

Aphrodisiacs

Contributed by Doug Williams
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There is much debate surrounding the issue of aphrodisiacs, and whether they actually work or not. No scientist has come out and made a claim for any one of them, but research into their benefits goes on. Some scientists believe that so called aphrodisiacs act as mere placebos. Sexual arousal is such a complex subject and it's so difficult to isolate the conditions that bring it about.

The Greek goddess Aphrodite gave us the name, and a belief in their various forms has been present all through recorded history. The Chinese in particular, treat aphrodisiacs very seriously indeed. In their culture, the genitalia of male animals are thought to promote masculine virility. This leads to the buying of genitalia from seals and tigers. It's bad news for the tigers, which are an endangered animal.

Other animals are the victims of a belief in aphrodisiacs. The rhinoceros, also feted for its aggression, is hunted for the horn, which is ground into a powder. This is much sought after, unfortunately contributing to the endangered status of the species. Turtles are often poached, so they can be killed and dissected for the eggs inside. They are considered a delicacy as well as aphrodisiacs, and are eaten raw, flavored with limejuice and salt.

The most famous of the aphrodisiacs is probably the oyster. The oyster industry, which is worth millions of dollars, likes to promote its product as the vital ingredient of any romantic, candle lit dinner for two. Does it work? The jury is still out.

It's well known that most people, especially women, have a weakness for chocolate. There is a chemical in chocolate that some people believe is an aphrodisiac. However, it's said that you would need to eat a great deal of it for it to kick in. Well, any excuse! At least, it isn't doing any harm. Chocolate isn't an endangered species, (except in my house).

In addition to all the foodstuffs we all have fun with, when thinking about aphrodisiacs, there is a lot of serious research going into developing drugs which address real problems such as erectile dysfunction and other sexual disorders.

The subject will be argued about for years to come. Is it the candles and champagne that makes us frisky, or the oysters? The brain is a very susceptible organ, responding to many different stimuli. The mere suggestion or reputation of something being an aphrodisiac may be enough to manufacture a response. It's probably true to say we all want it to be true. Between the skeptics and the true believers, the truth may fall somewhere in the middle. Whatever the scientific value, the culture of aphrodisiacs is here to stay.