

**Introduction**

Soursop is the fruit of *Annona muricata*, a broad leaf, flowering, evergreen tree native to Mexico, Cuba, Central America, the Caribbean, and northern South America, primarily Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela.



[Picture Credit: Soursop Tree and Fruit]

Today, it is also grown in some areas of Southeast Asia, as well as in some Pacific islands. It was most likely brought from Mexico to the Philippines by way of the Manila-Acapulco Galleon trade. It is in the same genus as the chirimoya and the same family as the pawpaw (Wikipedia).

Soursop is also known as Graviola (Hoax-Slayer).

**Nutritional Facts of Soursop (Graviola)**

Nutritional Facts per 100g

|                     |       |
|---------------------|-------|
| Calories            | 66    |
| Total Fat           | 0,3g  |
| Saturated fat       | 0,1g  |
| Polyunsaturated fat | 0,1g  |
| Monounsaturated fat | 0,1g  |
| Cholesterol         | 0mg   |
| Sodium              | 14mg  |
| Potassium           | 278mg |
| Total Carbohydrate  | 17g   |
| Dietary fibre       | 3,3g  |
| Sugar               | 14g   |
| Protein             | 1g    |
| Vitamin A*          | 0%    |
| Vitamin C*          | 34%   |
| Calcium*            | 1%    |

[Picture Credit: Soursop Fruit]



|                           |    |
|---------------------------|----|
| Iron*                     | 3% |
| Vitamin B <sub>6</sub> *  | 5% |
| Vitamin B <sub>12</sub> * | 0% |
| Magnesium*                | 5% |

\*Per cent Daily Values are based on a 8 000 kj diet. The daily values may be higher or lower depending on a person's kilojoule needs.

(Wikipedia).

### Scientific Research on Soursop (Graviola) and Cancer

According to an animal study by Yan, *et al.* (2015), the leaves of *Annona muricata*, commonly known as Graviola, are rich in flavonoids, isoquinoline alkaloids and annonaceous acetogenins and confers protection against prostate cancer.

#### Defining *in vitro*, *in vivo* and *ex vivo*

***In vitro*** (Latin: *in glass*) studies in experimental biology are those that are conducted using components of an organism that have been isolated from their usual biological surroundings in order to permit a more detailed or more convenient analysis than can be done with whole organisms. Colloquially, these experiments are commonly called 'test tube experiments'.

In contrast, ***in vivo*** studies are those that are conducted with living organisms in their normal intact state, while ***ex vivo*** studies are conducted on functional organs that have been removed from the intact organism (Wikipedia).

#### A brief discussion of the three (3) other peer-reviewed scientific papers

In a study by Torres, *et al* (2012) researching the anti-cancer properties of Soursop, it was found that the compounds that are naturally present in a Graviola extract inhibited multiple signalling pathways that regulate metabolism, cell cycle, survival, and metastatic properties in pancreatic cancer cells. The study showed the promising characteristics of the natural product against this lethal disease.

Dai, *et al* (2011) studied the effects of Soursop (Graviola) on breast cancer. Their data showed that dietary Graviola fruit extract (GFE) induced significant growth inhibition of MDA-MB-468 cells *in vitro* and *in vivo* through a mechanism involving the EGFR/ERK signalling pathway, suggesting that GFE may have a protective effect for women against EGFR-overexpressing breast cancer.

In his study, Cassileth (2008) found that Graviola demonstrated anticancer effects *in vitro*, but has not been studied in humans. Despite the lack of human data, many websites promote graviola to cancer patients based on traditional use and on the *in vitro* studies. Caution is, however, required as there is no evidence of safety or efficacy in this regard.

According to Cancer Research UK studies on Graviola extract has shown its ability to kill some types of liver and breast cancer cells that are resistant to particular chemotherapy drugs. However, there haven't been any large scale studies in humans. So it is not known yet whether it can work as a cancer treatment or not. Overall, there is no evidence to show that Graviola works as a cure for cancer. Many sites on the internet advertise and promote Graviola capsules as a cancer cure, but none of them are supported by any reputable scientific cancer organisations (Cancer Research UK).

Bioassay-guided fractionation of the fruit powder of graviola (*Annona muricata*) yielded three novel compounds: muricins J, K, and L. The compounds are all C35 Annonaceous acetogenins with a mono-tetrahydrofuran ring and four hydroxyls. Their structures were elucidated by spectral methods and chemical modification after isolation via chromatographic techniques and HPLC purification. These three acetogenins demonstrated an antiproliferative against human prostate cancer PC-3 cells. (Sun, et al., 2014).

### Claims Made in Support of Soursop's Ability to Treat Cancer

The following anti-cancer claims are listed on various websites regarding Soursop (Graviola):

[Picture Credit: Soursop Juice]

- Cures cancer - by eating the fruit of soursop helps to attack the cancer cells safely and naturally without side effects such as nausea, weight loss or hair loss
- Increases immune response - substances contained in soursop fruit such as acetogenins, annocatacin, annocatalin, annohexocin, annonacin, annomuricin, anomurine, ananol, caclourine, gentisic acid, gigantetronin, linoleic acid, muricapentocin, make the body kill malignant cancer cells



- Soursop leaf can kill malignant cells for 12 types of cancer, including colon, breast, prostate, lung and pancreatic cancer
- Soursop is 10 000 times stronger in slowing the growth of cancer cells compared to adriamycin and chemotherapy

[Picture Credit: Soursop Leaves]

- Soursop leaves is very effective for cancer of the prostate, pancreas and lung
- Soursop attacks cancer cells effectively because it does not harm healthy cells
- Soursop does not cause extreme nausea, weight loss and hair loss



(Letsgohealthy.blogspot.com; Healthyeating.sfgate.com; Nature's Chemo Cure; Yang, et al., 2015; Deep, et al., 2016).

## Warnings Against Graviola

The following warnings against graviola have been made recently by reputable scientists, scientific groups and institutions:

- Cancer Research UK does not support the use of graviola to treat cancer. Their advice is to be very cautious about believing information or paying for any type of alternative cancer therapy on the internet (Cancer Research UK).
- Graviola is UNSAFE. It can kill nerve cells in the brain and other parts of the body. It may cause movement disorders similar to Parkinson's disease (WebMD).
- I've seen Internet hype on graviola, which is being widely promoted as a cancer-fighting herb. Some Web sites claim that it is 10,000 times stronger than the chemotherapy drug Adriamycin, and that it is effective against prostate, lung, breast, colon and pancreatic cancers. None of this is true (Andrew Weil, MD).
- Extracts of graviola show antiviral, antiparasitic, antirheumatic, astringent, emetic, antileishmanial and cytotoxic, antinociceptive, anti-inflammatory, antihyperglycemic and anticancer effects in vitro and in vivo. However, human data are lacking. Alkaloids extracted from graviola may cause neuronal dysfunction and degeneration leading to symptoms of Parkinson's disease (Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center).
- On the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) gave a written warning to the 'Graviola Group' informing them to remove medical claims pertaining to graviola from their website as graviola is seen to be not safe neither effective against any of the cancers it is claimed to cure (Food and Drug Administration).
- Some side effects follow from graviola's areas of bioactivity. Studies on animal subjects have demonstrated that the plant can dilate blood vessels and lower blood pressure, so those whose blood pressure is already low, or are already on medication to reduce hypertension, should consult their physician before taking graviola (Wright). Also, a large dose taken at one time can cause nausea and vomiting (Taylor).
- Graviola's purported anti-cancer potency comes largely from its ability to reduce the supply of adenosine triphosphate (ATP) to cancer cells. ATP often provides metabolic energy to healthy cells as well, and some nutritional supplements, notably Coenzyme Q10, are known for increasing ATP. For this reason, CoQ10 may neutralize the effect of graviola and they should not be taken together (Taylor).

## FDA Warns Against Soursop (Graviola)

In April 2017, the Food and Drug Association (FDA) sent out warning letters to 14 companies, advising them to change or remove the fraudulent claims regarding Graviola on their websites. The FDA forwarded warning letters to all companies selling/distributing Graviola because unsubstantiated claims are made that Graviola can cure cancer.

The FDA warned that if the companies do not comply, the FDA may take further legal action to prevent their products from reaching consumers.  
(Food and Drug Administration).

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### **The Position of the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA)**

While CANSA does not dispute the fact that Soursop (Graviola) may demonstrate anti-cancer properties in laboratory tests, that it may have a protective effect for women against EGFR-overexpressing breast cancer and that it shows promising characteristics of fighting cancer cells and providing protection against prostate cancer (*in vitro*), it cannot at present, advance or promote the use of Soursop (Graviola) in any form for the treatment of cancer until there is sufficient scientific evidence of its safety and efficacy in this regard.

### **Medical Disclaimer**

This Fact Sheet and Position Statement is intended to provide general information only and as such, should not be considered as a substitute for advice, medically or otherwise, covering any specific situation. Users should seek appropriate advice before taking or refraining from taking any action in reliance on any information contained in this Fact Sheet and Position Statement. So far as permissible by law, the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) does not accept any liability to any person (or his/her dependants/estate/heirs) relating to the use of any information contained in this Fact Sheet and Position Statement.

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### Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

<http://www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/herb/graviola>

### Nature's Chemo Cure

<http://www.natureschemocare.com/benifitsofsoursop.html>

### Soursop Juice

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### Soursop Fruit

[https://www.google.co.za/search?q=soursop&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=Zxf5UfrkBc6ZhQeWkoGIBw&ved=0CAcQ\\_AUoAQ&biw=1366&bih=614#facrc=\\_&imgdii=\\_&imgrc=7VuU4w6bFuZgxM%3A%3BJJVtQAKBiLTJYM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.frutti-mundo.com%252Fwp-content%252Fuploads%252Fet\\_temp%252FGuanabana1-73152\\_621x320.jpg%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.frutti-mundo.com%252Fen%252Fguanabana%252F%3B621%3B320](https://www.google.co.za/search?q=soursop&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=Zxf5UfrkBc6ZhQeWkoGIBw&ved=0CAcQ_AUoAQ&biw=1366&bih=614#facrc=_&imgdii=_&imgrc=7VuU4w6bFuZgxM%3A%3BJJVtQAKBiLTJYM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.frutti-mundo.com%252Fwp-content%252Fuploads%252Fet_temp%252FGuanabana1-73152_621x320.jpg%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.frutti-mundo.com%252Fen%252Fguanabana%252F%3B621%3B320)

### Soursop Leaves

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### Soursop Tree and Fruit

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