

Recipes for Africa's super vegetables

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NIGHTSHADE LEAVES

This recipe is for African nightshade (*Solanum scabrum*). Do not use other plants from the *Solanum* genus.

Ingredients

2 handfuls of African nightshade leaves
1 onion
2 tomatoes
3 tablespoons cooking oil
½ cup groundnut flour/paste
Salt
Water (enough to cover the leaves)

Method

- Sort, wash and cut the nightshade leaves into small pieces.
- Boil the water, add the salt and vegetables, and then cover pot and cook until the leaves are soft.
- Drain off the water (if desired).
- Wash, peel and slice the onion and tomato
- Prepare/cook groundnut flour/paste until ready.
- Fry the onions, then add the tomato and stir until soft.
- Add the boiled vegetables and stir well.
- Add the fried vegetables into the groundnut sauce.
- Season to taste and serve with any staple food.

CREAM OF NIGHTSHADE SPINACH

This recipe from Kenya is for African nightshade (*Solanum scabrum*). Do not use other plants from the *Solanum* genus.

Ingredients

4 cups African nightshade leaves (or a mix of leaves)
Water (enough to cover the leaves)
¼ cup cream or milk
1 onion (chopped)
1 tomato (chopped)
1 tablespoon salt
2 tablespoons oil

Method

- Wash the leaves and drain.
- Boil 1 cup of water, add the leaves and cook for 15–25 minutes.
- Remove from heat and drain excess water if desired.
- Heat the oil in a pan, add the onions and fry until soft.

- Add the tomatoes and cooked leaves, and cook for 2 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Add the cream and 4 cups water.
- Cover and cook for 5 minutes.

TRADITIONAL JUTE

Jute (*Corchorus olitorius*) is prepared in this way all over Africa. The ash or bicarbonate of soda makes the jute less slippery but do not add too much, as it will destroy some of the nutrients.

Ingredients

2 cups fresh, cleaned jute leaves
Ash or bicarbonate of soda (small amount)
Water (enough to cover the leaves)

Method

- Add ash to water in a beaker and stir well.
- Add mixture to pot.
- Stir and add washed leaves when the water is cooking.
- Boil until tender (do not cover the pot or leave it unattended, as the water is liable to boil over).

JUTE WITH GROUNDNUTS

This recipe for jute (*Corchorus olitorius*) comes from Kenya and optionally uses cowpea leaves (*Vigna unguiculata*).

Ingredients

2 cups jute leaves (cowpea leaves can be mixed in as well)
1 tomato
Groundnut paste (to taste)
Salt to taste
1–2 tablespoons liquid salt from ash (this softens the vegetables and helps to retain the green colour)

Method

- Pick and wash the soft, young, tender jute/cowpea leaves, and cut them into smaller pieces.
- Use enough water for cooking and add salt.
- Add the leaves to water and cook for 3–5 minutes while stirring.
- Cut the tomato and add. Allow it to cook for 1–2 minutes and then remove from the heat.
- Mix the groundnut paste very well. Add the cooked vegetables to the paste mixture and stir.
- Serve warm with any staple food.

SPIDER PLANT WITH TOMATO

Spider plant (*Cleome gynandra*) is prepared like this in various African countries. The leaves of the plants are very rich in iron and are sometimes given to mothers after childbirth.

Ingredients

2 handfuls of spider plant leaves or leaf mixture
1 onion
2 tomatoes
3 tablespoons cooking oil
½ cup groundnut flour/paste
Salt
2 cups water

Method

- Pick out the tender leaves of the vegetables, wash and cut into small pieces.
- Boil the water, add the salt and vegetables and then cover the pot and cook until the vegetables are soft.
- Drain off the water.
- Wash, peel and slice the onion and tomato
- Prepare/cook groundnut paste until ready. (You may add vegetables at this stage and mix them in the groundnut sauce.)
- Fry the onions, add tomato and stir until soft.
- Add the boiled vegetables into the groundnut sauce.
- Season to taste and serve with any staple food.

SPIDER PLANT COOKED WITH SOUR MILK

This recipe for cooking spider plant (*Cleome gynandra*) comes from Kenya. Preparing spider plant with milk reduces the bitter taste of the leaves. Fresh milk may be substituted for sour milk.

Ingredients

4 bunches spider plant leaves (4 cups)
4 cups water
2 cups sour milk
1 teaspoon cooking fat or oil
½ teaspoon salt

Method

- Select and wash leaves with fresh water and drain.
- Boil the water, then add the leaves and cook for ½ hour stirring occasionally.
- Add the fat/oil and salt, and stir. Add the sour milk and cook for 5–10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

COOKED COWPEA LEAVES

This recipe for cowpea leaves (*Vigna unguiculata*) comes from South Africa.

Ingredients

4–6 cups tightly filled with young cowpea leaves (use the three or four youngest leaves in a branch)
3 cups of water
1 chopped tomato (optional)
1 chopped chilli pepper (optional)
1 teaspoon salt

Method

1. Place the leaves in the sun for one whole day if coarse. Stalks can be removed.
2. Boil the water and add salt.
3. Add the leaves and cook covered for 30 minutes. Stir the cooking leaves once.
4. If desired add one chopped tomato and one chopped chilli pepper.
5. Place back on the fire and cook covered for another 30 minutes.

Drying cowpea leaves

Older coarse leaves are frequently used for drying.

1. Boil the green leaves for a short time (15 minutes or less).
2. Dry them in the shade and turn leaves over to ensure a uniform drying process and to avoid clumping of leaves.
3. Preserve dried leaves whole, broken or in powder form for use during the dry season.
4. Prepare dried leaves the same as fresh leaves.

COWPEA LEAVES IN SOYA BEAN SAUCE

This recipe for cowpea leaves (*Vigna unguiculata*) comes from Kenya.

Ingredients

4 cups cowpea leaves
½ cup water

2 teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon cooking fat or oil
1 onion (chopped)
1 tomato (chopped)
1 cup soya bean or groundnut paste

Method

1. Wash and chop the cowpea leaves.
2. Fry chopped onion in fat/oil.
3. Add the tomatoes and stir.
4. Add cowpea leaves, water and salt and cook for 10 minutes.
5. Add the soya bean/groundnut paste.
6. Stir and boil for 10 minutes.

For the soya bean paste

1. Wash ½ kg of dried soya beans.
2. Add the soya beans to salted water and cook for 30 minutes or until the soya beans are soft.
3. Discard the water and mash the soya beans with a large spoon until a paste is formed.

AMARANTH LEAVES

Amaranth (*Amaranthus* sp.) is prepared like this in various African countries.

Ingredients

2 bunches of amaranth leaves (3–4 cups)
1 medium onion (chopped)
1 tablespoon of oil/butter/margarine
1 medium tomato (chopped)
Water
Salt to taste
Seasoning (optional)

Method

1. Remove the leaves from the stalks and clean them.
2. Boil the water and add salt to taste.
3. Blanch the amaranth leaves and remove them from the water as soon as it begins to boil again.
4. Rinse the leaves in cold water.

5. Cut the amaranth, heat the butter and fry the onions lightly, do not let them turn brown.
6. Add the leaves and stir to prevent them from burning.
7. Cook for 3 minutes.
8. Add the chopped tomatoes and cook for 1 minute.
9. Add seasoning of your choice.
10. Serve with stew and starch accompaniment.

AMARANTH FRITTERS

This recipe for amaranth (*Amaranthus* sp.) comes from South Africa.

Ingredients

2 cups amaranth leaves
2 teaspoons baking powder
¼ cup flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 onion (finely diced)
1 sweet pepper (finely diced)
1 (sweet) potato (finely diced)
½ cup grated cheese
½ cup minced meat
Oil for frying (not more than ½ cup)

Method

1. Sort tender leaves of amaranth, wash and cut in small pieces.
2. Mix the dry ingredients.
3. Add other ingredients and form a soft dough.
4. Heat just enough oil in pan for frying.
5. Scoop spoonfuls in a pan with oil to fry until golden brown.
6. Excess oil can be drained on paper towels or brown paper.

Variations

Onion, sweet pepper, (sweet) potato, cheese or minced meat can be replaced by other finely diced vegetables.