

# Eat this, beat cancer

By Melvin Hoe

## Super Plant

Wasabi is a root vegetable that's ground and made into a paste for use in cuisine (most commonly with sushi and sashimi), and quite possibly one of the healthiest greens around.

For starters, it possess anti-bacterial properties that can help inhibit the nasties that cause tooth decay and dental plaque, and even has anti-parasitic properties that can help prevent food poisoning, says Vivianna Wou, a nutritionist from the Food Advisory Group ([www.foodadvisory.sg](http://www.foodadvisory.sg)).

## Horsing Around

It's interesting to note too, that wasabi is often mixed with horseradish and mustard seed, as growing wasabi is expensive, says Wou.

It's by no means an inferior blend, though: Horseradish also contains sulphur compounds that have been identified as cancer killers, says scientist and study author Muraleedharan Nair, PhD from Michigan State University. When extracts from wasabi and horseradish root were added to several cancers, cell growth declined by as much as 70 per cent.



## Breathe Easy

The vapours from a hefty wasabi dip may give you the impression that it clears your sinuses, but in actual fact, it doesn't.

Researchers from the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center gave 22 subjects with congestion problems servings of wasabi, and found that their stuffiness worsened.

"The hot, pungent taste of wasabi is derived from the breakdown of sulphur-rich chemicals stored in the cells of the plant," says Wou. "Through the grating of wasabi, volatile compounds are released, giving it its characteristic flavour."

## All In The Family

The wasabi plant is related to cabbages, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, watercress and kale, among many other healthy vegetables, reveals Wou.

Apparently, chemical compounds present in wasabi and other crucifers possess anti-inflammatory properties, which can make them useful for conditions like arthritis, asthma, allergies and even inflammatory bowel disease.

Don't skip this super dip next time you're at the sushi joint.