

South Pacific Commission

Community
Health
Services

South
Pacific
Foods

Leaflet
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Guava

A nutritious tropical fruit

Many years ago, guava trees were brought to the Pacific from tropical America. They now grow wild in the bush on many Pacific islands.

The fruit of the guava tree is a free, nutritious food for the whole family. It tastes good and makes excellent juice, jelly and other dishes. Anyone who has a guava tree should use its valuable fruit.

The guava tree is also a good fruit tree for home gardens. If it is well cared for and its branches are trimmed occasionally, a home-garden guava tree will produce more good-quality fruit than a wild tree.

But on some islands, it is against the law to plant new guava trees. This is because wild trees have spread over too much farm and grazing land, making it difficult to clear for planting crops. Before planting guava trees in a home garden, it is best to talk to a local agricultural officer to find out what are the best varieties for local conditions.

Two kinds of guavas

The common guava has the scientific name *Psidium guajava* and is part of the



myrtle and eucalyptus family. The tree is small, with copper-coloured bark. It has leaves with many veins, and white or cream-coloured flowers.

The fruit of the common guava varies in size and shape, but it is usually 4 – 8 centimetres (1½ – 3 inches) long.

As the guava ripens, the outside skin changes colour from green to light green or yellow. The flesh of the fruit may be white, yellow, pink or red. Inside the fruit are many stone-like seeds.

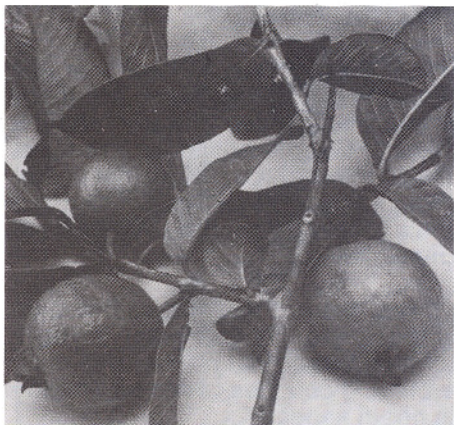
Another kind of guava is the Cattle guava, also called strawberry or cherry guava. It is quite different from the common guava and has the scientific name *Psidium cattleianum*.

The leaves of the Cattle guava are smaller, shinier, and darker green than those of the common guava. The fruit is also small, rarely growing to more than 4 centimetres (1½ inches) long. It is usually red or reddish purple. Inside are several large, nut-like seeds.

Both kinds of guava trees usually bear their fruit during the hot, rainy season.

A source of Vitamin C and fibre

Guavas are one of the best sources of **Vitamin C and dietary fibre** found in the Pacific. They contain almost five times as much Vitamin C as oranges. This important vitamin keeps the body tissues strong, helps the body use iron, and aids in chemical reactions in the body. It helps cuts and wounds heal and protects the body from getting boils.



Common guava



Cattle guava

Fibre prevents constipation and helps the body to have regular bowel movements. Fibre also tends to lower blood cholesterol levels and help prevent heart diseases.

The amount of Vitamin C found in guavas varies greatly, but one small common guava usually has nearly four times the amount of Vitamin C needed by children and adults for one day. As the bar chart shows, guava contains the highest amount of Vitamin C of all fruits listed.

Eating guavas is a good way to get the Vitamin C needed for the family, especially since guavas cost little or nothing when they are in season.

Guava juice — a Pacific treat

Both common and Cattley varieties can be used to make guava juice. Drinking guava juice can give the whole family the Vitamin C they need every day. It can also save the money often spent on less nutritious soft drinks.

For the best juice, good-quality guavas should be used. The juice should be prepared as soon as possible after picking.

The mild, less sour guavas make good juice for babies. Mothers should add a little boiled water to guava juice before giving it to their babies. Sugar is **not** needed.

Bottling guava juice makes it possible to enjoy its good flavour and vitamins all year long. If properly prepared and sealed, guava juice should keep for one year.

The longer that guava juice is stored, the more Vitamin C it loses. Putting the juice in dark bottles or storing it in a dark place will keep the Vitamin C in the juice longer. If you have a refrigerator or freezer the juice can be stored for a long time.

Community groups and clubs can earn money by making and bottling guava juice and then selling it to shops or at dances, sports competitions, or other special events.

To make guava juice

1. Choose firm, ripe guavas. Wash, cut off ends, and slice.
2. Place slices in a large pot with enough water to just cover them. Boil until fruit is very soft (15 – 20 minutes).

3. Pour fruit into a bag made of cheese cloth, muslin or two thicknesses of clean flour- or sugar-sack. For clear juice, do not squeeze the bag.
4. Serve as a drink immediately, or use for making jelly, or bottle for future use. (The leftover pulp may be pressed through a strainer and used for making guava sauce.)

To prepare the juice for bottling

1. After the juice has dripped through the bag, put it back on the stove or fire and heat again.
2. As soon as the juice starts to boil, pour it into hot sterilised bottles and seal. (See notes on bottling.)

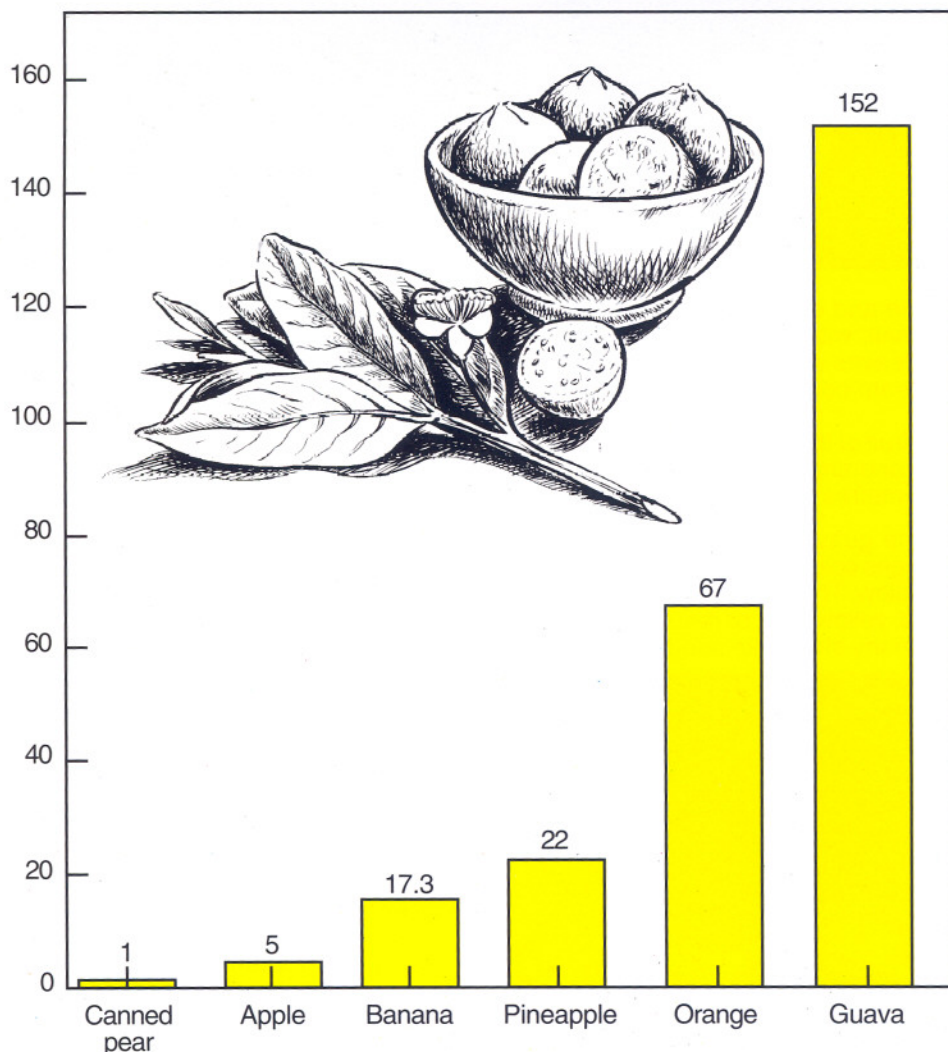
Notes on bottling:

1. Choose bottles or jars that are not cracked or broken in any way.
2. Wash bottles thoroughly in soapy water, then rinse.
3. Line a large pot with a towel. (This prevents the bottles from breaking.)
4. Place the bottles in the pot and cover with water. The bottles may stand up right or lie on their sides, but they should be full of water on the inside and covered with water on the outside.
5. Bring the water to the boil, then boil for at least 20 minutes. This will kill the bacteria which may spoil the juice.
6. Remove the bottles, drain and fill immediately. Wipe rims with a clean cloth.
7. Seal the bottles with tightly fitting lids or corks that have been boiled for five minutes, or tie waxed or greaseproof paper tightly around the rim of the bottle, using string or a rubber band.

Note: It is important to follow all the steps for bottling juice or other products such as jelly and jams exactly as outlined in the notes above. If bottles (or jars) are not washed thoroughly and sterilised well the juice or jelly will go bad, may be harmful to drink or eat, and may cause food poisoning.

It is also dangerous to health to use chipped or cracked bottles or jars. If you do not have a good water supply and find it hard to boil the bottles or jars for at least 20 minutes, do not attempt to preserve juice, jam or jelly in this way. You should only make enough to drink or eat immediately.

If you can sterilise your bottles well, then this is a good method of preserving fruits such as guava so that you can enjoy their flavour and goodness **even when they are not in season.**



Vitamin C in mg for 100 g of fruits

A quality fruit

The quality of the guava fruit varies when it grows wild. Both common and Cattley guava of high quality can be used as fresh fruit.

Fresh guavas taste good when eaten plain or when mixed with other fruit in a salad. The flavour may be sweet or sour, but will always have a special guava taste.

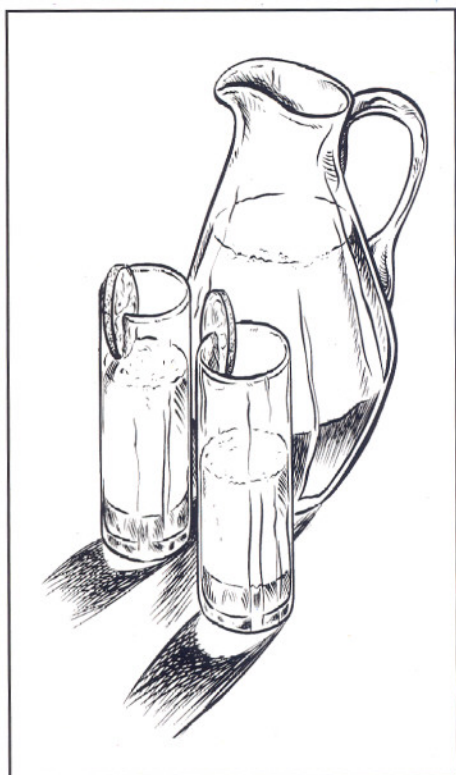
Because of its fine flavour, guava is a favourite fruit for jelly. It is high in pectin, the chemical substance that helps jelly to set. It is an important commercial crop in some Pacific Island countries such as Fiji.

The juice from half-ripe guavas may be used with hibiscus flowers or low-pectin fruits to make jelly. Guavas may also be used for butters, jams, marmalades and preserves.

Both the outside skin and the inside flesh of the guava may be eaten. It is a good idea to eat the skin (fresh or cooked) as well as the flesh, since the skin has more Vitamin C than the flesh.

When the guava skin is to be used, only large juicy guavas should be chosen. The small dry guavas that often grow during a dry season are only good for making juice. Sometimes when the fruit is too ripe, the skin can become soft, allowing certain insects such as fruit flies to destroy the guava. Always use fresh guavas while still firm and throw away those that are infected with larvae (worms) from the flies.

The young leaves of the guava are also useful as a cure for diarrhoea in the Pacific.



Guava delicious

Six servings:

8 large ripe guavas
3 large ripe bananas
1 cup grated coconut
Sugar (optional)

1. Choose the best-quality ripe guavas. Wash and peel, then cut into halves.
2. Scoop out the pulp and press through a sieve. Add a little sugar if desired and mix thoroughly.
3. Peel the bananas.
4. Cut the guava skins and bananas into thin slices.
5. Place half the guava-skin slices in a dish and cover with half the banana slices.
6. Pour half the guava pulp over the fruit in the dish, then sprinkle with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated coconut.
7. Repeat layers: guava slices, banana slices, guava pulp and grated coconut.
8. Cover dish and chill 2–3 hours, if possible, before serving.
9. Serve as a dessert.

Guava drink

Two cups:

4 ripe medium guavas
2 cups water
2 teaspoons sugar (optional)

1. Wash and cut ends of guavas.
2. Grate into bowl, add water and sugar to taste.
3. Serve in tall glasses with a slice of lemon.

Guava sauce

Four servings:

2 cups guava pulp
1 medium onion
1 small chilli, finely chopped, or pinch of ground pepper
1 clove garlic, finely sliced
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup vinegar
1 level teaspoon ground allspice (optional)
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons ground cinnamon (optional)
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cloves
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
Salt to taste

1. Prepare pulp by pressing guava slices through a coarse sieve, or use pulp left over from making guava juice.
2. Cook onion in water until soft. Add all other ingredients and mix well.
3. Bring mixture to the boil, then simmer for 30–40 minutes.
4. Pour mixture into hot, sterilised jars and seal. (See notes on bottling.)
5. Serve as a sauce with meat or other foods.

Guava milkshake

One glass:

1 cup milk (full-cream or skim milk)
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons guava purée

1. Mix milk and guava purée in a glass jar and cover with a tightly fitting lid.
2. Chill, if possible, then shake mixture thoroughly, and serve.

Note: A guava milkshake is an excellent drink for schoolchildren.

Guava dumplings

Six servings:

For filling:

- 9 ripe guavas
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon (optional)
- 1–2 tablespoons butter or margarine

For dough:

- 2 cups plain flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter or margarine
- $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{3}$ cup water

1. Wash guavas and cut off ends and any bad parts.
2. Cut guavas into halves, scoop out the flesh, and set skins aside.
3. Press guava flesh through a sieve and add lemon juice. Mix well, then set aside.
4. Sift flour with baking powder, sugar and salt.
5. Rub in half the butter or margarine until well mixed. Then rub in other half until dough forms into pieces about the size of small pearls.
6. Slowly add enough water and mix well to make a firm dough.
7. Divide dough into six parts of the same size. Roll each into a circle about 13 centimetres (5 inches) across and $\frac{1}{2}$ centimetre ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch) thick.
8. Place 3 half-skins of guava, one inside the other, in the centre of each piece of dough. Fill with guava mixture and sprinkle with cinnamon.

9. Lift edges of dough, moisten and press together at top.

10. Place in a greased muffin tin or baking dish. Bake in a hot oven (425°F or 220°C) for 10 minutes. Then lower heat, if possible (to 375°F or 190°C) and bake for 5 more minutes.

11. Serve hot, with milk or guava purée if desired.

Guava jelly

Two cups:

- 2½ cups guava juice
- 2 cups sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup lemon juice

1. Prepare guava juice following method given above, using slightly under-ripe guavas.
2. Pour 2½ cups guava juice into a pot, then bring to the boil.
3. Add lemon juice and sugar, stir until well mixed, then cook at a full rolling boil.
4. After a few minutes of boiling, test to see if jelly is ready by putting a teaspoonful in a saucer, letting it cool, and running a clean finger through it. If the line made by the finger does not close up, the jelly is ready.
5. Pour jelly into hot sterilised jars and seal. (See notes on bottling.)

Guava purée

1. Choose fully ripe guavas.
2. Wash, cut off ends and any bad parts.
3. Cut guavas into halves and scoop out the flesh.
4. Press guava flesh through a sieve.
5. Use purée immediately in milkshakes or serve as a sauce on ice-cream or other desserts.
6. Purée can be stored in a refrigerator for 3–4 days, in a clean container.

Stewed guavas

Four servings:

- 2 cups sliced ripe guavas
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- Water

1. Put sliced guavas in pot with a little lemon juice.
2. Fill the pot with water until the fruit is just covered.
3. Bring to the boil, then turn heat to low and simmer 5–7 minutes, or until guava is soft but not mushy.
4. Serve hot or cold with coconut cream.

Note: Remember, if you are overweight or if a member of your family has diabetes, you should try to reduce or leave out the sugar used in any of the recipes.

This leaflet is the fourth of a series devoted to the uses of local Pacific foods. Other leaflets available in this series are:

- Leaflet 1 – Taro
- Leaflet 2 – Pawpaw
- Leaflet 3 – Mango
- Leaflet 5 – Cassava
- Leaflet 6 – Green leaves
- Leaflet 7 – Banana
- Leaflet 8 – Coconut
- Leaflet 9 – Breadfruit
- Leaflet 10 – Pineapple
- Leaflet 11 – Citrus fruits
- Leaflet 12 – Pumpkin
- Leaflet 13 – Sweet potato
- Leaflet 14 – Yam
- Leaflet 15 – Nuts and seeds
- Leaflet 16 – Legumes
- Leaflet 17 – Fish
- Leaflet 18 – Seafoods

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