

## Some Facts and Sources of Information about Cassava

### CASSAVA (*Manihot Esculenta*) (Common names: Tapioca, Yucca, Manioc, Manihot)



Roots of Cassava  
(National Library of Jamaica Photograph Collection)

The cassava is an erect shrubby perennial about 2-3m high with knobbed stems which has a viscous sap. Flowers are male or female (greenish to purple tinge). The roots are tuberous and starchy. There are several varieties of cassava but they are generally divided into two groups: 'bitter' and 'sweet'.

The **bitter** is characterized by a high percentage of *hydrocyanic or prussic acid*, making it necessary for the roots to be processed and subjected to heat in order to dissipate the poison before it can be used for food. The 'bitter' is also the kind chiefly used in the production of 'bammie'. The **sweet** is most commonly boiled and used as a vegetable, and constitutes a valuable and tasty addition to the diet. The principal 'sweet' variety can easily be distinguished from the 'bitter' by a characteristic yellow colour when boiled and generally the 'sweet' possesses a less acrid smell when cut open.

#### Recipe

#### CASSAVA FLOUR BREAD

2lb cassava flour  
1lb white flour  
2 teaspoons salt  
¼ lb shortening  
1 oz yeast  
2 teaspoons sugar  
2 ½ pt warm water

Mix the yeast and sugar to a cream. Sift flours and salt into a basin (leaving two handfuls on a plate for kneading). Make a well in the centre of the flour, pour in the yeast. Mix the flour into the liquid. Add all the water, a little at a time, and mix to an elastic dough. Knead with one hand until the dough is quite smooth, use the flour on the plate to clean the hands. Leave in a greased or floured basin, to rise for one hour in a warm place until double in size. Turn on a floured board, divide into loaves, knead into shape and put in greased tins. Leave in a warm place for 15 minutes. Bake in a hot oven for 30 to 60 minutes (according to size). When ready the bread should have a golden brown crust and sound hollow when tapped with the knuckles at the bottom of the loaf.

(from: **The Farmer's Food Manual** by the Jamaica Agricultural Society, 1957)

### Internet Sources

1. **Championing the cause of cassava**  
<http://www.fao.org/NEWS/2000/000405-e.htm>
2. **A Review of Cassava in Latin America and the Caribbean with Country Case Studies on Brazil and Colombia**  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5271e/y5271e00.htm>

### Print Sources

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2. Jamaica Agricultural Society. The Farmer's Food Manual, A Recipe Book for the West Indies. Glasgow, Scotland: Robert Maclehouse & Co. Ltd., 1957
3. Lowe, I.C. Henry...et al Poisonous Plants of Jamaica: Their Toxins and Treatments. Kingston: The Pelican Publishers, 2002
4. National Consumer's League. "Cassava Leaves for Protein." The Daily Gleaner, November 8, 1973: p. 33
5. Zephirin, Manuelita...et al The Joys of Healthy Cooking in the Caribbean. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2005