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## Gastropedia 美食百科

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## Coming to a head

### 神機妙蒜

Pungent and powerful, garlic is much more than your everyday seasoning  
味道強烈的蒜並不只是日常調味料那麼簡單



#### What? 這是什麼？

Garlic, or *Allium sativum*, is an edible bulb that is closely related to onions, shallots, leeks and chives. It has a tall stem that can grow up to 1m and produce pink or purple flowers. Each bulb or head of garlic consists of 10-20 cloves protected by a parchment-like skin.

蒜，屬蔥科蔥屬，球莖（亦即蒜頭）可食用，跟洋蔥、青蔥、韭蔥和細香蔥非常相近。蒜的莖可長到一米高，莖上長著粉紅或紫色的花。每個蒜頭大概有10至20瓣，最外層是質感像羊皮紙的蒜衣。

#### Origins 原產地

While garlic is cultivated and consumed all over the world, it's believed to have originated in Central Asia and spread through human migration. Today the region encompassing Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is the only place where garlic still grows in the wild.

雖然現時全球都有生產和食用蒜頭，但相信其原產地為中亞地區，後來才隨著人類遷徙而散播到世界各地。現時，只有吉爾吉斯、塔吉克、土庫曼和烏茲別克一帶還有野生蒜。

# 31.7 million

Tonnes of garlic produced globally in 2019, an increase of 1.9 million over the previous year and an increase of 27.8 million since 1970. China is by far the world's largest producer with 23.3 million tonnes.

2019年，全球生產的蒜頭達3,170萬噸，比之前一年增加190萬噸，比1970年更是大增2,780萬噸。中國是全球最大的蒜頭生產國，年產量為2,330萬噸。

## Varieties 品種

There are hundreds of unique varieties of garlic, but most can be divided into one of two subspecies. Soft-necked garlic typically has smaller cloves with thinner husks, and its flavour is generally mild. Hard-necked garlic has a more complex flavour profile, and produces garlic scapes that can be used in stir-fries, pestos or in place of scallions. Given its longer shelf life, soft-necked garlic is most commonly found at supermarkets and often tied into aesthetically pleasing braids.

You've probably heard of pink garlic, porcelain garlic and maybe even purple stripe garlic. But the latest craze is for black garlic, a type of aged garlic that's believed to have originated in Korea. Black garlic is made by ageing whole bulbs or individual cloves for several weeks under specific heat and humidity conditions, resulting in a soft, sweet and caramelised garlic with twice as many antioxidants as white garlic.



蒜的品種數以百計，但基本上主要分為軟頸和硬頸兩大類。前者蒜瓣比較小，蒜衣比較薄，味道相對溫和；後者味道比較複雜，其蒜心可以當菜炒、做成羅勒青醬和當青蔥用。軟頸蒜的蒜頭保存期比較長，是超市裡比較常見的品種，有時會綁成漂亮的辮子般出售。

你可能已聽過粉紅蒜、瓷蒜甚至紫皮蒜，但目前最新的蒜頭狂熱卻是黑蒜。將蒜頭或蒜瓣置於特定的溫度和濕度下焗數週，就能得出軟軟的、甜的、帶點焦糖味道的黑蒜。這種經過長時間炮製的蒜頭據說源於韓國，其抗氧化物含量比白蒜多一倍。

### Did you know? 你知道嗎？

Elephant garlic is not in fact garlic but a different species of the allium genus. Its large size, about four times that of conventional garlic, also belies its milder flavour that is more similar to an onion.

The cloves are especially good roasted and eaten whole or used as a spread.

象蒜並不是蒜，雖然同為蔥屬，但不同種。象蒜體積大，約為一般蒜頭的四倍，味道比較近似洋蔥，比蒜頭溫和。象蒜瓣非常適合拿來烤焗，原瓣進食或做成蒜醬均佳。



## Folklore 民間傳說

Theories and beliefs surrounding garlic are as old as the ingredient itself. Egyptians are said to have sworn oaths to garlic and onions, considering them holy plants. Garlic cloves were even placed in the tomb of King Tut to protect him from evil spirits. The belief that garlic deters vampires originated in Eastern Europe and may be related to the fact that people who suffer from porphyria, a blood disease that can cause a vampire-like appearance, are intolerant to foods with a high sulphur content. Ancient Greeks believed garlic would increase strength and endurance, while the Romans believed it gave their armies courage.

圍繞蒜頭的說法和信念源遠流長，跟這種食材本身一樣歷史悠久。據說埃及人會把蒜頭和洋蔥當成聖物般對它起誓，法老王圖坦卡門的墓穴裡甚至放進蒜瓣以辟邪。蒜頭能逼退吸血鬼的說法起源東歐，大概跟紫質症患者有關，這種跟血液有關的疾病會令患者的外貌變得像吸血鬼一樣，並且抗拒含有高濃度硫化物的食物。古希臘人相信蒜頭可以強身健體，而羅馬人則認為蒜頭能令士兵軍心大振。

91%  
Share of the  
global garlic  
market, in  
terms of  
consumption,  
that's held by  
Asia-Pacific  
亞太地區消耗的蒜頭  
佔了全球的91%。



### The stinking rose 味道來源

The pungent aroma we associate with garlic is derived from allicin, a compound that's released when a clove is chopped or crushed. The finer it's chopped, the more allicin is released. Allicin also serves as a natural insect repellent.

蒜頭強烈的味道來自蒜胺酸，蒜瓣被切開或壓碎時就會釋放這種化合物，切得越細，釋放的蒜胺酸越多。蒜胺酸也是天然的驅蟲劑。

## Medicinal uses 藥用價值



Garlic's medicinal qualities have been widely embraced across history and cultures. As far back as the second century, it was hailed as a "cure-all" for everything from infections and lead poisoning to cancer and heart problems. Its antiseptic, antioxidant and antibiotic qualities help to protect the digestive tract and fight bacteria that can cause food poisoning. While most modern studies are inconclusive, garlic is still widely considered effective in boosting the immune system, reducing high blood pressure and cholesterol, and enhancing athletic performance. It can also be used topically to treat acne and other skin conditions.



古往今來，不同文化背景的人都對蒜頭的藥用價值深信不疑。早在二世紀時，蒜頭已被視為能醫百病的良方妙藥，相信它可醫治細菌感染、鉛中毒、癌症以至心臟病等。蒜頭擁有防腐、抗氧化、抗菌三大功能，可以防止消化道受到細菌感染而導致食物中毒。雖然大部分現代研究還無法確定，但大家依然深信蒜頭能提升免疫力和體能，以及降低血壓和膽固醇。蒜頭還是治療疥瘡和其他皮膚問題的良藥。