

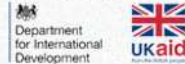


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Hanza (*Boscia senegalensis*, Capparaceae)



10-year old hanza tree.
Location: Zinder, Republic of Niger

Called "hanza" or "dilo" in the Hausa language of Niger, this perennial bush grows up to a height of three meters in its native and drought-stressed environment of stony slopes and cracking-clay plains of the Sahel (rainfall 100-600mm). It flowers from October to December and the ripe fruits become available for human consumption from June to July. Still widely used in the Sahel as a **famine food**, hanza is an important element of Niger's food traditions. The Peulh people have been eating hanza seeds in times of abundance. The Touareg use them especially in the cold season and in the Zinder region, the "gara", a traditional assortment of foods the bride receives on her wedding day, typically contained debittered hanza.

The ripe hanza fruits contain a delicious sweet jelly that surrounds the seeds and that can be either used for direct consumption or be made into syrup. The remaining seeds are the more significant product. After drying they can be stored for extended periods and they are protected from insects because of their bitter taste. To render the seeds edible they need to be soaked in water for several days, changing water regularly. After processing the seeds they assume a texture and taste reminiscent of chickpeas. They are rich in protein (25% of dry matter), carbohydrates (60%), zinc and iron, and they are used in stews, soups, and porridges. They can also be dried again and ground to yield flour that is then used in a variety of bakery products.



Mature hanza fruits ready for consumption. Location: Zinder, Republic of Niger

The genus *Boscia* includes almost a dozen species bearing edible fruits in Africa, of which *B. angustifolia* and *B. albitrunca* are the two better-known species.

(Text and pictures contributed by Renate Garvi-Bode and Josef Garvi, Aridité Prospère "Cida Kanka", Zinder, Republic of Niger)



Debittered hanza seeds ready for cooking or processing into hanza flour. Location: Zinder, Republic of Niger



Hanza stew with tomatoes and onions. Location: Zinder, Republic of Niger



Canned hanza seed and bread and cookies made from hanza flour. Location: Zinder, Republic of Niger

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3 October 2013

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18 October 2013

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