



Chaya col, chaykeken, or kikulchay (Mayan, Central America), Mayan tree spinach (English)

Chaya

a taste of Latin America on the Floridian table

Chaya is a highly nutritious leafy green vegetable that is indigenous to the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. It has played a central role in Mayan cuisine for thousands of years, and it remains an important part of indigenous culture today. Although Chaya initially made its way to Florida via indigenous trade in the Caribbean, it is growing in popularity among home gardeners today because it is a drought-tolerant hot weather alternative to cool weather spinach with flowers that attract pollinators. It is important to note that Chaya must be boiled before it is consumed because it is poisonous when raw.

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Cutting chaya for cooking



SALSA WITH CHAYA

25
MINUTES
TOTAL

4
TOTAL
SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| 15 chaya leaves (with stems removed and chopped into small pieces) | 1 medium onion, chopped |
| 1 quart water | 1 sprig of mint leaves, remove leaves from stem and mince |
| 6 tomatoes, whole | Salt |
| 3 cloves garlic, minced | 1 lime |

DIRECTIONS

1. In a non-aluminum pot, bring the water to a boil.
2. Add the chopped chaya leaves, and cook at least 15 minutes. Do not use the lid and be sure the area is well-ventilated.
3. In another pot, boil water with salt and add the whole tomatoes. Cook for 3 minutes.
4. Peel the tomatoes and mash them with the chopped garlic, onion and mint leaves.
5. Add the drained chaya, season with salt and lime juice.

Recipe adapted from Miracles in Action (2019). Chaya Recipes: For the whole family! (2nd Ed.), North Fort Myers, FL 33917 USA: ECHO Inc.

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FACTS

Mayan people have used chaya leaves and stems as food and medicine for thousands of years, and it remains an important part of Mayan cuisine today. Popular dishes include 'dzotobichay' or 'brazo de la India,' which is a tamale with chopped chaya and a tomato-based sauce. 'Pibxcat' refers to stuffed peppers served with Chaya leaves and pork with sour orange; used as an enchilada stuffing. 'Chakbilchay' is a soup of chaya with lime.

Chaya is rich in protein, vitamins C and A, calcium, potassium, and iron.

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