

Michael Boym, Flora sinensis, fructus floresque humillime
porrigens serenissimo et potentissimo, Vienne, 1656.

Nous donnons ici deux des chapitres que Michael Boym consacre à la flore chinoise.
Le texte est donné d'abord en latin, puis en traduction anglaise.

Ananas et Rhabarbarum,

Cap. G : Ananas

Fan-Po-Lo-Mie seu Ananas Fructus

Dictus Fan-po-lo-mie ab Sinis frucus, ab Indis Ananaus appellatur, in Australibus regnis Quamtum, Quam-Sii, Iunnan Folcien, et Insula Haynan, prouenit abunde ; ad Orientales Indias ex Brasilia dicitur fuisse apportatus. Folia et radicem Cardui, vulgo Carciochorum habet ; Fructus cum primum nascitur, mille coloribus variegatus resplendet, sec cum maturescit, solum flauum et rubicundum conseruat, semina paucissima, quae dispersa in illo rarissime reperiuntur, nigri sunt coloris, et talia plane sicut in pomo, quae defossa producent alios fructus. Et hastula etiam, de qua fructus eminet, vel surculus ab illa productus, immo vero ipsa folia, quae ex vertice fructus promanant, abscissa, si in terra defodiantur ad eiusdem speciei fructum, vertente sole producendum, sufficiunt. Magnus palmum et medium superat, carnem flauam, spongiosam, et abundantem succo habet. Odorem maturus suauius spirat, saporis est dulcis, et tantillum subacidi ; Dicunt fructum esse calidissimae qualitatis, quod nimirum succus illius ferrum corrodatur quasi vero Citrii pomi frigidissimus liquor idem non efficiat. Ego profecto existimo frigidissimae esse naturae, et expertus sum febricitantibus posse exhiberi. Apud Indos et Caphres, Februario et Martio, Apud Sinas Iulio et Augusto mensibus maturescit. Iam conseruam ex hoc praestantissimo fructu conficiunt, verum naturalem saporem, in illo non usquequaque conseruat. Nescio sane, an sapore et figura, non omnibus aliis Indicis fructibus antecellat, hic illum prout nascitur, et cortice resecto, ad comedendum praeparatur, proposui depictum.

Cap. S : Rhabarbarum

Quamquam hoc in uniuersa Sina nascatur, in Prouinciis tamen Su-Civen, Xensy, atque Socieu ciuitate ad mauros Sinarum proxima uberius prouenit. Illam M. Paulus Venetus *Socuir* appellat, ubi Mauri qui cum Caruanis in Katay (hoc est Sinas) et Cambale (hoc est Peruinum) proficiscuntur, subsitunt ; quo etiam olim cum illis Benedictus Goetz Lusitanus e Societate Jesu quaerens Catayum peruenit. Terra in qua gignitur rubra est et lutosa ob fontes et pluuias, folia pro ratione plantae magis vel minus duobus palmis longa, inferne angusta, superne ampla, limbus illorum

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lanuginem pilosam habet, quae tamen mox ubi adolescent et maturantur, marcescuntque, flavescent, et in terram declinant. Truncus supra terram uno palmo cum foliis supereminet ex quorum medio, ramus subtilis, onustus floribus (violis magnis non absimilibus) exurgit. Qui succum expressum instar lactis coerulei habent, odorem acutum, et quem nares fastidiant redolentes. Radix seu caulis quem terra recondit, et longus uno, dobus, aliquando tribus palmis, illius color aereus subobscurus, saepe grossitie humanum brachium adaequat, alias quoque radices tenues et circum circa proiicit, quibus resectis Rhabarbarum diuisum in frusta, carnem diu flauis coloris rubeis refertam venis ostendit, ex qua succus flauus et rubeus aliquantulum viscosus distillat. Porro si quis statim illa frusta humida ad siccandum appenderet, experientia docuit unctuosum illum humorem mox euaporare, radicemque leuissimum remanere, adeoque omnem virtutem deperdere. Ideo periti recentis Rhabarbari frusta, primo in oblongis reponunt mensis, et qualibet die tribus aut quatuor vicibus ea reuoluunt, ut per hanc industriam succus incorporetur frustis et constipatus maneat ; tum vero quatuor dierum spatio concreto humore, transactis per frusta illa funiculis, appensa vento exponunt, loco tamen umbroso, ne radiis solaribus contingantur. Effodiendo Rhabarbaro hybernum tempus est optimum, antequam viridia folia incipiant pullulare, quod scilicet eo tempore (circa mensis Maii initium) succus et virtus unita et collecta sit. Quod si vero Rhabarbari radix effodiatur aestate, aut illo tempore, quo viridia folia producit, uti necdum hoc tempore maturuit, flauoque illo succo et rubeis venis caret, porosaque ac leuissima est, ita ad perfectionem Rhabarbari hyeme effossi, minime pertingit. Currus humidis adhuc Rhabarbari caulibus onustus, uno scudo et medio venit, siccatum vero tantum pondere suo decrescit, ut ex septem libris recentis, sicci vix una vel altera libra obtineatur. Recens ac viride amarissimum est et gustui maxime contrarium. Sinice vocatur Tayhuam quod significat summe flauum.

Traduction anglaise :

Although this plant grows throughout all of China, it flourishes more abundantly in the provinces of Su-Civen, Xensi, and in the city of Socieu, which lies nearest to the Chinese Muslims. Marco Polo calls this place Socuir, where the Muslims who travel with caravans to Cathay (that is, China) and Cambale (that is, Beijing) make a stop. It was also there that, in former times, the Portuguese Jesuit Benedict Goës arrived while searching for Cathay.

The soil in which it grows is red and clayey because of springs and rainfall. Its leaves, according to the size of the plant, are more or less two palms in length,

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narrow at the base and broad at the top. Their edges bear a woolly down, which, however, soon withers as the leaves mature; they turn yellow and bend down toward the ground.

The stem rises about one palm above the earth together with the leaves. From their midst emerges a slender stalk laden with flowers, not unlike large violets. These contain a juice resembling bluish milk, with a sharp odor that is unpleasant to the nostrils.

The root, or underground stem concealed by the earth, is one, two, or sometimes three palms long. Its color is a somewhat dark bronze, and it is often as thick as a human arm. It also sends out thin roots all around. When these are cut away and the rhubarb is divided into pieces, the flesh appears deep yellow, streaked with red veins, from which exudes a yellow and slightly reddish, somewhat viscous juice.

Furthermore, if someone were immediately to hang these moist pieces up to dry, experience has shown that this oily moisture would quickly evaporate, leaving the root extremely light and causing it to lose all its medicinal virtue. Therefore, skilled workers first place the pieces of fresh rhubarb on long tables and turn them three or four times each day, so that by this method the juice becomes incorporated into the pieces and remains condensed within them. Then, after four days, once the moisture has thickened, cords are passed through the pieces and they are hung up to the wind, but in a shaded place so that they are not touched by the sun's rays.

The best time for digging up rhubarb is winter, before the green leaves begin to sprout, because at that season (around the beginning of May) the sap and medicinal virtue are united and concentrated. If, however, the root is dug up in summer, or at the time when it is producing green leaves, since it has not yet reached maturity, it lacks that yellow juice and the red veins, and is porous and very light. Thus it falls far short of the perfection of rhubarb dug up in winter.

A cart loaded with still-moist rhubarb roots sells for one and a half scudi. Once dried, however, it loses so much of its weight that from seven pounds of fresh root scarcely one or two pounds of dry rhubarb are obtained.

Fresh and green rhubarb is exceedingly bitter and most disagreeable to the taste.

In Chinese it is called *Tayhuam*, which means "supremely yellow."