



SIMPLY GOOD FOOD

JICAMA (pronounce HEE-kama)
(YamBean, "Mexican Potato" or "Mexican Turnip")

Jicama is a large bulbous root vegetable that has a thin brown skin and white crunchy flesh. It is a turnip-shaped legume that can be eaten raw or cooked, and is used as a source of starch. Though some roots may weight up to 50 pounds, most are between 3 and 5 pounds. The plants themselves are a vine that can grow to a length of 20 feet or more.

Culture: Jicama are perennials and produce their large roots after several years of growth. They are found mostly in frost free regions. In Texas, seeds can be planted in the early Spring and small tubers harvested before the first killing frost of the winter.

Availability: Jicamas are most popular in South Texas, but are found in supermarkets throughout Texas. Most of those on the market are imported from Mexico and South America.

Choose: jicamas that are heavy for their size, well formed and free of cracks and bruises, shriveling, or drying.

Store: in a plastic bag or uncovered in the refrigerator up to 2 weeks. Longer storage will result in the conversion of starch to sugar and should be avoided.

Preparation: Cut away the peel and fibrous flesh just under the peel with a stainless steel knife.. Cut or slice and serve raw with dips and in salads or as an inexpensive substitute for water chestnuts. Saute or stir-fry. It stays crisp when cooked. When adding to soup or stew, add towards the end of cooking. Jicama can be thinly sliced on sandwiches, or boiled and mashed like a potato. It is good in both fruit and vegetable salads. Because it holds it shape and color, it is perfect for raw vegetable trays. It's mild sweetness needs the contrast of lime, lemon or orange juice. It also has a affinity with ground red pepper or hot pepper sauce. Allow 4 ounces per serving. One pound jicama yields about 3 cups chopped or shredded flesh.

Nutrition Information: A 3 ½ ounce serving of jicama provides 39 calories and about 25 percent of the RDA for Vitamin C. It contains zero fat or cholesterol and is a moderate source for Fiber and Potassium.



Microwave Jicama

1 pound jicama

¼ cup water

Optional Accompaniments

honey, butter, salt, pepper, sweet and sour sauce, sour cream, yogurt dressing

Peel and cut one pound of jicama into ½ inch cubes or julienne strips. Place in a 2 quart covered casserole with 1/4 cup water. Microwave on HIGH for 8-9 ½ minutes, stirring once after 4 minutes. Serve with accompaniment if desired.

Jicama with Lime Juice

Tastes like a cross between water chestnuts and apples.

1 medium-size jicama, peeled and rinsed

Lettuce leaves

Juice of 3 limes (about 1/4 cup)

½ teaspoon chili powder

With sharp knife or crinkle edge cutter, cut jicama into 2 x 1/4 inch sticks. Place on lettuce-lined serving platter. Sprinkle with lime juice, then chili powder. Cover, chill until serving. Makes 8 servings.

Jicama-bacon Balls

Jicama balls are marinated in teriyaki sauce and wrapped in bacon to create a crisp and crunchy appetizer.

1 pound jicama

¼ cup bottled teriyaki marinade

12 slices of bacon

Peel the jicama. Using a melon-ball cutter, scoop out 24 balls. Marinate the jicama in the teriyaki marinade for at least 30 minutes. Cut the bacon slices crosswise into halves. Roll each jicama ball in a bacon half, securing with wooden picks if desired. Place the balls on a broiler pan. Broil the balls, turning occasionally until the bacon is well browned. Serve warm. Makes 2 dozen.

Sources: *The Joy of Cooking*; *Unusual Fruits and Vegetables* by Dorothy Powell, Hockley County CEA-FCS.

Supporting State Extension Goal: Health, Safety and Well Being

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