

CHAYA FRITA

SAUTÉED YUCATECAN GREENS

Chaya (*Cnidoscolus chayamansa*) is considered the "miracle food" of the Maya. Indigenous to the Maya region of southeastern Mexico and northern Guatemala, this green, leafy plant, which tastes something like spinach when cooked, is exceptionally high in protein, Vitamins A and C, niacin, riboflavin, thiamine and carotene, as well as minerals such as calcium, iron, potassium and phosphorus. In fact, its nutritional content is two to three times greater than most edible leafy green vegetables such as spinach or chard. As a traditional remedy, *chaya* has been recommended for a number of ailments including diabetes, obesity, kidney stones, hemorrhoids, acne and eye problems. Due to an invisible micro-fiber, *chaya* can be irritating to the skin of some people; you may wish to wear gloves when you clean it. And it cannot be consumed raw in salads; proper cooking takes at least 20 minutes.

10 SERVINGS

✧ PREPARE THE CHAYA ✧

- **2 Tbs. (45 ml) olive oil**
- **4 oz. (114g) slab bacon, cut into large dice**
- **1 large red onion**
- **6 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped**
- **1 large red bell pepper, seeded and diced**
- **8 cups (2 liters) chaya leaves, thick stems removed and coarsely chopped**
(Substitute: spinach, Swiss chard, kale)
- **Salt and pepper, to taste**

STEP 1 IN A LARGE SKILLET, heat olive oil and bacon until bacon is cooked. Remove bacon and set aside to drain. Reduce heat and add onion, garlic and bell pepper and cook until softened. Add *chaya* and cover. Cook 20-25 minutes or until *chaya* is tender, stirring occasionally. Return bacon to skillet and toss to incorporate. Check seasonings.