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PALM BEACH PARADISE

THE SPA AT THE BREAKERS (FL)



Kakadu plums grow on trees in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Plum Assignment

Discover why you may want to pay attention to this Australian superfruit that packs a mighty punch.

ALTHOUGH MOST PEOPLE THINK FIRST OF oranges when it comes to being a rich source of vitamin C, a little known fruit is poised to take over that title. Native to Australia, kakadu plum, also referred to as gubinge, murunga, bush plum and billygoat plum, is produced by *terminalia ferdinandiana*, a flowering tree grown throughout the tropical woodlands. Regardless of what you call it, kakadu plum is garnering attention for its potential health benefits, much of which can be attributed to its high levels of vitamin C. Despite the current buzz, the fruit has long been valued by Australian Aboriginal people who often relied on the round yellow-green plums as a source of food for their walkabouts. The bark of the tree was also used to treat a variety of skin conditions, such as infections and wounds. Today, kakadu plum is appearing in various skincare formulations thanks to its powerful anti-aging benefits, and spas are taking note with products and treatments that incorporate the nutrient-rich ingredient.

It's really no surprise when you consider vitamin C has always had a coveted place in skincare. According to Audrey Kunin, M.D., a board-certified dermatologist and founder of Dermadoctor, it helps protect against pollutants

as well as oxidative stress and free-radical damage. "It plays an essential role in supporting collagen production, which helps improve skin elasticity, firmness, and the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles," she says. The high vitamin C content of the Australian fruit makes it an especially effective ingredient, which is why Kunin chose to make it the focus of her Dermadoctor Kakadu C Collection. And she isn't alone in recognizing its potential. Vitelle Dermatology Laboratories features it in several products, including its popular Eye Serum with Sqisandryl. Aleks Vranicic, vice president of sales and technical training for the company, credits its skin-nourishing properties.

"Kakadu plum is a vitamin C powerhouse that contains the highest concentration of vitamin C of any known plant on the planet," says Nicole Chadwick, creative director of Coast to Coast, an Australian skincare line. "The Outback region of Australia is one of the driest places on earth with extreme weather conditions, and because of this, these superfruits contain an abundance of vitamins and minerals in order to survive the elements." It's that wild environment that

continued on page 28

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The light green fruit (below) grows wild throughout the tropical woodlands (above).

continued from page 26

contributes to the fruit's rich vitamin content. Trees grown in more hospitable conditions are shown to produce significantly lower levels of vitamin C. While intense UV rays are usually best to be avoided, Daniel Clary, director of global education for MyBody Probiotic Skincare, says those rays are responsible for giving the fruit a powerful self-defense mechanism, with the highest concentration of botanical vitamin C available, 100 times more than an orange.



“There was a study conducted by the Australian government in 2009 that shows kakadu plum to be the world's richest source of natural vitamin C,” says Kimberly Parry, founder of Kimberly Parry Organics. “No other plant in the world has the same levels of antioxidants, bioactives, and vitamin C. Kakadu plum is unique, because it contains both hydrophilic, or water-soluble, and lipophilic, or oil-soluble antioxidants; ellagic and gallic acids; and vitamin B9.” While the numbers may vary on exactly how much vitamin C the fruit possesses, there is no denying the fact that kakadu plum is beneficial to the skin.

“Modern technology has been able to extract the heart of this powerhouse fruit, while science has proven it to be a workhorse anti-aging active,” says Clary. “Clinically validated results include stimulation of collagen synthesis, increased hydration levels, protection against skin-damaging free radicals, and a significant, immediate boost to skin luminosity and radiance.” According to Janel Luu, CEO of Le Mieux and PurErb, kakadu plum also helps minimize the appearance of dark spots. “Vitamin C helps minimize hyperpigmentation, because it inhibits tyrosinase activity, which helps control the production of melanin,” she says. “It also provides powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits, which help in slowing the signs of aging.”

Formulating with the ingredient for years, Parry made it a key active along with green tea in her company's Brightening Serum. Spa-goers at

continued on page 30

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continued from page 28

the **Spa at Four Seasons Hotel Las Vegas** can experience the product as part of the Kimberly Parry Organic (starting at \$195, 50 minutes; \$265, 80 minutes), a firming, toning, and hydrating facial that helps to turn back the clock. Kakadu plum is also a staple of the PurErb line, which is used in a variety of treatments at **Rituals Aesthetic Skincare** (Burlingame, CA) and **Jiva Living Wellness Sanctuary** (Folsom, CA).

A Natural Star

While it may seem that there is no shortage of buzzworthy new ingredients, kakadu plum looks to have real staying power. “Natural products are trending, but not all botanical extracts are potent enough to really make a difference when they are included in skincare,” says Luu. “Kakadu plum extract, however, has been shown to provide effective anti-aging results without causing skin irritation.” As a result, many are jumping on the bandwagon. “Naturally sourced actives are always exciting when discovered,” says Clary. “There is nothing wrong with synthetically created molecules, as oftentimes they are more functional, bioavailable, and stable in formulations. However, when such a powerful molecule can be isolated from something found in nature, it proves the endless possibilities that nature can ultimately provide in our anti-aging objectives.”

Perfect Pairings

Although the ingredient stands strong on its own, it also works well as a team. According to Clary, research shows that it pairs well with other molecules that help protect the skin. As a result, the company incorporated kakadu plum into its Glowbiotics Probiotic Instant Resurfacing Pads and HydraGlow Cream Oil. “We knew the pairing with our probiotic technology would inherently provide us a cocktail that would have a marked and rapid benefit for the health of the skin,” she says.

Both Kunin and Vranicic suggest pairing it with ferulic acid and vitamin E. According to Kunin, they are both ingredients that work well with vitamin C. “These antioxidants work together to boost each other’s efficacy,” she says. The Dermadoctor Kakadu C Collection also



CLOCKWISE: Kakadu plum works well with other native Australian bush ingredients, including kangaroo paw and lilly pilli.



incorporates other native bush ingredients, such as lilly pilli, an evergreen tree; kangaroo paw, a popular house plant; and muntari berry, a low-growing shrub. “Because kakadu plum is so beneficial in brightening and evening out the skintone, it also pairs well with botanicals such as black elder extract, licorice extract, and rosehip oil, which also aid in addressing pigmentation,” says Sara LaBree, education manager, North America for Jurlique.

Regardless of what other nourishing ingredients you pair it with, kakadu plum is proving to be a hot commodity in skincare. It’s only a matter of time before we start to see more stand-alone treatments highlighting the vitamin C-rich fruit. Says Parry, “This powerhouse of a plant, backed by science, is a powerful weapon against premature aging.”—*Heather Mikesell*

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