

# Searching for Passion



By Joe Schwarcz — February 27, 2019

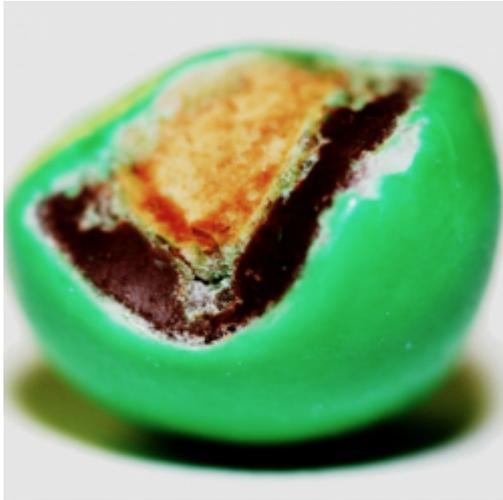


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Humans are absolutely passionate when it comes to searching for passion. The variety of substances that have been tried over the years to provoke sexual desire is truly astounding. Bird's nest soup and ginseng were ancient Chinese favourites, while the Kama Sutra, compiled between 100 and 300 AD, recommended an elixir made of honey, milk, liquorice and fennel juice. Pliny, the Roman philosopher, believed that consuming a lizard drowned in urine had an aphrodisiac effect on the person who donated the fluid. People who were adverse to lizard consumption could resort to dining on the right lobe of a vulture's lung. Foods that resembled appropriate parts of the human anatomy were especially prized. Avocados were a turn on for the Aztecs and famed European herbalist Nicolas Culpepper recommended asparagus for stirring up bodily lust. Sixteenth century Italian physician, Dr. Leonardo Fioravanti, prescribed a tonic of nuts and cinnamon sticks for men who needed a little help. Casanova downed oysters regularly, supposedly because of their resemblance to the female private parts. Rhinoceros horn, nutmeg, truffles, deer antlers, elk horns, seal penises, ground goat testicles (only the left one), M&Ms (the greens) and of course wild oats have all been touted to boost the libido.

You might think that these attempts to aid sexual performance owed their popularity to a less scientifically sophisticated, bygone era, but you would be wrong. There are more purported aphrodisiacs available today than at any other time in our history.

Corynanthe yohimbe is a tree that grows in West Africa. Various preparations of its bark have long been used to treat sexual dysfunction and modern research bears out the folklore, at least to a

degree. Yohimbine, found in the bark, blocks alpha-2 adrenergic receptors on nerve cells-a complicated way of saying it can increase blood flow to the penis. An analysis of yohimbine studies shows that 30% of men using it achieved satisfactory erections compared with 14% on placebo. This may sound better than it really is; the data actually show that about six men would have to be treated for one to be helped significantly. (For Viagra, the ratio is 2 to 1). Then of course there is the usual problem with herbal remedies, namely lack of regulation to ensure that the product really contains what it is supposed to contain. Yohimbine hydrochloride is available as a prescription drug and has a greater potential for success. Interestingly, in rats, as well as in Nile crocodiles, yohimbine seems to increase not only performance, but the libido as well. Once again, there is a lack of human evidence in this area, but unfortunately it is well known that yohimbine can cause anxiety, palpitations and sleeplessness.

L-arginine, a commonly occurring amino acid, is also receiving attention as a performance enhancer. It is the raw material our body uses to produce nitric oxide, a compound that produces smooth muscle relaxation. In fact, Viagra works by blocking an enzyme that interferes with nitric oxide activity. Again, there is a lack of human data on arginine, but in theory it should have an effect. Jed Kaminetsky, a New York urologist sure things so. He has formulated “Dr. K’s Dream Cream” for women, which he says increases blood flow to the essential area and increases pleasure.

If none of this appeals, you may consider a trip to Scotland. The tourist board there has launched a campaign that features “aphrodisiac haggis.” Heavenly Haggis is made with apricots, figs and pine nuts, in addition to the usual less appetizing components. Hot’n Horny Devil Haggis turns you on with chili and Cajun spices. Or you may want to check out the Aphrodisiac Restaurant in Singapore which has special menus tailored to the needs of men and women. In Italy, people travel from all over to “Cascina Orlofsky” in Piedmont to feast on “frittata afrodisica” or aphrodisiac omelet. But the hottest spot these days seems to be “Tantra” in Miami’s South Beach. The signature Tantra plate has oysters and barbecued eel and can be washed down with a shot of rum, vodka and peach schnapps, fortified with a blend of aphrodisiac herbs. I think it would work even better if they added some Swamp Rabbit Milk.

*The original McGill University OSS post can be found [here](#). [1]*

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