Kalo (Taro): History, Nutrition & Recipes


SCIENCE
- Over 350 varieties of Hawaiian kalo
- When raw the plant is toxic due to the presence of calciumoxalate, which is destroyed by lengthy cooking or can be removed by steeping taro roots in cold water overnight

HISTORY
- Used widely in other Polynesian countries such as Tahiti, & the Philippines. Also now used in Asia, Africa, & continental US.
- Culturally, the most important food for Hawaiians – said to be the “number one sibling” and the embodiment of the god Kāne

NUTRITION
- Leaf is source of vitamins A, B, & C
- Root (100 grams cooked with salt) has:
  - 142 calories
  - 11g carbohydrates
  - 1g protein
  - no fat
- Vitamins (daily value based on 2000 calorie diet): A (1%) C (8%), E 9%, K (2%), B1 (7%), B2 (1%), B3 (2%), B6 (16%)
- Minerals: Iron (4%); calcium (1%); magnesium & phosphorus (7% each); copper (10%); potassium (20%); zinc (1%); manganese (22%) & selenium (1%)

COOKING
- Must clean leaf before use, to clean off fine needles to prevent irritation of mouth and throat (best to cook thoroughly)
- The leaf (lu‘au) can be used for wrapping of food (laulau)
- Tuber or corm are steamed and pounded to make poi or pa‘i‘ai
- Other foods - laulau, lu‘au, kulolo
- Some varieties can use whole plant for cooking

MEDICINE
- Removes swelling from insect bites; helps with infection of wounds; helps cast bone; if used with other plants can help with diarrhea

Scientific classification
- Kingdom: Plantae
- Division: Magnoliophyta
- Class: Liliopsida
- Order: Alismatales
- Family: Araceae
- Genus: Colocasia
- Species: C. esculenta

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**RECIPES – The 4 Basics (Poi, Table Taro, Taro Chips, & Luau Leaf)**

1. **Poi** - water is added during mashing of cooked corm (baked or steamed) to achieve a desired consistency, (known as two-finger or three-finger)
2. **Table Taro** – steamed or baked corm. Add salt, pepper &/or butter. Can be served au gratin.
3. **Taro Chips** – thin sliced corm, deep fried; or, boiled & chilled corm sliced thin & fried in pan. Drain or pat away oil & salt.
4. **Lu‘au Leaf** – steamed with salt under high heat. Also made with various seafoods (butterfish, squid) & meats (chicken, pork, beef)

**Other taro dishes to try:** laulau (stuffed leaves), mochi bread, kulolo (sweet pudding), ice cream

The Internet now has countless exotic recipes for kalo. Try look!

**Taro Chips Recipes**


- **Recipe 1** - Peel raw taro corms and slice thin with slicer. Deep fry in oil heated in 380 F. Drain on paper towels and salt generously.
- **Recipe 2** - Boil whole unpeeled taro till cooked through. Chill. Then slice as thin as possible. Fry in hot oil until crisp (about 10 minutes). Use frying pan or deep fryer. Drain on cake rack, absorbent paper or newspaper, and sprinkle with salt or garlic salt. Both recipes may be frozen if desired.
Taro Leaf au Gratin

Serves: 4

2 lbs (4 cups) taro leaves, blanched and drained
1 c milk
2 T butter
1/2 c grated cheddar or Gruyere cheese
1 T chopped parsley
1/2 t prepared mustard
1/4 c chopped spring onion
2 eggs, lightly beaten

Blanch taro leaves after cleaning. Young leaves should take only 3-5 minutes and older leaves 10-15 minutes. To keep the beautiful green color of the leaves, be sure to use a generous amount of boiling water for blanching. Press all the liquid from the cooked taro leaves. Melt the butter and cook the parsley and spring onion till softened. Mix with the taro leaves. Season to taste with salt and mustard. Spoon into a buttered baking dish. Combine the eggs, milk and cheese, and pour over the taro leaves. Bake at 325 F for 20-30 minutes until puffed and golden on top.

Taro Tapioca

Ingredients
1/2 cup pear sago/tapioca (increase to 3/4 cup if you prefer more tapioca per spoonful) 2 cups mashed taro (frozen or fresh) 1 can of coconut milk (unsweetened) 1/2 cup of splenda/or sugar or condensed milk

Directions
1. Remove skin from taro and cut into chunks (if using frozen taro, proceed to next step) 2. Add taro to a boiling a potful of water and cook until tender (fresh taro takes about 20 minutes, frozen takes 5-7 minutes) 3. Drain excess water and mash with fork until majority of the taro is smooth (leave chunky bits if you want chunks of taro in the dessert) 4. In a separate pot, add tapioca to another boiling pot of water. Boil for 5-6 minutes, turn off the heat and cover for another 10-15 minutes. Begin checking tapioca after 10 minutes - the tapioca is done once it has turned translucent (no white center). Drain any excess water. 5. On low heat, add can of coconut milk to the pot with the taro. Stir the mixture until the taro has “blended” with the coconut milk and then add tapioca. 6. To sweeten the dessert, get creative with sugar, Splenda, condensed milk, or rock sugar. The sweetness is based on personal preference so start small, taste, and add more if necessary! My favorite combination is to use dissolved rock sugar and condensed milk. 7. If you prefer a soupier consistency, add more coconut milk.