

*Cicer arietinum*

[Synonyms : *Cicer sativum*, *Ononis crotalarioides*]

**CHICK PEA** is an annual. Probably native to western Asia and to Turkey, it has pea-like, mauvish-white flowers.

It is also known as *Bagolyborsó* (Hungarian), Bengal gram, *Bukkeert* (Norwegian), Bush garbanzo bean, *Butakala* (Bengali), *Butmah* (Assamese), Calavanche, *Canaa* (Nepalese), *Cece* (Italian), Chana (English, Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu), *Chanaa* (Gujarati, Punjabi), *Chanaabatulaa* (Bengali), *Chanaka* (Sanskrit), *Chaniaa* (Gujarati), Chick pea, *Chola* (Bengali, Punjabi), *Chotabata* (Bengali), *Cicérole* (French), Ciche, *Cicri* (Maltese), *Ciecierzycza pospolita* (Polish), *Cizrna beraní* (Czech), Common gram, *Csicseri borsó* (Hungarian), Dhale, *Echte Kicher* (German), Egyptian bean, Egyptian pea, *Ervanço* (Portuguese), Falcon-head, *Gairance* (French), Garbanzo (English, Spanish), Garbanzo bean, Garvance, Gram, Gram pea, *Grão de bico* (Portuguese), *Grão gravanço* (Portuguese), *Harimandhakama* (Telugu), *Harimantha* (Sanskrit), *Hhimmass* (Arabic), *Hiyoko mame* (Japanese), *Hommos malana* (Arabic), Hummus (Arabic, English), *I chip t'eu kong* (Korean), *Ji dou* (Chinese), *Ji tou dou* (Chinese), *Kacang Arab* (Malay), *Kacang kuda* (Malay), *Kadalai* (Tamil), *Kaffäert* (Swedish), *Kahviherne* (Finnish), *Kalabèh* (Burmese), *Kariikadale* (Kannada), *Keker* (Dutch), *Kichererbse* (German), *Kichererbsen* (German), *Kikært* (Danish), *Kikärt* (Swedish), *Kikerært* (Danish), *Kikero ordinara* (Esperanto), *Kikkererwt* (Dutch), *Konda-kadala* (Singhalese), *Kondi* (Singhalese), *Kodala* (Singhalese), *Kreukerwt* (Dutch), *May bu ri kong* (Korean), *Nohud* (Turkish), *Nut baranii* (Russian), *Pisello cece* (Italian), *Pisello cornuto* (Italian), *Pois chiche* (French), Ram's head, *Revithi* (Greek), *Salealpriya* (Sanskrit), *Sanagalalu* (Telugu), *Sisér* (Armenian), *Sissererwt* (Flemish), *Sissererwten* (Flemish), Spanish pea, *Thua hua chaang* (Thai), *Turetskii gorokh* (Russian), *Vajimantha* (Sanskrit), and *Ying zui dou* (Chinese).

*Arietinum* means 'like ram's horns or a ram's head'.

Many authorities claim that Cicero (106-43 BC) – or one of his ancestors – was dubbed *Cicer* (Latin for 'chick-pea') because of the pea-shaped wart on the end of his nose. On the other hand there are those who doubt this explanation and point out that Cicero was a family name, not a nickname. The French *Chiche* is one name from which the English name is believed to be derived.

Chick peas have been a staple food for centuries and still are in south-western Asia, India particularly (and now also parts of Africa). The Sumerians were cultivating the plants in Mesopotamia by at least 2500 BC and they were also familiar to the ancient Egyptians. Before the 11<sup>th</sup> Century a large part of Europe had assumed them into their diet and they had become a staple food there too. The Romans' enthusiasm for them had been such that they were sold, roasted, at theatrical performances in the same way that popcorn (*Zea mays everata*) or peanuts (*Arachis hypogaea*) would be today – despite according to many as having been viewed by the Romans primarily as a food favoured by countryfolk and the poor. Its acceptance and standing is further illustrated by the fact that it was one of the plants that the Genoese explorer, Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), introduced to the New World in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

Authorities note that in North America some of the Tohono O'odham Indian tribe absorbed chick peas into their diet.

They have been ground to produce a heavy flour known as 'besan', have been roasted or boiled in curries, and have also been roasted and ground as a substitute for coffee. Today chick peas can be found dry roasted and flavoured with salt, spices or chilli (*Capsicum*) as a snackfood, one of the Western world's growing markets at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> Centuries. Crushed chick peas are one of the ingredients in the traditional Middle Eastern paste familiar as 'hummus', and in North Africa seed flour is the most important ingredient in the traditional Arabian couscous. Split, they are also used to make Indian dhal.

Medicinally, chick pea has been used in parts of India to treat dysentery, constipation and snake bites.