

The latest wonder oil

Φ Σ Over the last year, Argan oil has gone from a little-known ingredient used in traditional Moroccan cuisine to a miracle skin and hair treatment. Glamour model Alicia Douvall swears by Argan oil and has even launched her own brand, which she hails as her miracle skincare product. Yourwellness investigates its benefits.

TIP:
Place a few drops of Argan oil on your brush or comb to give your hair freshness, brilliance and lustre.





What is Argan oil?

Argan oil comes from the nuts of the Argan tree, originally found in western Morocco. After cracking, the inner 'almond' is ground into paste and the golden oil extracted. One tree, producing 30kg of fruit, delivers a litre of oil per year. Fifty years ago there were twice as many Argan trees in Morocco as there are today, as they have been chopped down for firewood, and overgrazed by Argan-loving goats. The United Nations' conservation body, UNESCO, has now set up reserves to protect Argan trees in Morocco. Trees are also being planted in other countries, such as Israel.

Dietary benefits:

The best grade nuts are roasted and the resulting oil, used in the kitchen, has a light smell and fine nutty flavour. Argan oil has a high level of vitamin E, essential fatty acids (omega-3s and omega-9s) plus plant sterols, making it highly effective at lowering cholesterol levels. It promotes the secretion of a digestive enzyme, pepsin, to improve digestion, and has an anti-inflammatory action useful for reducing arthritic joint pains. Traditionally, Argan oil is also considered an aphrodisiac!

Cosmetic benefits:

Unroasted nut oils are used in cosmetics as an antioxidant-rich, moisturising 'food' for the skin and hair. As well as protecting skin from environmental damage, it



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improves elasticity to reduce stretch marks and wrinkles. It soothes dry, sensitive skin and damps down inflammation associated with acne or dandruff. Interestingly, as well as having a moisturising effect on dry skin, it is equally good for oily skin as it helps to normalise the production of skin oil (sebum). It can even be used as a base under make-up due to its non-oily nature. When applied to hair, it strengthens protein bonds, improves elasticity, restores smoothness and lustre, giving new life to dry, tangled, flyaway strands. It also protects against heat treatments such as blow-drying.



- 1 **Terre d'Oc's** new skincare collection combines Morocco's finest natural Argan oil, prickly pear oil and date extract to rehydrate, regenerate and revitalise ageing skin. In trials, 89% agreed it nourished, 83% said it smoothed and 89% felt they had a more illuminated complexion. *Anti-Ageing Face Elixir* £32.95 from www.terredoccosmetics.co.uk or call 01557 870266.
- 2 **Argan Secret - Shada Luxury Sulphate-Free Shampoo, and Luxury Smoothing Conditioner** contain a complex blend of exotic Argan oil, willow bark and hempseed oil to nourish dry and damaged hair. This opulent range smells divine - truly fit for an Arabian princess. £11.95 each from *Sally stores* or www.sallyexpress.com
- 3 **Alassala Olives** produce a roasted Moroccan Organic Argan Oil for the kitchen, and an unroasted oil that's perfect for cosmetic use as you don't get the nutty smell. Ethically sourced as part of the Marocavie project to protect Berber Tribes and the Argan Forest. Ecocert Certified. No Preservatives or additives. £11.90 from: www.alassala.beauty.co.uk & www.alassalaolives.co.uk
- 4 **Douvall's Organic Argan Oil Moisturiser**, to condition face, body, nails and hair. *Travel size* £12 from www.douvalls.com
- 5 **Wild Wood Groves** extra-virgin, cold-pressed Argan oil has a lightly toasted nutty flavour. Delicious sprinkled on salads, roast vegetables, grilled goats cheese or stirred into soups, pasta or couscous. Use sparingly and add after cooking to preserve its health benefits. £11.25 from *Revital stores* & www.revital.com