

Buk Choy

Brassica rapa var. Chinensis

Otherwise known as...

Buk choy Chinese chard, Chinese white cabbage, mustard cabbage, bai cai, pak choy,
Baby buk choy Moonbuk, Canton buk choy, Gongmoon buk choy

Background

“Buk choy” literally means “white vegetable” in Cantonese. There are hundreds of varieties of these vegetables. Some have short stems with large leaves, others have longer, more slender stems with almost circular leaves. What we call “baby” buk choy is not really an immature buk choy, but a dwarfed variety which usually grows no more than 20cm tall.

Varieties of *Brassica rapa var. chinensis* with green stems are called “pak choy” in Australia; “buk choy” is only used to refer to white stemmed types. Buk choy should also not be confused with “tatsoi” (*Brassica rapa var. rosularis*), which is distinguished by its small, round leaves and flattened rosette shape.

Where and How does it grow?

Buk choy prefers warm climates but can grow under many different environmental conditions. Some varieties have been adapted to growing hydroponically, which ensures that the stem bases are soil-free. They are naturally shallow rooted, fast growing, and need to be kept well watered.

Fresh buk choy will store for up to a week in the fridge if it is kept in a plastic bag and the temperature is less than 5°C.

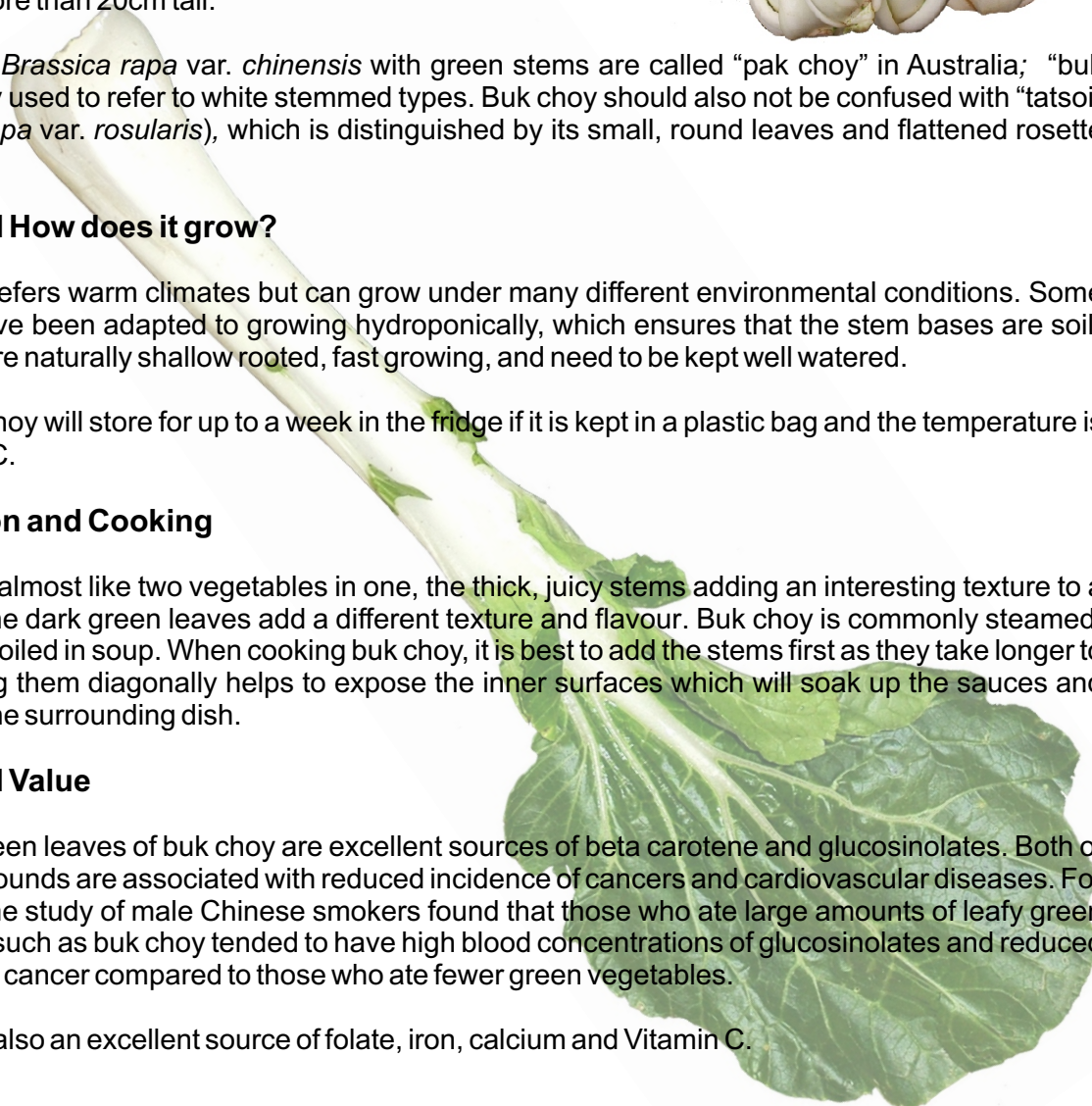
Preparation and Cooking

Buk choy is almost like two vegetables in one, the thick, juicy stems adding an interesting texture to a dish while the dark green leaves add a different texture and flavour. Buk choy is commonly steamed, stir fried or boiled in soup. When cooking buk choy, it is best to add the stems first as they take longer to cook. Slicing them diagonally helps to expose the inner surfaces which will soak up the sauces and flavours in the surrounding dish.

Nutritional Value

The dark green leaves of buk choy are excellent sources of beta carotene and glucosinolates. Both of these compounds are associated with reduced incidence of cancers and cardiovascular diseases. For example, one study of male Chinese smokers found that those who ate large amounts of leafy green vegetables such as buk choy tended to have high blood concentrations of glucosinolates and reduced rates of lung cancer compared to those who ate fewer green vegetables.

Buk choy is also an excellent source of folate, iron, calcium and Vitamin C.



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