

The Many-sided Benefits of
The **BANANA** Tree



How many of us know that the peel of a banana fruit can be rubbed on a mosquito bite with good effect? The stinging sensation stops and the swelling also reduces.

While only some parts of most of the plants and trees are useful to mankind, the wondrous banana tree alone is of total service, each part—the leaves, stem, fruits being used in some form or other.

Banana trees tied to pillars of pavilion symbolise auspiciousness. During *pujas* and on important days in Hindu calendar, food is served on banana leaves.

Offering on banana leaves is said to please Lord Ganesa. Banana leaves are large, flexible, waterproof and decorative and hence used for cooking, wrapping and serving food in tropical and subtropical areas.

Banana leaves contain large amounts of polyphenols. Polyphenol oxidase is an enzyme that produces a chemical L-DOPA which is used to treat Parkinson's disease.

Steaming some varieties of food with banana leaves imparts a subtle sweet flavour and aroma to the dish.

It is hygienic to eat food served on banana leaves since the leaves are discarded once the food is consumed.

Medicinal Value

For treating burn injuries, dry banana leaves are burnt, and the ash is mixed with slaked lime and palm jaggery. The thick paste is applied over the affected area and it immediately dries and forms a protective coating. This helps the patient feel better soon.

Banana Stem

The tender inner stem of banana plant is used as food and has many medicinal properties due to its high fibrous content.

It is mostly chopped and soaked in buttermilk before being cooked. You will find it in various colours, such as off white, light pink and purple.

In South Indian cuisine, chopped banana stem is deliciously combined with *dhal* and buttermilk and then tempered with traditional spices.

According to Ayurveda, banana stem juice is highly beneficial to health. The juice is made by steaming chopped banana stem along with water and grinding the cooked stem till it is smooth. Add buttermilk and salt, mix well and consume quickly. It will be a little astringent and bitter to taste.

Chopped stem soaked in buttermilk with basic spices and garam masala makes delicious curries. Many use the stem raw in salads too.

Banana stem is a good source of dietary fibre, and a laxative to ease constipation. Banana stem juice taken with buttermilk on empty stomach helps weight reduction. The juice has other benefits, too, such as relief for ulcers, burning sensation and acidity. Its astringent quality helps in blood coagulation.

Banana stem is rich in potassium and, taken regularly, can cure stomach pain. Outer layers of the stem can be used to treat burns.

Nowadays doctors and dietitians recommend banana stem in the diet at least once a week for patients who suffer from gall bladder stones.

Ingredients

- Tender Banana stem 1/2 kg
- Green gram (*moong dhal*) 1/2 cup
- Grated Coconut 1/2 cup
- Green chillies 4 or 5
- Cumin seeds 1 tsp
- Mustard Seeds 1 tsp
- Turmeric powder 1/2 tsp
- Curry leaves
- Oil 1 tbsp
- Salt to taste

Method

1. Remove the outer layers of the banana stem; cut the central core into slices, removing the

fibres. Very tender stems usually do not have fibre.

2. Place the chopped banana stem in buttermilk to retain the white colour; otherwise it will get oxidised and turn into grey brown colour.

3. Cook the chopped banana stem in buttermilk adding turmeric and asafoetida, till it becomes soft.

4. Heat oil in a *kadai* and add mustard seeds.

5. When they crackle, add the cooked banana stem to it.

6. Wash the *dhal* and cook with half cup of water till it becomes soft but not mushy.

7. Grind grated coconut, green chillies, cumin and curry leaves together into a thick, coarse paste.

8. Add the cooked *dhal* and ground paste to banana stem. Add salt.

9. Cover and simmer for two more minutes.

10. Serve hot with hot rice and *rasam* 🍲

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