



Nutrious Grain: Little Millet

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Millets are a group of highly variable small-seeded grasses widely grown around the world as cereal crops or grains for human food and fodder. Millets are important crops in the semiarid tropics of Asia and Africa especially in India, Mali, Nigeria, with 97% of millet production in developing countries. The crop are favored due to their productivity and short growing season under dry, high-temperature conditions. Millets are indigenous to many parts of the world. The most widely grown millet is pearl millet, which is an important crop in India and parts of Africa. Finger millet, proso millet, and foxtail millet are also important crop species. Millets may have been consumed by humans for about 7,000 years and potentially had "a pivotal role in the rise of multi-crop agriculture and settled farming societies. Millet crops like foxtail, little browntop, kodu, pearl and finger millet used to be staple crops in earlier days as part of the food and nutrition security of the rural people.

Little millet, scientifically known as *Panicum sumatrense*, is one of the smallest millets in size but one of the most powerful in terms of health benefits. It's a gluten-free whole grain packed with fiber, minerals, and slow-digesting carbs, making it ideal for modern healthy lifestyles. Little millet thrives in semi-arid and rain-fed regions. It is predominantly grown in Indian states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha. Its short growing cycle and drought resistance make it a sustainable choice for Indian farmers.

Little millet is gluten-free, and is full of all the essentials. It contains complex carbohydrates and can provide long-lasting energy. The grain is not only a good source of protein and dietary fibre but also rich in calcium, iron, and vitamins B and E. This nutrient-dense composition makes it a valuable addition to diets.

Nutritional composition of little millet (100g)

Nutrient	Amount
Calories	207 kcal
Carbohydrates	67 g
Protein	7.7 g
Fat	4.7 g
Dietary Fiber	9.8 g
Calcium	17 mg
Iron	9.3 mg
Magnesium	119 mg
Phosphorus	285 mg

Benefits of Little Millet

Little millet, as opposed to its name, packs huge health benefits in its grain. This includes aiding your digestion, managing diabetes, and cholesterol. Being rich in protein content it is a great addition to vegetarian and vegan food diets. Here are some of the major benefits from consuming this nutrient-rich food.

➤ Rich in Antioxidants

Little millet has antioxidants that help its grass fight oxidative stress and reduce the level of chronic diseases. The antioxidant's role is helpful in defending cells against free radicals that destroy them, hence over all healthy status.

➤ Supports Heart Health

Magnesium and potassium are some of the important elements found in little millet. These salts also help maintain blood pressure along with a healthy heart. Minerals help proper functioning of body muscles and fluid balance.

➤ Helps Reduce Cholesterol

Rich in good fats and fiber, little millet helps lower bad cholesterol (LDL) while maintaining good cholesterol (HDL). This reduces the risk of heart disease and keeps your arteries clear and functioning well.

➤ Aids in Digestion

Rich in dietary fiber, little millet encourages healthy digestion and prevents constipation. The fiber increases the bulk of stool and causes effortless passing of the bowels, thereby becoming an important constituent of healthy diet.

➤ Helps in Weight Management

Little millet is low in glycemic index and, therefore, very good for diet control. Intake also regulates blood sugar levels, which gives one the satisfaction of not needing a snack between meals.

➤ Bone Health

Little millet is a good provider of calcium and phosphorus, thus good for bones and strong teeth. It can also prevent many factors that may cause osteoporosis as well as other bone diseases related to it.

➤ Manages Diabetes

Low GI is another characteristic of little millet, which controls the blood sugar level but doesn't make it surge.

➤ A Great Source of Protein

For those following a vegetarian or vegan diet, little millet is an excellent plant-based protein source.

➤ Supports Respiratory Health

Did you know that Little millet is known to help with respiratory conditions like asthma and bronchitis due to its anti-inflammatory properties. It supports lung function and overall respiratory well-being.

Uses of Little Millet

- **Good for the Environment:** Little Millet, like many millets, is a drought-resistant crop that requires less water and no chemical fertilizers, making it a sustainable choice for the planet's health.
- **Soil-Friendly Crop:** Its deep-rooted system improves soil fertility and prevents erosion, helping maintain agricultural biodiversity while supporting eco-friendly farming practices.
- **Economically Beneficial for Farmers:** As a low-input, high-yield crop, little millet provides a cost-effective and profitable alternative for small-scale farmers, promoting rural livelihoods.
- **Value added products** :-Traditionally little millet is used in preparation of khichidi, rotis, rice and porridges. Recently it is used as rice substitute in diet plan . It also included as millet flour blend to make cakes, and cookies.