



# *A New You Ministry*

*"Revealing God's Way To A New Life"*

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## **Carob: Better Than Chocolate**

Many people the world over love chocolate in all its various forms: chocolate candy, chocolate cake, chocolate ice cream, etc. Often chocolate is associated with pleasure, happy times, and holidays. So how could anything be better than chocolate? Well, carob is better for you than chocolate in several ways.

Chocolate packs more than just good times. Chocolate contains chemical substances from the same family as caffeine, which is found in coffee and tea. These chemicals are caffeine and theobromine. The main chemical substance in chocolate (theobromine) is exactly the same as caffeine except for one atom; and like caffeine, it also affects the body in serious ways. This family of chemical substances (which include caffeine and theobromine) can cause or contribute to imperfect

balance, racing heart, insomnia and sleep disturbances, bedwetting, fatigue, obesity, dizziness, irritability, agitation, anxiety, acne, and more. Some diseases and health problems, including heart disease, allergies, diabetes, stomach disturbances, and depression, can be exacerbated by these substances. Also, chromosome damage, birth deformities, and cancer have been associated to these chemicals, and resistance to disease is lowered. Some physicians also believe that they contribute to breast disease and prostate problems by stepping up cell growth in certain tissues. Cocoa from which chocolate is made is naturally quite bitter. In order to cover up its bitterness, large amounts of sugar and fat (including milk and cream) are added, which gives chocolate its rich, velvety texture. But these things also lower resistance to diseases and hinders digestion. Other additives are also added before the product is finished. For part of the process necessary to produce chocolate, the cocoa beans must be left out to ferment. During this process it is possible for cancer causing agents to form, as well as for insects, rodents, and small animals to contaminate the fermenting cocoa beans. These contaminants remain in the finished product. The FDA allows up to 10 milligrams of animal excrement per pound, or up to 25 insect fragments per tablespoon of cocoa powder.

The above points provide good reasons for an alternative. However, chocolate lovers are not left without a replacement. Carob is a wonderful substitute for chocolate. It tastes great with a chocolate-like flavor but without the health risks, additives, or contamination that comes with chocolate.

Carob is a legume that comes from the carob tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*), an evergreen tree native to the Mediterranean (it is actually a shrub that is trained into tree form by pruning). Today it is also grown in other warm climates including Florida and the southwestern United States. The tree is drought tolerant, does well in direct sun, and can handle temperatures down to 18 degrees F. It has a broad, spreading form that makes it an ideal shade tree and can grow to a height of 50 feet. The leaves are dark green, glossy, and leathery. The tree bears fruit (carob pods) after six to eight years of growth,

and can easily bear 100 pounds of pods per year by its twelfth year, increasing to an average of 200 to 250 pounds annually as the tree grows older. It can continue to bear fruit for 100 years. The pods are reddish-brown and can be up to a foot long.

Carob has been used for food for over 5000 years and continues to play an important role in Jewish tradition. It is also called "honey locust" or St. John's Bread as this was consumed by John the Baptist while he was in the wilderness (Matt. 3:4). The husks that were eaten by the Prodigal Son in Jesus' parable (Luke 15:16) were discarded carob pods. Even today carob continues to be an important feed for livestock. The word carat, which is still used today to measure gold and diamonds, comes from the Arabic name for the carob seeds because of their uniformity in weight.

After harvesting, the long bean-like pods from the carob tree are cooked for a short time or roasted and then ground into carob powder (roasting enhances its chocolate-like flavor). Carob can be used to make such items as cakes, cookies, candy, pudding, icing, bread, beverages, shakes, ice cream, muffins, fudge, and brownies. Carob is naturally sweet and requires much less sweetener when used in recipes. When replacing chocolate with carob in a recipe, use 3 tablespoons of carob powder plus 1 tablespoon of water for every ounce of unsweetened chocolate called for. When substituting cocoa powder, use an equal amount of carob powder. Remember to reduce the amount of sugar in the recipe because of the natural sweetness of carob.

In addition to not having the negative effects of chocolate, carob is very nutritious. Carob contains as much Vitamin B1 as asparagus or strawberries; as much niacin as lima beans, lentils, or peas; and more Vitamin A than eggplant, asparagus, and beets. It also contains Vitamin B2, calcium, magnesium, potassium, and the trace minerals iron, manganese, chromium, copper, and nickel. It contains approximately 8 percent protein and is a good source of fiber. Compared to chocolate, carob is three times richer in calcium, has one third less calories and seventeen times less fat.

Carob also has therapeutic uses. It is known to halt serious cases of diarrhea in adults, infants, and animals. Use 1 tablespoon of carob powder in a cup of liquid, or make a paste of carob powder and water. It is also known to help with nausea, vomiting, and upset stomach. One French physician successfully reversed kidney failure with carob. Use approximately 2 teaspoons carob powder in unsweetened cranberry juice four or five times daily. A decoction of the leaves and bark has been useful for syphilis and venereal diseases, and seems to have a soothing effect on epilepsy.

Carob is a chocolate lovers delight as it is not only delicious, but low in fat and calories, caffeine-free, and lacks the health risks of chocolate. Please give carob a try. Different carob products taste differently, as some taste more chocolate-like than others. Therefore, try out several different carob products, and congratulate yourself on treating yourself to a healthy and delicious treat.