# What is Chaga?

Chaga is a type of fungus that you can brew to make a drink that resembles coffee or black tea with the exception that it doesn’t contain caffeine. When you add cream or milk to it, it becomes slightly mocha-flavored. Some people even brew tasty beer from chaga mushrooms.

Chaga can only be found on birch trees, and mainly comes from Siberia. Aside from Siberia, Chaga can also be found at high elevations. This type of fungus can grow on other trees, but if it does, it is not called chaga, and isn’t used for medicinal purposes. Many things can be mistaken for chaga. For example, a friend of ours once thought that cherry burl was chaga, and received a mild case of cyanide poisoning as a result.

Just like many other fungi, chaga is highly medicinal and flavorful. It seems that chaga absorbs the immune compounds that birch tree is using to fight the fungus. This allows chaga to become very rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals.

Plenty of studies have testified that chaga can work as an anti-cancer treatment. Furthermore, chaga can protect from radiation, boost the immune system, lower the blood pressure, and nourish the liver.

## Ecology

Most mushrooms grow up quickly and just as fast they are completely gone, but not chaga. This type of fungus grows only by a few cubic inches per year eating away at the heartwood and eventually killing the tree itself.

Even though chaga is a parasite, it doesn’t mean that it’s ‘bad’ in any way, nor does it help the tree in any way if you remove the relatively small exposed portion of it from the trunk. Furthermore, cutting away the chaga leaves a part of the tree exposed, making it vulnerable to insects. Therefore, it is better to buy cultivated chaga rather than to seek it out on your own.