

SUGAR CANE - PLU 4790



Description/Taste

Sugar Cane is botanically known as *Saccharum officinarum* and is classified as a perennial grass. This Sugar Cane variety is similar in appearance to bamboo, which is 1-2" thick and has clearly divided segments with a green outer skin. Sugar Cane produces sucrose, which can be extracted or simply removed by crushing the stem and has an expected sugary flavor. Being one of the most valuable grass crops, the Sugar Cane produces 70% of the world's sugar supply.

Seasons/Availability

Sugar Cane is produced after a maturing period of two years and is typically harvested year-round.

The flavor

Sugarcane stalks, though woody, release a deliciously sweet, pale, yellowy-green juice.

Where to find it

At wet markets. To see it growing, visit the leisure farms at Fanling in the New Territories. It is also available canned in some countries where you can't buy it fresh.

Uses

- The original candy, raw sugarcane stalks are chewed on as a sweet snack in many developing countries.
- Throughout Southeast Asia and India, the juice is extracted by running the cane through small mills.
- To make sweeteners: sugar, syrup, (in the US, the cheaper alternative, high fructose corn syrup, is now used instead), molasses and jaggery.

- To make the alcoholic spirit cachaça in Brazil, which is the star ingredient in the national cocktail caipirinha.
- To make rum (often from molasses) in the Caribbean.
- The ethanol made from sugarcane is used both for transportation and as a green alternative to petroleum in the making of plastic.
- The pulp and stalks are used for woven furniture, cardboard and paper products.



Health benefits

- Sugarcane is a source of iron, B vitamins, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus and potassium.
- Nutrient-dense blackstrap molasses, a by-product, treats anaemia by promoting red blood cell production.
- Sugarcane's antioxidants can prevent and repair damage by free radicals and may also fight infection and disease.
- Raw sugarcane's low glycemic index keeps blood sugar levels more stable than processed sugar would do, making it a better choice for diabetics.

Cook it at home

Here, sugar cane stalks serve as a great presentation skewer for the prawn paste as well as lending a sweet finish to the dish. The delicate flavours of Vietnamese *chao tom* are a delicious mouthful – prawns, garlic and herbs, all wrapped up in fresh lettuce leaves and dipped in a sweet, salty, sour and spicy sauce.



Sugarcane

Vietnamese Prawn Sugarcane Skewers

Servings: 4 to 6

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 3 shallots, minced
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- a pinch of sea salt
- 1 tablespoon palm sugar
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- 500g medium-sized raw shrimps, peeled, deveined and patted dry
- 2 scallions, chopped
- 4 pieces of long sugar cane or 1 can of sugarcane

Garnish:

- 1 small head butter lettuce
- 1 bunch coriander
- 1 bunch mint

Nuoc cham dipping sauce:

Mix 3 tablespoons lime juice, 2 tablespoons sugar, ½ cup water, 2 tablespoons fish sauce, 1 lightly crushed clove of garlic (remove before serving) and 1 red Birdseye chili.

Directions:

1. Put shallots, raw shrimp, egg, fish sauce, salt, sugar, garlic, pepper, cornstarch and baking powder into a food processor.
2. Process until it becomes an almost smooth paste.
3. Refrigerate for half an hour or more until the paste is firm and cold.
4. Quarter the sugarcane pieces lengthwise.
5. Wet hands with cold water. Mound 2 tablespoons of shrimp paste around each stick of sugarcane, carefully sealing the edges around the stick.
6. Place the sugarcane sticks in a single layer in a steamer basket lined with oiled parchment paper.
7. Steam until the shrimp paste turns pink, around 3 minutes.
8. Before serving, grill the shrimp sticks until the paste is hot inside and slightly charred around the edges.
9. Serve immediately. Remove the prawn paste from the sugarcane, cut into segments, wrap each one in a small piece of lettuce with herbs and dip into the sauce. The sugarcane sticks can also be chewed on for a sweet finish.