

## Castanha do Pará

**Scientific name:** *Bertholletia excelsa* (Humb & Bonpl)<sup>(4)</sup>

**Family:** Lecythidaceae<sup>(2)</sup>

**Popular names:** Brazil Nut<sup>(1)</sup>, amêndoa-da-america, castanha, castanha-do-brazil, castanha mansa, juviá<sup>(2)</sup>

**Used parts:** nut<sup>(2)</sup>

**Botanical characteristics:** The tree an enormous, frequently attaining height of 50 m or more. The fruit is a large spherical woody capsule or pod. Inside each fruit pod there are 12-25 nuts with their own individual shell. The tree can produce approximately 300 or more of these fruit pods<sup>(1)</sup>.

**Habitat:** Castanha do Pará grow in a vast zone of South America, mostly in the region of Pará (Brazil). It is found in many Amazonian States of Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador<sup>(1)</sup>

**Chemical composition:** The seeds contain 65-70% oil (palmitic, oleic, and linoleic and alpha linolenic acids and small amounts of myristic and stearic acids and phytosterols) and 17% protein. The seeds have amino acids (cysteine, methionine, arginine, glutamic acid,), selenium<sup>(1,2,3)</sup>.

**Indications:** Brazil nut oil is often used in soaps, shampoos, and hair products<sup>(2)</sup>.

Selenium compounds play an important role in protecting cells from oxidative damage and may reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases and other pathologies brought on by oxidative stress<sup>(3)</sup>.

## References:

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