

# Did You Know?

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## Caraway, *Carum carvi*

- Caraway is a biennial and related to dill, cumin, fennel and anise which also produce aromatic fruits, commonly called seeds.
- The caraway plant is 18-24" tall with delicate, white to pink, umbel-shaped flowers and finely dissected, feathery leaves. It flowers in the spring of the second year of growth.
- The common name seems to come from the Arabic name for the seed karawya, but the etymology is unclear. It has had many different names in different languages, including in Latin, Greek, Sanskrit and Arabic.
- The "seeds" are actually half of the caraway fruit, which splits down the middle and strongly resembles cumin seeds. They have a distinctive fragrance when crushed.
- Caraway has been used for 5000 years, dating back to the Mesolithic era. It was used in the burial of ancient Egyptians. Early Greek and Roman used it in cooking and for medicinal purposes.
- Caraway has been used historically to aid digestive disorders and was added to breads, cakes and baked fruit in the Middle Ages for that purpose.
- Love potions included caraway as the ingredient that kept couples faithful and was given to homing pigeons to encourage their return home as well..
- Caraway flavors sausage, sauerkraut, soups and stews, cheeses, breads, cakes and cooked fruit.
- Seeds coated with sugar are used for comfits and to decorate cakes and cookies.
- Kummel is a caraway-flavored liqueur. Caraway oil also flavors aquavit, gin, and schnapps.
- Caraway oil also is used commercially in mouthwashes, toothpaste, chewing gums and is used in perfumery.
- Caraway seeds are best harvested in the early morning when the fragile seed heads are moist with dew. This prevents the seeds from shattering before they are collected. The seed heads are thrashed after a drying process.

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