

# DRAGON FRUIT

## Pitaya

### BENEFITS

High in Nutrients  
Help Fight Chronic Disease  
Loaded With Fiber  
Promotes a Healthy Gut  
Strengthens Your Immune System  
May Boost Low Iron Levels  
Good Source of Magnesium



### DESCRIPTION

The pitaya is one of nature's most unique plants widely known as dragon fruit. It is indigenous to Central America but is also grown and exported from several Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand and Vietnam.

### TASTE

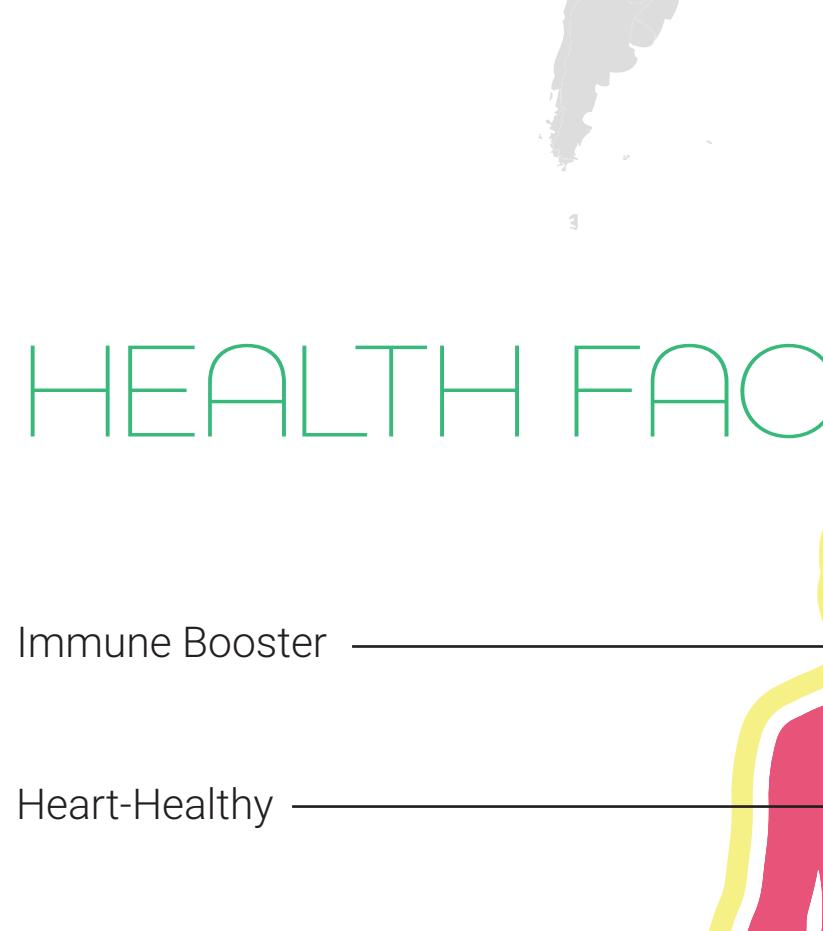
The fruit's texture is sometimes likened to that of the kiwifruit because of its black, crunchy seeds. The flesh is bland, mildly sweet and low in calories. The seeds have a nutty taste. The seeds are rich in lipids.

### APPEARANCE

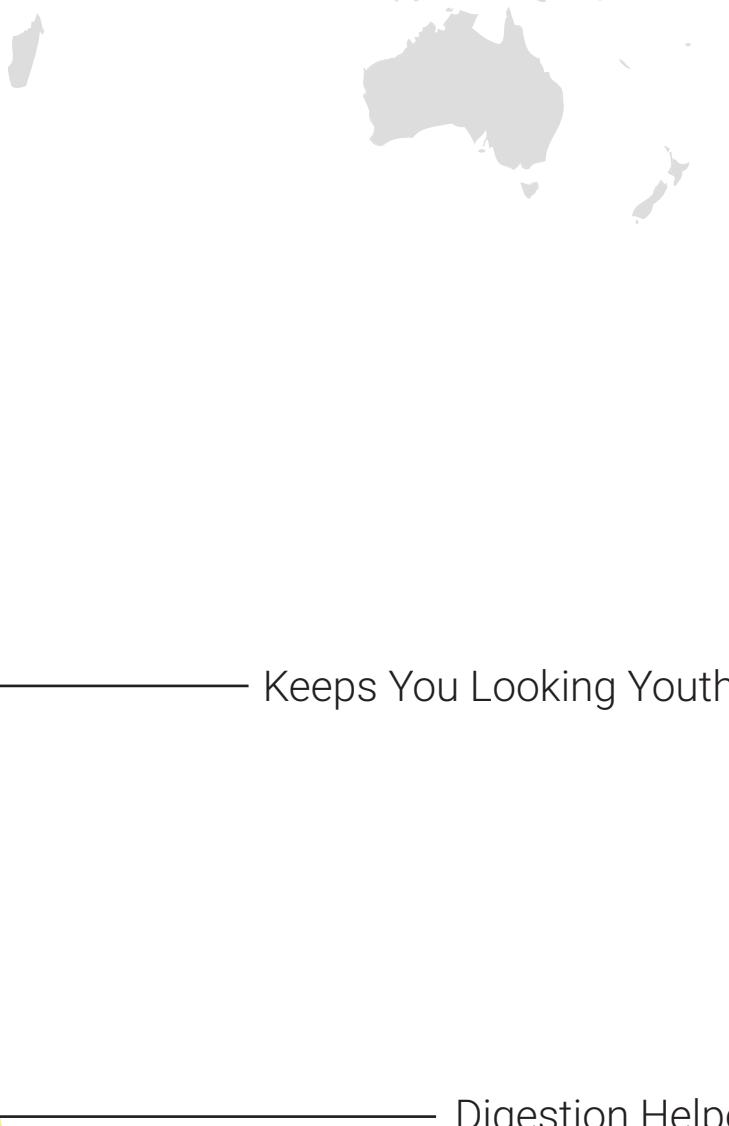
The red and purple colors of Hylocereus fruits are due to betacyanins, a family of pigments that includes betanin, the same substance that gives beets, Swiss chard, and amaranth their red color.

## NUTRITION

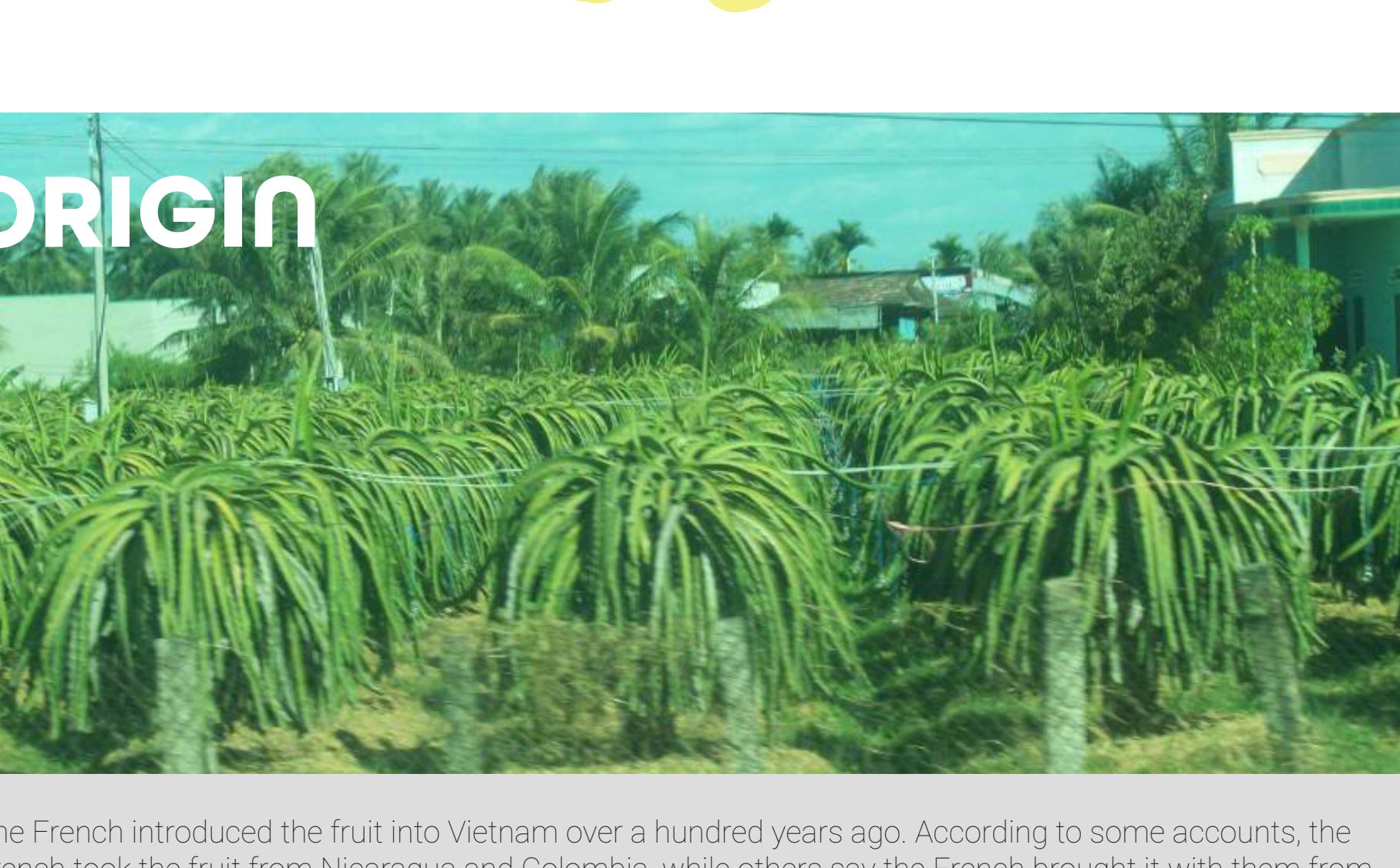
### VITAMINS & MINERALS



### DIGESTION



## WORLD PRODUCTION



## HEALTH FACTS



## ORIGIN

The French introduced the fruit into Vietnam over a hundred years ago. According to some accounts, the French took the fruit from Nicaragua and Colombia, while others say the French brought it with them from Guyana (South America) in 1870 as an ornamental plant. Today, Vietnam is the world's leading exporter of dragon fruit, with revenues from dragon fruit making up 55 percent of the country's fruit export turnover.

However, the fruit is also increasingly being cultivated in other countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Israel, northern Australia, southern China, the Philippines and Hawaii, challenging Vietnam's dominance.<sup>9</sup> China, which imports 77 percent of Vietnam's dragon fruit production, has successfully cultivated the crop on 20,000 ha of land in Guangdong and Guangxi provinces alone, an area roughly equal to that dedicated to the plant in the whole of Vietnam.<sup>10</sup>

## FUN FACTS

### Did You Know?

- Dragon fruit is also known as strawberry pear or pitaya.
- The best time to pick dragon fruits is when they are mature, as they are at their height of sweetness.
- The red-fleshed variety of dragon fruit contains lycopene, the same antioxidant found in tomatoes.
- Eating too much red-colored dragon fruit can give rise to a harmless condition called pseudohematuria, which can turn urine reddish.
- A concoction made of dragon fruit, honey, and cucumber juice can moisturize and soothe sunburned skin.
- Taiwanese doctors are said to recommend dragon fruits to patients with diabetes, to help normalize blood sugar levels.
- Despite its unusual appearance, the dragon fruit is similar to the more average-looking fruits in that it contains several nutrients that are good for the body. These include B-complex vitamins and Vitamin C; iron, calcium, phosphorus and antioxidants.
- The dragon fruit's seeds also contribute to its nutritional benefit. They contain protein as well as omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids that can help prevent cardiovascular diseases. The seeds also have a mild laxative effect.

Yizhou(Zachary) Zeng

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