

Growing Chaya – one of the fastest, easiest foods to grow!

Chaya grows easily from cuttings. Cut 8-12" sections of chaya branch (with or without the leaves). Cuttings can survive out of water, wrapped in newspaper for 4 weeks. Plant cutting in 4-5" of soil, either in pots, or directly in the ground. Be sure the area is open to plenty of sunlight and water often until roots form, but do not waterlog the plant. Chaya does well in drought conditions, even in sandy soil. Fertilizer is not necessary, however, if fertilized and watered, chaya will have more leaf growth. Ideal conditions are hot, humid coastal areas like Guatemala's tropical areas below 600 meters (2,000 ft.) elevation. Chaya grows slower in the highlands at 1500 meters (5,000 ft.). The planting area should be sheltered from frost and cold winds, with full sun. Chaya is resistant to insects and disease.

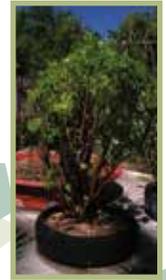


Important Facts to Remember

- Chaya contains an irritant or toxin in the leaf and stem.
- Always wash your hands after handling chaya. Do not get the sap in your eyes.
- Always cook chaya 15 minutes to remove the toxin.
- Always cook in steel, clay, or enamel pots. NEVER in aluminum. (Cooking chaya in aluminum pots can cause diarrhea).

Other Uses for Chaya

- Dried chaya leaves can be used as food for different farm animals such as pigs, chickens and turkeys.
- Shade trees for coffee or for fencing.
- High-nitrogen compost to fertilize gardens.
- Clinics can grow chaya bushes to give to malnourished patients as a food supplement, and to give them cuttings to grow at home.
- Chaya is helpful in controlling diabetes, arthritis, and other ailments.



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Nature's Solution to Malnutrition

One of the healthiest vegetables in the world.

Help us to re-introduce chaya to the people of Guatemala.

What is Chaya?

The chaya plant is native to the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico, and to parts of Guatemala. It is similar to spinach and other greens, but grows on a bush that can get to 3 meters (10 ft.)



tall and 2 meters (6.5 ft.) wide. The leaves are about the size of an adult hand. Chaya leaves are one of the most nutritious vegetables in the world. For centuries, chaya was a staple food of the Mayans, and was known as chae, chatate, or chaya mansa. There are many varieties of chaya, but Estrella (Star) chaya

is highest in nutrition and leaf mass. During dry or colder weather, chaya may lose leaves, but they will come back with the rains and sun.



Why Eat Chaya?

Chaya leaves are an excellent source for:

Protein – builds muscles. One serving of chaya has the same amount of protein as an egg.

Iron – for healthy blood and more energy. Chaya contains twice the iron of spinach.

Calcium – for strong bones. Chaya contains more calcium than any other vegetable.

Vitamin A – prevents blindness, reduces severity of infections & diarrhea diseases.

Vitamin C, folic acid, and B Vitamins – all essential to health.

For babies 6 months to 2 years, puréed chaya is a great way to provide protein and vitamins, especially when a toddler is weaned from breast milk. Chaya broth is excellent for children over 2 years old, and can be served as a staple with tortillas or mixed into the masa (tortilla dough). Mothers who eat chaya have a greater quality and quantity of breast milk for their babies.

Preparing Chaya

Chaya has a natural toxin (cyanide) in the leaf cells. (Other vegetables, such as cassava have toxins, but are safe to eat when cooked.) **To safely remove the toxin, boil chaya leaves for 15 minutes in a non-aluminum pot.** Boiling larger leaves for 25-30 minutes may be desirable to make them more tender. Chopping the cooked chaya will also make the leaves easier to chew and digest. The cooking water is high in vitamins and minerals and is safe to drink as hot tea or broth,



a cold juice, or added to lemonade. Cooked and chopped chaya leaves can be made ahead and then added to foods.

Recipe Ideas

Chaya leaves are easily added to foods such as soup or broth, beans, rice, scrambled eggs, or tamales. Chaya can be used as a main ingredient in soup (such as potato chaya soup) or chaya broth. Do you know how to make Tamalitos de Chipilín? Use the same recipe substituting chaya for Chipilín; the result will be a delicious and highly nutritious tamal. Finely ground

or puréed cooked chaya can be added to masa to fortify tortillas. Any recipe with spinach can be substituted with cooked chaya. Add to stews, chili, vegetable soup, lasagna, black beans, or on pizza. Chop chaya leaves and sauté with oil, garlic, onion, cilantro and tomatoes.

Nutrient Analysis

Nutrients	Chaya	Spinach	Corn Tortilla	Black Beans
100 gram serving =	5 fl oz	5 fl oz	4 tortillas	5 fl oz
Protein (g)	5.7	3.2	5.7	8.8
Iron (mg)	11.4	5.7	1.2	2.1
Calcium (mg)	199	101	81	27
Potassium (mg)	217	147	186	355
Vitamin A (mg)	0.085	0.014	0	0
Vitamin C (mg)	165	48	0	0

(25-30 fresh chaya leaves cook down to 5 fl oz serving)