digestive, diuretic, emetic, expectorant, hepatic, hypotensor, insect repellent, laxative, nervine, sedative, stimulant and stomachic.

Bay laurel leaf essential oil has a long history of use as a pain reliever for arthritic aches and pains, lower back pain, earaches, and sore muscles and sprains. This essential oil should be used in moderation, as it can be overpowering and cause drowsiness. Bay laurel leaf is a warming essential oil that promotes circulation and perspiration, is also calming and helps reduce stress. The most common health benefits attributed to bay laurel leaf, tea and essential oil are:

1. REDUCE RESPIRATORY CONDITIONS

The essential oil of the bay laurel leaf is known to be an effective expectorant. Bay laurel leaf essential oil is often used in aromatherapy for loosening up phlegm and eliminating dangerous pathogens trapped in the respiratory tract, thus relieving congestion in the air ways. Its antispasmodic properties are useful for those experiencing coughs, colds, flu and bronchitis. Bay laurel leaf essential oil's antibacterial and antiseptic nature is also useful for killing off any bacteria or viruses that cause infections of the respiratory system.

Antioxidants like vitamins C and A, and other compounds like tannins in bay laurel leaves improve our respiratory health and protect our respiratory system from free radical damage. The anti–inflammatory compounds and dietary fibers in bay laurel leaves [reduce lung inflammation](#) and protects against asthma and bronchial asthma.

The use of bay laurel leaf essential oil diluted in water to make medicinal vapors in the case of colds or the flu is just as common as the use of eucalyptus leaves. It is also used to lightly moisten heating pads that are then applied to the chest with the goal of mitigating congestion and promoting better respiration. Conversely, a poultice can be made from the bay laurel leaves and spread onto the chest overnight.

2. REDUCE ANXIETY & STRESS

Unmanaged stress can affect our physical, mental, and emotional health. It is important to keep stress under control, bay laurel leaves can help in doing the same. Linalool, a *noncyclic monoterpene* present in the bay laurel leaves and essential oil, also found in [basil](#) and thyme, reduces stress hormones in the body and is used in aromatherapy. It may be a good choice to consume bay laurel leaf tea on a regular basis since the antioxidants and tannins in bay laurel leaves protect our cells from oxidative stress. B vitamins and magnesium in bay laurel leaves calm our nerves, and reduce stress and anxiety.

3. REGULATE MENSTRUAL FLOW

Extracts of the bay laurel leaves have been used to stimulate menstrual flow, thus making the essential oil a good, natural remedy for irregular menstrual cycles. Bay laurel leaf essential oil also helps to ease menstrual cramps, given its antispasmodic qualities as it relaxes the uterine muscles. It also relieves common problems associated with menstruation, such as nausea and fatigue.

4. RELIEVE MORNING SICKNESS

Consuming bay laurel leaves increases the secretion of digestive enzymes in the stomach. This provides relief from nausea, vomiting, morning sickness, and other related discomfort experienced during pregnancy.

5. PREVENT BIRTH DEFECTS

Bay laurel leaves support the health of both mom and baby during pregnancy, because they are a rich source of folic acid. They are also believed to contain properties that enhance fertility. So, consuming bay laurel leaf tea is a way to stimulate the reproductive system and improve its health.

6. OFFER PAIN RELIEF

Bay laurel leaf essential oil is also known for its anti-inflammatory and analgesic qualities, and it is often used to provide pain relief for a variety of muscular and joint ailments associated with arthritis, rheumatism and gout, or for sore, aching muscles after an intense workout. Conversely, a bay laurel leaf poultice can be applied onto the inflamed joints. For headaches, apply a bay laurel leaf paste on the forehead for quick relief. Massaging the temples with the essential oil from bay laurel leaves can help alleviate pain from headaches and migraines.

Bay laurel leaf essential oil is a very powerful muscle relaxant. Its vasoconstriction action stimulates the relaxation and contraction of the nerve impulse, it even regulates blood circulation. It is especially useful as a massage oil for achy shoulders and neck. This essential oil is natural and organic, which is better than over-the-counter painkillers and analgesic medication that might carry unwanted side effects and may be harmful to your overall health in the long run.

7. PROVIDES ANTI-INFLAMMATORY BENEFITS

Bay laurel leaves contain *parthenolide*, a unique phytonutrient, and other [anti-inflammatory](#) compounds. These compounds provide relief from the pain and inflammation caused by inflammatory conditions such as arthritis, rheumatism, gout, asthma and bronchitis. Chronic inflammation can cause autoimmune diseases, diabetes and cancers. Consuming bay laurel leaves as well as topical application of bay laurel leaf essential oil helps relieve pain and inflammation of sore joints and other areas affected.

8. HELP HEAL WOUNDS

The antibacterial and antibiotic properties of bay laurel leaf essential oil help to clean bacteria from wounds, cuts, bruises and scrapes. This essential oil inhibits the growth of various types of bacteria,

microbes and fungi, prevents infections from setting in and prevents wounds from becoming septic or from incurring tetanus. It generally helps to prevent complications and speeds up the healing process.

Bay laurel leaves promote the quick healing of wounds and injuries. The antimicrobial properties of bay laurel leaves protect wounds and injuries from bacterial, viral, and fungal infections. Anti-inflammatory compounds in bay laurel leaves reduce pain and inflammation caused by the injury.

According to a [2006 study on Sprague Dawley rats](#) treated with the aqueous extract of *Laurus nobilis*, bay laurel leaf, (200mg per kg of weight per day) for 10 days. In bay laurel leaf treated animals, the rate of wound contraction, weight of the granulation tissue and *hydroxyproline* content were moderately high. The histological study of the granulation tissue of the bay laurel leaf treated animals was better than the control group.

Herbalists recommend washing the wound with a bay laurel leaf tea (infusion) and apply a bay laurel leaf poultice to the wound as natural way to heal. Additionally, the leaves have also been shown to protect the body against some common pathogens like *Staphylococcus aureus* (Staph), *Aspergillus fumigatus* (mold), *Streptococcus pyogenes* (Strep) and *Candida albicans* (yeast) with their strong antimicrobial activity.

Bay laurel leaf is also recommended by herbalists to treat insect stings and snakebites. With the antibacterial and antifungal properties, the essential oil of bay laurel leaf can help treat skin infections when applied topically, and to heal cuts, bruises and insect bites.

9. TREAT COLD AND FLU SYMPTOMS

The antimicrobial property of bay laurel leaves is useful in treating cold and flu symptoms and upper respiratory infections. In addition, bay laurel leaf tea can also be used to lower a fever. Start with a half cup until you feel an improvement.

Another benefit of bay laurel leaf tea and essential oil is the relief from symptoms of various respiratory tract infections. For cold and flu symptoms, dilute bay laurel leaf essential oil in a carrier oil and apply it to the chest to clear congestion of the lungs and air passages. Use the essential oil of bay laurel leaf in a humidifier to make a vapor for breathing.

10. SUPPORTS DIGESTIVE HEALTH

Antioxidant compounds in bay laurel leaves protect our digestive system from free radical damage. They reduce the risk of several types of cancer such as colon cancer, pancreatic cancer, stomach cancer and intestinal cancer. The dietary fibers in bay laurel leaves are natural laxative that [improve bowel movement](#), relieve constipation, and other digestive problems like abdominal pain, gas, bloating and flatulence. These dietary fibers are also effective against diarrhea as fiber absorbs excess fluid from the intestines.

The antimicrobial and antibacterial properties of bay laurel leaves protect our digestive system from bacterial and fungal infections, and reduce the risk of stomach ulcers. Other nutrients such as zinc, potassium, magnesium and iron in bay laurel leaves contribute to healthy digestion. For diets rich in complex proteins that are difficult to digest, drinking an infusion (tea) made from bay laurel leaves, which contains unique enzymes facilitates digestion and promotes nutrient absorption. Spicing up dishes with bay laurel leaves is also beneficial for people who wish to stimulate their appetite.

Bay laurel leaves can play a role in digestion as a diuretic stimulating urination, which eliminates toxins from the body, and as an emetic stimulating vomiting, if something unhealthy has been ingested. In addition, bay laurel leaves contain organic compounds effective at calming upset stomachs and relieving symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Bay laurel leaf essential oil is thought to be an aperitif, it helps boost appetite. Bay laurel leaf essential oil also helps to remove excess gas, relieving symptoms of indigestion and bloating. Its antispasmodic qualities are also useful in helping alleviate gastrointestinal pain arising from spasms or contractions of the stomach and intestinal walls. Drinking a cup of bay laurel leaf tea is a natural way to alleviate some digestive problems such as acid reflux, constipation and irregular bowel movements.

11. HELP MANAGE CHOLESTEROL

Bay laurel leaves help manage cholesterol levels as they contain dietary fibers that reduce LDL cholesterol. Antioxidants in bay laurel leaves reduce cholesterol oxidation. Thus preventing the accumulation of plaque and fat deposits in the arterial walls and reducing the risk of *atherosclerosis*, a leading cause of several cardiovascular diseases.

12. REGULATE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Bay laurel leaves contain potassium, a natural vasodilator that relaxes blood vessels, improves blood circulation and provides relief from *hypertension* (high blood pressure). Drinking bay laurel leaf tea routinely may reduce the risk of high blood pressure. Mixing bay laurel leaves with andrographis leaves will have the best results.

Caution: *If you take blood pressure medication, consult your physician before adding bay laurel leaves to your diet, to ensure there is no risk of food–drug interaction. Too much potassium can drop our blood pressure below normal, and cause tiredness, numbness, nausea or vomiting, trouble breathing, chest pain, palpitation or irregular heartbeat and pale skin.*

13. IMPROVES CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

Bay laurel leaves, tea and essential oil contain antioxidants that protect our cardiovascular system from free radical damage. Dietary fibers in bay laurel leaves help [improve cardiovascular health](#). Bay laurel leaves contain potassium that reduces the risk of cardiovascular problems. Compounds like salicylates, as well as other nutrients like zinc, iron, magnesium, calcium, and B vitamins in bay laurel leaves play an important role in improving and maintaining cardiovascular health.

Bay laurel leaves can protect you from cardiovascular diseases like heart attacks and strokes. They contain two chemical compounds, *caffeic acid* that helps lower bad cholesterol, and *rutin* that helps strengthen the capillary walls of your heart and body extremities. Something as simple as eating dishes spiced up with bay laurel leaves can help reduce your risk of heart disease.

14. LOWER THE RISK OF CANCER

Bay laurel leaves, tea and essential oil are an abundant source of antioxidants and flavonoids. These compounds protect our cells from [free radical damage](#) and reduce the risk of several types of cancer such as colon cancer, pancreatic cancer, stomach cancer, lung cancer and intestinal cancer. Free radicals are unstable ions that stabilize by stealing electrons from the neighboring molecules, and doing so causes them oxidative damage.

Bay laurel leaves contain antioxidants and other organic compounds such as *catechins*, *quercetin*, *eugenol*, *linalool*, *phytonutrients*, and *parthenolide* that help the body fight free radical damage. The phytonutrient *parthenolide* is proven effective at preventing the development of cervical cancer cells. Antioxidants provide other benefits such as strengthening the immune system and improving neurological health.

15. REGULATE BLOOD SUGAR

Due to their low glycemic index, bay laurel leaves, tea and essential oil release sugar into the bloodstream at a slow pace. This prevents sudden spikes in blood sugar levels and helps manage diabetes. [Bay laurel leaves increase HDL cholesterol](#) levels in people with Type II diabetes. The antioxidants in bay laurel leaves help our body produce insulin efficiently. They are useful for Type II diabetes patients and people who experience insulin resistance.

Caution: *If you take medication for diabetes, do not add bay laurel leaves to your diet until after consulting with your physician to ensure there is no risk of food–drug interaction. Taking bay laurel leaves while being on sedative medication may cause excessive drowsiness.*

16. AID IN WEIGHT LOSS

Bay laurel leaves promote weight loss as they improve our metabolism, and accelerate the rate at which our body burns stored fats. Dietary fibers in bay laurel leaves provide a feeling of satiety and control overeating. Although they are high in calories (314 calories per 100 grams) that is not so much of a concern since they are used as a spice for flavor and are only added to dishes in minuscule amounts.

17. GOOD FOR EYES

Bay laurel leaves are good for our eyes as they contain antioxidants and flavonoids. These compounds protect our eyes from Free radical damage and reduce the risk of age–related macular degeneration, cataracts and glaucoma. The vitamin A in bay laurel leaves is an essential nutrient for our ocular health as it improves vision, prevents eye dryness and reduces the [risk of night blindness](#). Other nutrients like zinc, iron, potassium, magnesium, and B vitamins in bay laurel leaves also play a significant role in keeping our eyes healthy. .

18. TREAT KIDNEY INFECTIONS AND PREVENT KIDNEY STONES

Boiling bay laurel leaves in water and drinking the infusion as an herbal tea is known to be effective at treating infections, including infection of the kidneys. Doing this is also recommended for people who are prone to developing kidney stones to prevent their formation.

19. POTENT INSECT REPELLENT

Bay laurel leaves are natural insect repellent as they contain *laurat acid*. The essential oil also has potent insect repelling qualities, as it is known to be able to ward off pesky and unwanted pests your surrounding environment. Applying bay laurel leaf essential oil will reduce pain and swelling from insect bites and stings.

You don't have to rely on synthetic, store–bought, manufactured pesticides and insecticides that are full of harmful toxic chemicals when you can have this natural and organic remedy instead. Furthermore, commercial pesticides and insecticides are detrimental not only to the environment, but to your health as well.

THE BEAUTY BENEFITS OF BAY LAUREL LEAVES, TEA & ESSENTIAL OIL

1. PROMOTE HAIR GROWTH

Antioxidants and flavonoids in bay laurel leaves provide nourishment to our hair and scalp, protect them from free radical damage, and reduce premature greying of hair, split ends, dryness and other signs of aging. Bay laurel leaves restore moisture to the hair follicles. The beta–carotene and protein present in bay laurel leaves improve hair thickness and strength. Bay laurel leaves benefit the hair shaft as they contain vitamin B⁶, an essential nutrient for the hair as it [prevents hair loss](#) and hair damage.

Bay laurel leaf essential oil is as effective for hair growth as rosemary essential oil. It can promote hair growth when applied regularly within a proper care routine. The essential oil penetrates the scalp and hair shaft, and since it improves blood circulation, it enhances the health of the scalp, stimulating growth. The aroma of this essential oil repels insects, so it is sometimes used to get rid of lice.

2. REDUCE HAIR LOSS

Antioxidants in bay laurel leaves protect our hair and scalp from oxidative damage. This strengthens our hair follicles and reduces the risk of hair loss. Beta-carotene, protein, as well as other nutrients like zinc, potassium, magnesium and B vitamins in bay laurel leaves strengthen our hair and prevent hair loss. Boiling bay laurel leaves in water and rinsing your hair with the infusion once cool is said to be very good at preventing excess hair loss.

Bay laurel leaf essential oil is also thought to be a good hair tonic, as it boosts hair growth and prevents excessive hair loss. Because it is also an astringent, it helps to tighten the hair follicles and hair roots, thus preventing excess hair loss. It helps to moisturize the scalp, thus preventing dandruff and flaky, itchy scalp. Bay laurel leaf essential oil may also be massaged on balding spots.

3. GOOD FOR YOUR SKIN

Bay laurel leaves can offer skin relief from oxidative damage, which prevents the appearance of wrinkles, fine lines, and other signs of aging. Bay laurel leaf essential oil is rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants—nutrients that are suited for skin care.

In a [2017 study](#) bay laurel leaf essential oil's anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial activities helped fight off bacterial strains—namely *Staphylococcus aureus* (Staph), *Bacillus cereus* (food-borne bacteria), *Escherichia coli* (E. coli) and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (common bacteria)—which are spread through contact.

4. ORAL CARE

Bay laurel leaves are beneficial for keeping teeth healthy and white. Dry fresh bay laurel leaves and orange peel. Mash them and mix them with water until they become a paste. Brushing with this mixture can be used for teeth whitening.

THERAPEUTIC USES OF BAY LAUREL LEAVES, TEA & ESSENTIAL OIL

Bay laurel leaves contain an essential oil whose main components are *1,8-cineole* and *eugenol*. The essential oil also contains iron and calcium, and riboflavin, niacin and vitamin A. The essential oil obtained from the fruit of *Laurus nobilis* was traditionally used for the treatment of *osteoarticular* (manifestations, affecting or related to bones and joints) of inflammatory diseases and *pediculosis* (lice).

In herbal medicine, aqueous extracts (tinctures) of bay laurel have been used as an astringent (a chemical that shrinks or constricts) and salve for open wounds. Bay laurel leaf essential oil is one of the most popular natural oils used in massage.

More recently it is believed that this essential oil can foster relaxation and stress relief, so it is also used in aromatherapy. Since it has antiseptic, antibiotic and pain relieving properties, a folk remedy for rashes caused by poison ivy, poison oak, and stinging nettle is a poultice soaked in boiled bay laurel leaves.

1. **Respiratory Relief:** Diffuse bay laurel leaf essential oil in a diffuser or vaporizer and inhale the aroma. Alternatively, make a steam inhalation by adding a few drops of the essential oil into a bowl of hot, steaming water and inhale the vapors. Mix it in combination with eucalyptus essential oil for optimum results.

2. **For Cold and Flu Symptoms:** Steep 2–3 bay laurel leaves in hot water for about 10 minutes then soak a cloth in the water and spread it on your chest.
1. **To Lower A Fever:** Boil 2–3 bay laurel leaves in 200 ml of water until about ¼ liquid remains, then drink the infusion.
2. **To Regulate Menstruation:** Dilute the essential oil with a carrier oil (such as grape seed, jojoba or rosehip) in a 1:1 ratio and gently massage onto the abdominal area for pain relief and to stimulate menstruation.
3. **For Pain Relief:** Dilute the essential oil with a carrier oil and gently massage onto the affected areas. Alternatively, add a few drops of the essential oil to a warm compress and press gently onto the affected areas.
4. **To Accelerate Wound Healing:** Apply diluted bay laurel leaf essential oil onto the affected areas using a cotton swab, but be careful to avoid applying it to open wounds.
5. **For Digestive Health:** Gently massage diluted bay laurel leaf essential oil onto the abdominal area to aid in digestion.
6. **For Indigestion and Bloating:** Boil 5g of bay laurel leaves with a piece of ginger in 200ml water until ¼ liquid remains then drink this twice a day (add some honey if preferred).
7. **To Lower Bad Cholesterol:** Wash 10–15 bay laurel leaves and boil in 3 cups of water until 1 cup of liquid remains. Allow to cool, strain and drink this routinely every night.
8. **For High Blood Pressure:** Boil 7–10 fresh bay laurel leaves in 3 cups of water until 1 cup of liquid remains. Allow to cool, strain and drink this twice a day.
9. **To Manage Type II Diabetes:** Grind dry bay laurel leaves into powder, add to food and eat for 30 days for maximum results, which may result in a reduction in blood sugar levels.
10. **To Manage Type II Diabetes:** Boil 7–15 bay laurel leaves in 3 cups of water until only 1 cup of liquid remains. Allow to cool, strain and drink this before meals. Practice this method twice a day.
11. **For Healthy Heart or Anxiety:** Boil 3g bay laurel leaves combined with 3–4g wild rose flowers and 300ml water until 75ml of liquid remains. Drink this infusion.
12. **For Weight Loss.** Wash 20–30 bay laurel leaves and boil in 4 cups of water until only 2 cups of liquid remain. Allow to cool, strain and drink this twice a day, one glass the morning and the other in the evening.
13. **For Stomach Ulcers:** Wash 15–20 fresh bay laurel leaves. Boil with ½ liter of water for 15 minutes. Add sufficient palm sugar. After it has cooled, drink the infusion as an herbal tea. Do this until the pain abates.
14. **For a Potent Insect Repellent:** Diffuse bay laurel leaf essential oil with your diffuser or vaporizer. Alternatively, a few drops of the essential oil can be added to a spray bottle containing water, shake well to mix and spray it over surfaces and cracks to deter insects.
15. **For Eradicating Head Lice:** Boil 50g bay laurel leaves in about 400ml water until only 100ml of liquid remains, and then apply the mixture onto hair roots. After 3–4 hours, rinse hair with water. *Optional, add some Bhringraj oil blend to the boiling mixture to make your hair darker, healthier and shinier.*
16. **For Hair Growth:** Dilute the essential oil with a carrier oil in a 1:1 ratio and apply onto the scalp and hair. Rinse off after a few minutes.
17. **To Treat Dandruff:** Steep some bay laurel leaves in hot water for about 10 minutes then rub the mixture on the scalp after shampooing.
1. **To Tame Frizzy Hair:** Boil bay laurel leaves in water to make an infusion. Let it cool, and use it as a hair rinse after shampooing and conditioning the hair.

2. **To Deep Condition Hair:** Boil some bay laurel leaves in coconut oil for few minutes, then let mixture come to room temperature. Once cooled, gently massage this mixture on hair and scalp. Leave on for 30 minutes, then shampoo as usual. Use regularly for best results.
3. **Anti-Aging Facial:** Boil 5 dried bay laurel leaves in 2 cups of water for about 2 minutes then pour the water into a large bowl. Cover your head with a towel over the steam until you feel your skin sweat, 3–5 minutes.
4. **For Fairer Skin:** Boil bay laurel leaves in water. Allow to cool, strain and use the residual mixture as a facial rinse. This solution also helps accelerate the drying of pimples and clearing of acne.
5. **Improve Appearance of Cellulite:** Dilute 4 drops per teaspoon of carrier oil and massage mixture onto affected areas. Do this daily until you notice a change in the appearance.
6. **For A Deodorizing Bath:** Place some powdered bay laurel leaves in an old stocking, secure the open end, and toss it in a tub filled with warm water. Soak for 15 minutes for best results.

MAKING YOUR OWN BAY LAUREL LEAF ESSENTIAL OIL

It is surprising how easy and simple it is to make your own homemade bay laurel leaf essential oil. The most important thing to remember when making bay laurel leaf essential oil is to have patience. Once you've combined the ingredients, you'll have to let them sit undisturbed for 40 days. Yep, 40 days.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ tablespoons of fresh bay laurel leaves (15 g)
- 1 cup of sweet almond oil (around 200 g)
- 1 jar or glass container with a tight-fitting lid (for at least 200 ml)

DIRECTIONS

1. First, start off with a clean, sterilized container or jar.
2. Then, put in the bay laurel leaves, making sure they've been washed clean and towel dried.
3. Once the bay laurel leaves are in the jar, pour in the sweet almond oil.
4. Finally, close with an airtight lid and let sit in a cool, dark place, away from direct sunlight for 40 days.
5. Use this oil in moderation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can Bay Leaves Be Eaten Raw

Yes, bay laurel leaves can be eaten raw as long as you are not allergic to them. Eating bay laurel leaves in the morning improves digestion and relieves digestive problems such as diarrhea, constipation and gas. Frying bay laurel leaves with a little oil amplifies their flavor and aroma.

2. Can Bay Leaves Be Eaten During Pregnancy

In general, bay laurel leaves are safe to be eaten during pregnancy and provide benefits such as regulating blood sugar, improving cardiovascular health and as an antimicrobial agent. However, to be on the safe side, always consult with your physician before ingesting bay laurel leaves during pregnancy.

3. Are There Benefits to Eating Bay Leaves on an Empty Stomach

Eating bay laurel leaves on an empty stomach can provide benefits such as improving digestive health, reducing symptoms of nausea and morning sickness during pregnancy, aiding in weight loss, burning excess fat, lowering bad cholesterol and regulating blood sugar.

4. Are Bay Leaves Safe for Kids

Bay laurel leaves can be beneficial for children as they are loaded with nutrients such as calcium, potassium, phosphorus, dietary fiber, and vitamins A, B, C and E. These nutrients provide benefits such as improved gastrointestinal health, eye health, supporting liver function and enhanced immunity.

5. How Many Bay Leaves Can I Eat Daily

As long as you are not allergic, it is safe to ingest 6–8 bay laurel leaves per day. If you suffer from any health condition and take medication for it, consult with your physician before adding bay laurel leaves to your diet. Pregnant and nursing women should consult with their physician before adding bay laurel leaves to their diet.

NUTRITIONAL CONTENT IN BAY LAUREL LEAVES

Principle	Value	% of RDA
Energy	313 Kcal	15.5%
Carbohydrates	74.97g	57%
Protein	7.61g	13%
Total Fat	8.36g	29%
Cholesterol	0mg	0%
Dietary Fiber	26.3g	69%
Vitamins		
Folates	180mcg	45%
Niacin	2.005mg	12.5%
Pyridoxine	1.740mg	133%
Riboflavin	0.421mg	32%
Vitamin A	6185IU	206%
Vitamin C	46.5mg	77.5%
Electrolytes		
Sodium	23mg	1.5%
Potassium	529mg	11%
Minerals		
Calcium	834mg	83%
Copper	0.416mg	46%
Iron	43mg	537%
Magnesium	120mg	30%
Manganese	8.167mg	355%
Phosphorus	113mg	16%
Selenium	2.8mcg	5%

Zinc	3.70mg	33%
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Value per 100g. Source: USDA National Nutrient Database

PRECAUTIONS

Bay laurel leaf essential oil, when used in aromatherapy, is often combined with other essential oils such as rose, rosemary, thyme, lavender, ylang–ylang, juniper berry, coriander, ginger and eucalyptus.

When using bay laurel leaf essential oil topically, it is important to dilute it with a carrier oil in a 1:1 ratio and perform a skin patch test first to ensure no allergic reactions. It is also recommended to use a maximum concentration of 3% when applying it topically, since it is known to cause skin irritations like eczema and contact dermatitis, and irritation to the mucus membranes due to its high concentration of eugenol. Avoid use on hypersensitive, diseased or damaged skin.

If pregnant or nursing, it is best to avoid using this essential oil since it stimulates menstruation, so it could possibly cause a miscarriage. Do not use on children under 2 years of age.

For external use only. Do not ingest bay laurel leaf essential oil and if you have pre–existing medical conditions and using prescription drugs, please consult your physician or health care provider to ensure no unwanted drug interactions.

CONSTIPATION

Bay laurel leaves can be hard to digest, which can result in constipation. This side effect usually only happens with excessive consumption of bay laurel leaves or if combining the use of bay laurel leaves with blood pressure medication. To prevent this problem, avoid use of bay laurel leaves if taking blood pressure medication. Otherwise, cut back on the amount of bay laurel leaves, and add them to your food. A good rule of thumb is, for every one portion of vegetables, use only 1 bay laurel leaf.

UPPER RESPIRATORY

The eugenol compound in bay laurel leaves have been found to have an adverse effect on some asthma patients. This side effect usually happens or is compounded by the excessive consumption of bay laurel leaves. It is advisable for asthma sufferers to avoid the use of bay laurel leaves, or to consult their physician first to ensure safety.

POSSIBLE POISON HAZARD

Some members of the laurel family, as well as the unrelated but visually similar mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*, calico–bush, or spoonwood, a flowering plant in the heath family Ericaceae, native to the eastern U.S. Its range stretches from southern Maine south to northern Florida, and west to Indiana and Louisiana) and cherry laurel, also known as common laurel and sometimes English laurel in North America (*Prunus laurocerasus*, an evergreen species of cherry, native to regions bordering the Black Sea in southwestern Asia and southeastern Europe, from Albania and Bulgaria east through Turkey to the Caucasus Mountains and northern Iran), have leaves that are poisonous to humans and livestock. Ensure that you consume true bay laurel leaves derived from the laurel tree and no other varieties.

While these plants are not sold anywhere for culinary use, their visual similarity to bay laurel leaves has led to the often repeated belief that bay laurel leaves should be removed from food after cooking because they are poisonous. This is not true; bay laurel leaves may be eaten without toxic effect. However, they remain unpleasantly stiff even after thorough cooking, and if swallowed whole or in large pieces they may pose a risk of harming the digestive tract or choking.

CANADIAN FOOD AND DRUG REGULATIONS

The Canadian government requires that the bay laurel leaves contain no more than 4.5% total ash material, with a maximum of 0.5% of which is insoluble in hydrochloric acid. To be considered dried, they have to contain 7% moisture or less. The essential oil content cannot be less than 1 milliliter per 100 grams of the spice.