

## The Wonderful YUCA

The richest of all starchy vegetables used extensively in Peruvian cooking, the yuca seems to have originated in Brazil. This staple food for many pre-Columbian cultures in Peru, has been cultivated along the Peruvian coast for at least 3000 years, and found in Peruvian tombs according to archeological evidence. Native to South America and basic food in the Peruvian Amazon jungle, there are about 50 varieties, some edible, some not, and is Never to be eaten raw.



The yuca root varies in quality, so it is important to choose good ones. The flesh should be perfectly milky-white and clear when it is split in two, with no grayish or black specks. Yuca can be made into flour, fermented into a drink, pureed, fried in chips, croquettes and into desserts. It is also used as garnish or accompaniment in traditional dishes, as well as in soups and stews. But it is excellent fried!

The yuca has medicinal uses as well. Indigenous people employ it for healing purposes: the starch with rum for skin problems, preparations for fever and chills, to treat sterile women and for sore muscles. In nutritional value, the content of yuca is comparable to the potato: low in fat with generous amounts of vitamins and minerals.

The secret for excellent fried yuca sticks is to boil them in advance, cool and freeze for a few days or weeks. When you want to make them just fry the frozen sticks without previous defrosting. The result is a wonderful creamy yuca, with a golden crispy crust, made in a few minutes. What could be better than that? Dipping it in the Huancaína Sauce!

