



The History of Keration

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Before speaking about what this majestic, incredibly drought resistant tree, and its wonderful fruit and seeds used to be, I'll explain the story of Carats. You might ask what Carats have to do with a Carob tree. The word Carat comes from the Greek word Karation, which means Carob. The Arabs called it Kirat and later Quilate in Spanish, and in English it became Carat. Surprising, isn't it?

Carob seeds are very resistant and durable and because of the extraordinary fact that they all weight exactly the same (0.19 grams), the Greeks used them as fine weights for light substances, with 5 seeds equalling 1 gram. Imagine yourselves buying paprika powder in an ancient market. The market trader would put a spoonful of paprika on one side of the scales and on the other side, would keep adding carob seeds until they were level. How many seeds would the market trader need to weigh 6 grams of paprika? We've left you a bag of seeds and some scales on the table in front. Do you want to try? You can see how much a key, a lighter or other small things weigh.

The Arabs later adopted the size and name, and the Romans also used them under the name of Siliqua Graeca: in fact, they minted a small coin with this name. These days, the Carat is a very well-known unit of mass equivalent to 0.2 grams.

Now let's come back to the here and now. The dry carob-tree trunk that you see in front gives us an idea of how big it was, at 10 metres tall it was the most productive carob tree in the entire region. It reached production of up to 2000 pounds of carob, more than 800 kilos, when the current average production of a large carob tree is around 250 kilos a year. It's unlikely that any carob tree could produce so much nowadays.

Everything from the carob tree is made use of. The seed is turned into locust bean gum, used in the pharmaceutical, cosmetic and processed-food industries, amongst others. Flour, animal feed, syrups, treacle (molasses), and endless other products such as sweets and creams are made from the husk.

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