

# Health Benefits of Cassava Root



Cassava, also known as yuca, is a root vegetable native to South America. Both the root and the leaves are edible but leaves are rarely available in the US.

Similar to a potato, it has a nutty flavor, and can be eaten whole or ground into flour called tapioca. Cassava root contains a cyanide toxin and must be soaked and cooked before consuming.

Cassava root is traditionally ground into flour although this reduces the nutrient content. Those with common food allergies may benefit from using cassava flour in baking because it is gluten-free, grain-free and nut-free.

Cassava is a famine-security crop in tropical world. The crop is inexpensive to produce, easy to grow, is resistant to pests and grows in suboptimal soils.

## WHAT MAKES CASSAVA ROOT GREAT?

### **Nutrition**

1/2 cup cooked cassava root provides 192 calories, 1.5 gm protein, 2 gm fiber and no cholesterol.

### **Vitamins**

Cassava root is an excellent source of vitamin C which enhances immunity and wound-healing, and protects cells against aging and disease. It also contains small amounts of B vitamins.

### **Minerals**

Cassava root is rich in copper, an essential mineral important for energy production, iron metabolism, gene expression and brain development. Copper can also act as an antioxidant that supports immunity. Small amounts of potassium and magnesium are also found in the root.

### **Fiber**

A half cup serving of cooked cassava root provides 3 grams of fiber. Cassava root contains resistant starch, which is similar to soluble fiber which helps to regulate blood sugars and lower cholesterol. Resistant starch acts as a prebiotic, feeding our healthy gut microbes and reduces inflammation. When processing cassava into flour, the fiber content is reduced.

## BUYING & USING CASSAVA ROOT

Cassava root can be found fresh in some box stores, and groceries that cater to Latin American or Asian communities. It can also be found peeled and packaged in the frozen food aisles.

Toxins in the sweet cassava root are found in and close to the skin which should be peeled away before cooking. To minimize this toxin, it is recommended peeled, chopped cassava root be soaked in water 48 hours in the refrigerator. Then drain and prepare as you would use potatoes. Bake, boil, grill, fry or use in soups, stews.

Cassava root flour is often used as gluten-free alternative and contains fewer calories than corn, wheat or rice flours. Be careful when using for cakes or cookies that the raw batter is not consumed. Cassava flour must be cooked before consuming.

Pairing cooked cassava root with cruciferous vegetables, protein foods and getting adequate B12 will also help neutralize leftover cyanide compounds.

The starch of the cassava root can be extracted and dried as tapioca used for thickening soups and sauces. Tapioca starch has a very low cyanide content.

Cassava can also be made into a fiber-rich prebiotic extract or syrup that can be added to drinks, smoothies, shakes and snacks.



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**Spiced Bombay Yuca (Cassava)**

www.euphoricvegan.com

**Ingredients:**

1 yuca root (~ 1 foot long)  
 1 tsp cumin seeds  
 2 tsp coriander seeds  
 1/2 tsp black mustard seeds  
 1 large red onion  
 3 garlic cloves  
 1 inch ginger, grated  
 1/2 inch fresh turmeric, grated  
 2 tsp garam masala  
 2 Tbsp tomato puree  
 1 medium red chili, chopped  
 1 Tbsp oil  
 1/2 tsp salt  
 3 large handfuls baby spinach  
 1 Tbsp fresh coriander, chopped  
 2 spring onions

**Directions:**

1. Soak peeled, chopped cassava root in water 48 hours.
2. Rinse and boil 15 minutes and drain.
3. Toast the cumin, coriander and mustard in a dry pan until golden brown, then grind.
4. Remove the ends of the onion, chop in half and thinly slice. Sauté in oil 5 minutes, then crush in the garlic, grate in the ginger and turmeric and add the ground seeds along with the garam masala. Cook 2-3 minutes more before adding the tomato paste, half the red chili (seeds removed) and salt.
5. Add in the cooked yuca root and baby spinach and stir just until spinach wilts.
6. Serve topped with fresh coriander, chopped spring onions and the rest of the chopped chili.

**NOTE: Soaking followed by boiling is better than soaking or boiling alone in removing cyanide.**

**Baked Yuca Fries**

delish.com

**Ingredients:**

2 large yuca  
 2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil  
 1 tsp chili powder  
 Kosher salt  
 Freshly ground black pepper  
 1 large avocado, pitted  
 ¼ cup sour cream  
 Juice of 1 lime

**Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 450°F. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Trim ends of yuca and cut each one in half, widthwise. Stand them on their ends and use a sharp knife to cut the waxy peel off. Cut each piece in half lengthwise and then cut in half lengthwise one more time to create 16 pieces total. Trim the fibrous center out of each piece.
2. Place cut yuca into boiling water and let boil until fork tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove from pot and place on a paper towel lined cutting board. Pat dry with another paper towel.
3. Place dried yuca into a large bowl and toss with oil. Season with chili powder, salt, and pepper and toss again to evenly coat. Place yuca on a large baking sheet in an even layer.
4. Bake until golden and crispy, about 25 minutes, tossing halfway through.
5. Meanwhile make dipping sauce: In a small food processor or blender, combine avocado, sour cream, lime juice, and cilantro and blend until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.
6. Serve fries immediately with dipping sauce.

**REFERENCES**

USDA National Nutrient Database  
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