

Note that we are in a learning process, if you think something is incorrect, let us know. We are going by what information available to us.

If you have comments, suggested topics, articles, or websites of interest, or wish to receive the FORUM please e-mail STaino@aol.com

Taino til!

[Resources](#)

[Poems](#)

[Artwork](#)

[Photos](#)

[BIARAKU](#)

THE TAINO FORUM #19

CASABE - BREAD OF LIFE

Our ancestors were blessed with **yuca** (cassava, manioc), a starchy tuber that can grow large and quickly in tropical soils. Tainos so valued their bread of life that in the many names for the supreme being or **Yaya**, there are two that are directly related to yuca -- **Yucahu** (of the yuca) and **Yucahuguama** (Lord of the Yuca). By the research Biaraku has done, we have come to the conclusion that the sound "yu" means white; and "hu" to mean breath or spirit. The word "cai" means food. So Yuca could mean white food and Yucahu, the white food of the Spirit.

There are two types of yuca -- the sweet or **boniato** which requires no special handling and the bitter yuca. What is amazing is that bitter yuca, which was used to make **casabe** (bread), is poisonous if not processed correctly. Cyanide is present in the roots because of its anti-microbial and anti-biological properties in defending the cassava bush and its storage roots against insects and microbes ever present in the tropical forest.

To remove most of the poison from the root, you must squeeze out the juices (**ynoa**) which had its uses as well. Our ancestors first grated the dried yuca pulp on mills called **guarikentes**. The resulting mash was squeezed in a basketlike tube called a **cibukan**. The end product was then dried into a mealy flour. You can leave cassava meal in the open and insects will not eat it, including roaches and ants.

Yuca roots can grow as long as three feet and weigh up to 20 pounds. Besides being a good source of carbohydrate -- it produces more starch per acre than corn or potatoes -- it also has a lot of calcium. It was grown in combination with other edible plants such as corn and beans in mounds called **conucos**. The best time to sow bitter yuca is in the rainy season at the end of March. It takes from 12 to 18 months to produce a harvest, from which parts of the stem are kept to plant in the following season.

The Taino method of yuca production, processing and cooking was so advanced that it has not changed in 500

[HOME](#)
[PAGE](#)

years. It is interesting to note that in 1496, Guarionex, cacike of Kiskeya offered to sow 80,000 mounds of yuca for the son of Columbus. This fact points to the efficient land use and storage and the technology of a people that were capable of such numbers. Today, you can buy ready-made casabe flour, or if you are in Caribbean or large metropolitan area, casabe bread. What follows are recipes and links to sites dedicated to the use of yuca in our diets.

Cassava Bread (courtesy of Wayne's Guyana Page)

Flat, white, round biscuit-like bread made by Amerindians in throughout the Caribbean and Central America.

Ingredients

Bitter **cassava**

Salt to taste Preparation

* Peel, wash and grate the cassava. Squeeze out as much of the juice as possible, using either a **matapee** or by wringing in a towel.

The juice can be used for making **cassareep**.

* Leave in lumps and allow to dry slightly in open air.

* Pound, sift and add salt. * Heat a griddle and a metal hoop of the size of cake required.

* Put enough of the cassava meal to a depth of about 1/8 inch in the hoop.

* Cook until set, using moderate heat.

Remove the hoop, level the surface and press firmly. Turn onto the other side and cook.

* When cooked through, remove the cake and sun-dry until crisp.

Note: Cassava bread may be lightly toasted and butter spread on one side for a delicious snack.

Alternative Recipe

Recipe compliments of "A Taste of Guyana" - Dr. Odeen Ishmael.

Ingredients

4 cups finely grated cassava 2 teaspoons salt

Preparation

- * Mix the salt and the cassava.
- * Take one cupful at a time, place the meal in a string cloth and wring out juice.
- * Crumble the meal and rub through a fine sieve.
- * Put a flat baking iron (or griddle) on an evenly glowing fire and sprinkle a little cassava meal on it. (When the meal browns, the iron is hot enough).
- * Brush off the meal and place tin rings on the baking iron.
- * Spread a thin layer of meal in each ring. As soon as the steam rises, shake and remove the ring.
- * When the bread is firm enough, turn with a knife. Turn frequently until the bread is dry and stiff. (Bread can be stored in a tin container).
- * Before serving, toast and butter or spread with melted butter and brown lightly in a quick oven.

A Casabe based health diet

<http://www.interpoint.net/~mana/>

Scientific research and folk remedies http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/duke_energy/Manihot_esculenta -

For more recipes from the Caribbean http://www3.nbnet.nb.ca/wmoses/recipes_alpha.html

[BIARAKU](#)
[HOME](#)
[PAGE](#)

To look over past Forum topics, please go to our website at <http://members.aol.com/STaino>

If you have comments, suggested topics, articles, or websites of interest, please e-mail STaino@aol.com

Bo Matum, Taino ti!

Biaraku - first people of a sacred place

