

## Nutritional and Nutraceutical Properties

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**C**ASHEW (*Anacardium occidentale*) is a versatile tree nut. The cashew kernel is a unique combination of fats, proteins, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins. Cashew kernel contains 47% fat, but 82% of this fat is unsaturated fatty acid. The unsaturated fat content of cashew kernel not only eliminates the possibility of increasing cholesterol, but also balances or reduces the cholesterol level in the blood. Cashew kernel also contains 21% proteins and 22% carbohydrates and the right combination of amino acids, minerals and vitamins and therefore nutritionally, it stands on par with milk, eggs and meat. As cashew kernel has a very low content of carbohydrates, almost as low as 1% soluble sugar, it gives a sweet taste without excess calories. Consumption of cashew kernels does not lead to obesity and helps to control diabetes. Thus, it is a good appetizer, an excellent nerve tonic, a stimulant and a body builder (Nayar, 1998).

At present cashew is consumed as a snack food in all over world. There is, however, good scope for promoting cashew as a food ingredient as it blends well with every food preparation style. The kernels are eaten either fresh or roasted and salted and also contain a milky juice which is used in puddings. They are relished as garnish in sweets and desserts. Cashew kernels, along with almonds and other dry fruits are being used in various rice dishes such as Hyderabadi-biriyani, rice-pulao etc. and in curry (*kaaju-shahi-paneer*) preparations in Indian, Pakistani and Middle-East regions. Crushed cashew kernels with almonds, pistachio are often sprinkled over desserts. The cashew kernels are widely used in confectionery, as an ingredient to biscuits, sweets and cakes.

Lower grade kernels are processed in to cashew flour which has high protein content and is easily digested (Johnson, 1982). The kernels contain 35-40% oil. Lower grade kernels are processed into kernel oil (Caribbean oil) which is a high quality edible oil that has been favourably compared to olive oil. The oil obtained from cashew kernel rejects could find use in cosmetic industry after refinement. Kernel residue after extraction of kernel oil is used to produce cashew kernel butter which is almost similar to peanut butter. Butter could be extracted from cashew kernel and pertinent technology is developed by Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI), Mysore, India (Van Eijnatten, 1991). There is a possibility of developing sugar, honey and salt coated baby bits, which are organoleptically acceptable. Baby bits are the lowest grade kernels marketed commercially. Sweetened and flavored milk could be prepared from cashew kernel baby bits. Cashew spread can also be prepared from kernel baby bits. Comparative investigation on various types of spreads revealed that sweetened and Vanillin