

Aloe Vera Leaves



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Description/Taste

Aloe leaves may vary in length, anywhere from 30 to 50 centimeters long, and are lance-shaped with serrated edges. The succulent leaves are firm and have a smooth, green skin with a fleshy texture. The skin is fibrous and bitter and is not typically consumed. The clear, inner flesh or "gel" of the Aloe plant has a texture like the flesh of a firm grape. Between the thick, protective skin and the translucent, jelly-like flesh is a bitter, viscous yellow-hued sap that needs to be rinsed off. Raw Aloe has a clean, refreshing taste and a slightly green flavor that is mildly bitter. The flesh will take on the flavors of any brine or liquid it is cooked in.

Current Facts

Aloe is a succulent plant, botanically and commonly known as Aloe vera, with a scientific classification of *Aloe barbadensis* or *Aloe barbadensis* var. *chinensis*. Aloe has been consumed and applied topically for thousands of years and is well-known for its health benefits. The word 'Aloe' comes from Arabic and means "shining bitter substance", referring to the translucent "meat" within the long leaves of the plant where most of its benefits lie. Aloe as a culinary ingredient is used more commonly in India, Singapore, Malaysia and Latin America. In Jamaica Aloe is known as Sinkle Bible, alluding to its all-over body benefits.

Nutritional Value

Aloe is both nutrient and mineral dense and provides a wide variety of health benefits. The "gel" or tissue within the skin contains most of the beneficial properties. Aloe is an excellent source of vitamins A, C, E, and B-complex, as well as folic acid and potassium. It also contains the minerals calcium, sodium, iron, magnesium, and copper. Aloe contains compounds called anthraquinones which provide anti-pain, antioxidant and antiviral benefits. It contains 7 of the 9 essential amino acids required for optimal health, in addition to polyphenols which provide beneficial antioxidants, and at least a dozen different compounds that reduce inflammation.

Applications

Aloe can be used both raw and cooked. Slice off the spiny edges and remove the skin using a peeler or knife. The gelatinous Aloe can be cut into cubes or strips. Most recipes suggest rinsing or soaking the aloe prior to use so any bitterness from the skin and sap is removed. Raw Aloe can be blended with water to make Aloe juice, or into smoothies or other beverages. To flavor Aloe, add different spices, citrus juices, sugar, salt or other seasonings to the soaking or poaching water. Once soaked or cooked, cubes of Aloe can be eaten as is, chilled and added to acai bowls or parfaits, or used for hors d'oeuvres, sushi, curries or soups. If adding to soups, wait until the end of the cooking process before adding the rinsed and prepared Aloe. In India, Aloe is sweetened and added to yogurt for breakfast or added to other desserts. It is also an ingredient in sabzis, which are traditional vegetable dishes. Add slices or cubes of Aloe to summer salads with cherry tomatoes and fresh mint and chill. Cut pieces of Aloe can be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week in an air-tight container.

Strawberry-Lemonade Aloe Vera Smoothie

This strawberry lemonade aloe vera smoothie packs a detoxifying, digestion-soothing punch. It's made with fresh aloe gel, frozen strawberries, water, pure maple syrup, and lemon juice.

Prep Time 15 mins

Total Time 15 mins

Course: Juice, Smoothie

Cuisine: Gluten-Free, Grain-Free, plant-based, Vegan

Servings: 1

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup fresh aloe gel
- 1 1/2 cups frozen strawberries
- 1 cup filtered water
- 1 1/2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

Instructions

1. Add all ingredients to a blender. Blend on high for 1-2 minutes or until smooth and frothy.
2. Pour into a glass and enjoy!

Notes

Aloe gel can be stored in an airtight container for one week. Blend it into smoothies or chop it up and add it into juices. Be careful not to include the green or yellow skin when you're scooping out the gel as it tends to have a laxative effect.

