

Bac Ha



0000 – PLU

Description/Taste

Bac Ha are lightweight, broad green stems that grow to around 150 centimeters long. The inner white to cream flesh is extremely porous and web-like, described as an almost hollow Styrofoam. Bac Ha has a very mild, grassy, celery-like flavor. However, its sponge-like texture is Bac Ha's most prominent attribute as the vegetable doesn't boast a robust flavor.

Current Facts

Bac Ha are botanically classified as *Colocasia gigantea*, an herbaceous perennial plant with large, heart-shaped green leaves. Its name, which translates to "silver colored stalk", comes from southern Vietnam. Bac Ha is related to the taro plant, and is also referred to as Giant Taro. Its large leaves have also earned it the name of Giant Elephant Ear. Unlike the taro, Bac Ha is cultivated for the use of its stems, rather than its roots or leaves. Bac Ha contains oxalic acid, which can cause allergic reactions like itching. Peeling the vegetable before it is used reduces this effect. However, it is often cooked, or soaked in salt water before being used. As a precaution, one should wear gloves when preparing the vegetable. Bac Ha is also grown as an ornamental plant in home gardens, where it is prized for its leaves as well as its yellow-white, calla lily-like flowers.

Nutritional Value

Bac Ha contains dietary fiber, as well as the essential minerals calcium and phosphorous.

Applications

Bac Ha is good for use in soups and stir-fries, and is commonly used in traditional Vietnamese dishes like Canh Chua, a sour soup served with rice or rice noodles. Bac Ha should first be peeled of its outer skin, then cut into bite-sized pieces. Before it is added into dishes, Bac Ha must be soaked for 5 minutes in salted water, then drained. Or, it can be steamed or boiled until soft. Bac Ha is tender and soft when cooked, and tends to absorb the flavor of other dishes, much like the sponge gourd vegetable. Good flavor complements for Bac Ha include miso, fish sauce, tamarind, ginger, lemongrass, coconut milk, red chilies, coriander and sugar. It pairs well with fish, shrimp and chicken. Store Bac Ha in a bag in the refrigerator, where it will last for up to a week.