

RECIPES

Bay-Infused Rice Pudding

Ingredients:

- 1 C Basmati rice
 - 3 ½ pt whole milk
 - ½ C ready-to-eat apricots, finely chopped
 - 3 Bay leaves, fresh
 - 1 Cinnamon stick, broken in half
 - 6 Cardamom pods, crushed (in a tea ball)
 - 1 vanilla pod
- Honey to taste (about ¼ C)
- Cream

Directions

Heat the milk in a saucepan over a high heat. Do not let the milk boil! At about 150 degrees, the milk begins to, "thicken", (~7-8 minutes), at this point add the rice and stir. Let the rice cook in the milk for about 2 minutes. To the rice mixture add the apricots, honey, bay, cinnamon, cardamom and vanilla. Stir. Reduce the heat to the lowest setting you have and continue to stir every few minutes!

Cook the pudding this way for an additional 30 minutes. It smells wonderful! The pudding continues to thicken as it cools so don't be alarmed if all the milk has not been absorbed. Remove the bay leaves, cinnamon stick, tea ball and vanilla. Allow to cool before serving. Drizzle cream on top. Serves 8

On the Grill

Ingredients:

- 1 handful fresh leaves, clean and dry
- 1 stripped bay branch

Directions

Toss the leaves directly onto the hot coals just before placing items on the grill. If making kabobs, try skewering the fresh leaves between pieces of meat. Try cleaning the branch from which the leaves were stripped and using that for your kabob skewer!

Bouquet Garni

A *bouquet garni* is a bundle of herbs tied together. (Literally, the term means a "garnish bouquet" and these were always removed from the finished dish.) The classic French *bouquet garni* combines bay leaf, thyme and parsley. The bay and thyme can be fresh or dried; the parsley is used fresh and sometimes it is just the stems.



SAN ANTONIO HERB SOCIETY

Meets the 2nd Thursday of every month at 6:30 pm.
3310 North New Braunfels
San Antonio, Texas 78209
<http://www.sanantonioherbs.org>



BAY LAUREL LAURIS NOBILIS

2009 HERB OF THE YEAR



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BAY LAUREL

LAURIS NOBILIS

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What is Bay Laurel?

According to modern studies, Bay is a member of a genus of trees including only the true laurel *Laurus nobilis*, and the larger *L. Canariensis* of Madeira and the Canary Islands. Other members of the Lauraceae family include sassafras, camphor, cinnamon, spice-bush, avocado and several other aromatic trees and shrubs.



Description

Bay laurel is a pyramid-shaped tree or large shrub and is native to the Mediterranean region. Here in South Central Texas, it can reach up to 40 feet tall unless kept pruned as a shrub.

The aromatic, evergreen leaves are glossy, dark green, ovate with a strong mid rib and finely serrated or wrinkled margins. They typically measure 3-4 in long, with the mature specimens being rather thick and leathery. The bark is smooth with a satiny shine and ranges from dark gray to olive green or reddish in color. Slender branches tend to be straight and quite flexible.

Harvesting

Prune branch just above the node on the supporting branch. Wash off all dust & bugs with the garden hose. Shake off excess water and allow entire branch to dry a little. Strip the leaves off, lay out on paper towels and allow all water to dry off completely. The larger, older leaves contain more essential oil and thus are preferred for cooking. Place loose leaves in a brown paper bag and close. Store in a dry location for a couple of weeks, shaking the bag gently several times. Check every few days and remove any leaves showing any sign of mold. When the leaves are thoroughly dried, store in an air- and light-tight container.

Alternatively, try drying the leaves for no more than 3 days. Arrange the clean, dry leaves between layers of paper toweling with a weight on top to keep them flat. Placed in a plastic bag with the air squeezed out, they'll stay "fresh" for many weeks in the door of your refrigerator.

Note: The fresh leaves can also be completely dried flat between layers of paper towels using a heavy book or a flower press. This prevents them from curling during the



A fresh cut bay branch

drying process. The flat dried leaves can be more easily used in wreath making or other crafts.

Around the Home & Garden

The Bay leaf, bay oil and bay fruit are considered the herb both in cooking (leaf) & medicine. The leaves are used around the world in teas, and the oil of the bay leaf berry is used in the making of fragrance oils (think candles) and perfumes (think aftershave).

A leaf or two in flour, meal or rice bins prevent weevils. This works very well in dog and cat food bags, too. Scatter a few under the sink, behind the refrigerator, in the linen closet or under the dresser to help ward off other bugs.

Crush and mix the following dried leaves & spices then sprinkle around garden plantings to ward off pests: Bay leaves, tansy, peppermint and a pinch of cayenne pepper.

Historical & Miscellany

A must-have tree for anyone who has lofty aspirations, bay leaf wreaths were worn by great men in ancient times: these were poets, athletes, victorious soldiers or the Emperor of Rome himself.

It is the source of the word *baccalaureate* (laurel berry). Those persons whose accomplishments are great are often called "laureate".

In the Middle East, the sweet-bay is often an emblem of prosperity and fame. In Christianity it is said to symbolize the Resurrection of Christ and the triumph of Humanity thereby.



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Trees can grow 40 feet tall here in South Central Texas