

Bitter Foods

Tibb nutrition is based on balancing hot, cold, moist and dry foods we use taste to help us create a balanced and personalised diet.

Introducing bitters into the diet is a much needed balancing element, bitters stimulate the production of saliva, bile, hydrochloric acid and digestive enzymes therefore helping us digest more quickly and absorb nutrients more completely. Many beneficial herbs for the liver are bitter. They are also an antidote to sugar cravings. Consumption of bitter foods has almost been lost in the European culture but remains alive and valued in Eastern and oriental cuisine. Our bitter vegetables have almost disappeared but we still have the humble dandelion offering us leaves and roots. From the Mediterranean we have the magnificent olive, its fruit is pleasantly bitter and the leaves are highly valued in herbalism. In France, Belgium and Italy, chicory leaves are eaten in salads or cooked in recipes.

In the UK it is best to grow your own bitter salad leaves (rocket is pungent rather than bitter) or buy some seeds and ask a friend with an allotment to grow them for you. They are hard to find in shops, however if you have a local greengrocer ask them to stock Belgian Chicory, Italian Palla Rossa, Endives or Radicchio which can be seen in some ready to eat salad leaf mixes and in a few supermarkets. Keep a jar of olives handy, especially black olives from a Turkish supermarket which once open can be stored in olive oil. Try and include bitter leaves and olives in a salad daily, alternatively you can find recipes for roast chicory or sauté dark chicory leaves like spinach with some butter or oil and garlic.

Bitter Foods list:

Olives (green and black)

Olive oil

Olive leaves (in tea)

Artichokes

Dandelion leaves (in salads) and root (in tea)

Belgian Chicory

Palla Rossa, Endives, Radicchio (red or green)

Fenugreek seeds (used in Indian cooking)

Karela, bitter melon or bitter gourd- this is extremely bitter (used in Indian cooking)

Kale, sprouts

Grapefruit, Fresh Cranberries

Sesame seeds

Saffron

Green tea

Cocoa and very dark chocolate (use in small quantities)

Coffee (best avoided) and replaced with dandelion or chicory coffee