

Cactus Leaf/Nopales



4558 – PLU

Description/Taste

Nopales, pronounced noh-pahl-es, are the pads or cladodes of the common edible cactus, *ficus-indica*. Harvested young for tenderness, the pads have sharp spines across its entirety that need to be handled carefully and removed before cooking and consumption. Large and mostly flat, the pads are usually only about half an inch thick and oval in shape. The texture of Nopales is tender and slightly gelatinous with a tender toothsome crunch.

Current Facts

Cactus leaf, botanically classified as *Opuntia ficus-indica*, was a source of nutritious food for Native Americans. This cacti was once used as a host plant for cochineal insects. Consuming the cacti moisture and nutrients turned the insects vibrant red, after which they would be processed for use in food grade dyes.

Nutritional Value

Cactus Leaf is an excellent source of vitamin A, C and B. Nopales cactus contains a large amount of antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties due to high concentrations of the bioflavonoid quercetin. Cactus Leaf is being studied as a possible treatment for type 2 diabetes due to its highly effective ability to stabilize the blood glucose levels in patients who consumed moderated amounts daily.

Applications

Cactus leaves must always have its spines carefully removed before further preparations can be executed. Usually cooked, Cactus leaves can be very refreshing and benefitting when blended raw with pineapple, orange and parsley for a morning smoothie. Blanched and sauteed with chorizo, Nopales make for a traditional accompaniment to eggs in the morning. Add to tortilla or chicken soup for texture and viscosity. Cactus leaves are commonly blanched in salt water and added to salads with corn, fried jalapenos and black beans for a hearty lunch or light dinner. Fresh Nopales can be preserved by many methods, including pickled, canned, dehydrated or frozen.

Nopalitos (Cactus leaves) with Tomatoes and Onions

Nopalitos, chopped cactus leaves sautéed with onions, garlic, jalapeno, and tomatoes.

Prep Time: 5 mins
Cook Time: 15 mins
Total Time: 20 mins

Servings: 3 to 4



Ingredients

- 1 pound nopalitos, nopales cactus leaves that have been stripped of spines, cleaned, and chopped
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 red onion, roughly chopped
- 1 jalapeño pepper, stem and seeds removed, chopped
- 1 medium tomato, roughly chopped
- Salt and pepper

Instructions

1 Sauté onions, garlic, jalapeño: Heat a tablespoon of olive oil (enough to coat the bottom of the pan) in a large sauté pan on medium high heat. Add red onion, garlic, and jalapeño. Cook for a minute, stirring occasionally.

2 Add the nopalitos, then the tomatoes: Add the nopalitos. Cook for several more minutes. Then add the chopped tomato.

Continue to cook until all vegetables are cooked through. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately.

from Simply Recipes ~

https://www.simplyrecipes.com/recipes/nopalitos_with_tomatoes_and_onions/