

Water Spinach (Basella Alba)

(Indian Spinach)

Use young steins with large tender leaves. Water spinach should be washed very well and stored in plastic bags or covered containers if not used immediately.

Use as other greens in traditional food and always add towards the last 5-10 minutes. Don't overcook as it will become sticky.

Cook leaves in a small quantity of boiling salted water for 3 to 4 minutes. Drain, season with butter or coconut cream.

Cook in a saucepan with a little butter, stirring frequently until soft.

SEASONINGS: basil, dill, nutmeg, tarragon.

Inedible Greens: Oversize leaves such as banana leaves, tankard leaves, breadfruit leaves, betel nut leaves, canna leaves, or tapioca leaves can be used as wrappings for food to be baked, steamed or mumued.

Wash well before using and remove before serving the food. To soften leaves for wrapping, hold for a minute over a flame or dip in boiling water.

It is possible to substitute tin-foil in recipes that call for any of these leaves as wrappings but the taste won't be quite the same. It is also possible to use brown paper or cloth.

These leaves are also used to wrap food to keep it fresh and clean.

Papaya leaves contain high amounts of papain which is the base of all meat tenderizers. So wrap your tough steaks in papaya leaves and let stand for several hours. Papaya juice is used in the same way.

STAPLES

There is a wide variety of starchy foods which are eaten as staples in Papua New Guinea as well as the rest of the South Pacific. Only the sweet potato (kaukau) is similar to foods eaten by most Canadians. Probably you will like most of these foods immediately but a few like sago may take a little time. After a while many people living here begin to think of the 'english potato' as a poor second best to the variety of alternatives available in the markets here.

Breadfruit: (Artocarpus Incisa) Although used as a staple, breadfruit is technically a fruit and not a vegetable. Choose fruit which is fully formed and firm and a pale yellow green in colour. Ripe fruit is soft and has a sweet flavour. Care must be taken to keep it quite cool to prevent the fruit from becoming over-ripe. Half ripe fruit will keep for 1 or 2 days.

Store breadfruit in a bucket of water or refrigerator.

Traditionally the peeled and wedged fruit is boiled in coconut milk or added to mumus. The whole fruit is roasted unpeeled over an open fire or charcoal.