

TARO - KALO

Hawaiian Name: *Kalo*

Common Names: Kalo, taro

Scientific Name: *Colocasia esculenta*

Origin: South East Asia or India

Plant Part Eaten: Leaves (*lau*), stem (*hā*), corm (*kalo* or *makua*)



Locally Grown...

- A “canoe plant,” kalo is one of the first plants brought by Polynesians to Hawai‘i.
- Kalo is considered the elder sibling (known by the name of Hāloa) of Native Hawaiians and is the most important and revered food plant of the Hawaiian culture. It is believed to have the greatest life force of all foods.
- It is estimated that kalo production at its peak covered more than 20,000 acres over six islands. Today, only about 400 acres are in production.
- Kalo is grown in either a *māla* (dryland/upland garden) or a *lo‘i* (terraced wetland), up to about 4,000 feet elevation in Hawai‘i. Different planting methods are used according to the local climate.
- There were once up to 400 varieties of kalo in Hawai‘i. Today only 87 recognized varieties remain.

Where else it's grown in the world...

Kalo is grown in Asia, tropical Africa, and throughout the Pacific.

Nutrition Info...



- Kalo is an excellent source of potassium, which helps regulate blood pressure.
- The corm is a complex carbohydrate, providing long-lasting energy. It also provides fiber for digestive health, as well as the mineral manganese and Vitamins E and B6.
- Leaves are excellent source of Vitamins A & C, calcium, fiber, riboflavin, and folate. All help your body to keep healthy and grow properly.

Meet a Farmer...

Farm: Waianu Farm

Farmers: Charlie and Paul Reppun

Location: Waiāhole, O‘ahu



Tad Tamura / MidWeek

Brothers Charlie and Paul Reppun grow kalo as well as sweet potato, breadfruit, sweet corn, coffee, cacao, tropical fruits, and greenhouse-grown tomatoes on their Windward O‘ahu farm. The families live on the farm in off-grid homes run by solar and hydroelectric power. They grow much of their own food on-site. The farm is certified organic, and the farmers emphasize using only local, natural inputs, such as invasive *limu* removed from Kāne‘ohe Bay. The Reppun’s products are available at Whole Foods, Kōkua Market, and People’s Open Markets.

In the Garden...

- Obtain *huli* (planting material) from friends or neighbors who are growing kalo. Kalo can be grown both in wetland *lo‘i* or in dryland *māla*.
- In dryland gardens, plant at least 6 inches deep, about 1-1.5 feet apart. Water well and protect soil with mulch.
- Care for plants by watering and weeding regularly.



- Harvest in 9-12 months. Remove any *huluhulu* (roots) and excess soil from the *makua* (corm). Carefully cut the *huli* (planting material) away from each *makua*. Be sure that at least 1/2 inch of the *makua* remains attached to the *hā* (stem) so that the *huli* will grow again. Trim the stems to about 12 to 18 inches long in order to create the *huli*.
- Be sure to label *huli* with their variety both in the garden and when sharing with others.

Let's Get Cooking... Poi Smoothie

Ingredients

- 2 cups organic soy milk (low-fat vanilla)
- 2 cups frozen organic berries
- 1 ripe locally-grown banana
- 1/3 cup coconut milk
- 1 cup poi
- 3 Tablespoons Hawaiian honey
- 1 cup crushed ice

Directions

1. Place ingredients in blender, adding poi and ice last.
2. Blend until smooth.
3. Divide into 4-5 cups and serve.

Recipe adapted from Armitage, K. and Odom, S.K., Hāloa, Kamehameha Schools 2006.

Poi Smoothies are made by students in 'ĀINA In Schools Nutrition lessons. This recipe includes ingredients from each category of the 'ĀINA Food Guide: Energy Food (poi), Protective Food (berries & banana), Body-Building Food (soy milk), Brain Food (coconut milk), and Caution Food (honey).



Reminder: Please compost your food waste.



What can you make with kalo?

Kalo can be pounded into pa'i'ai or poi. Both can be used in many innovative recipes ranging from desserts to main dishes. Pa'i'ai slices fried in coconut oil are delicious. Adding poi to smoothies, ice cream, or a popsicle makes a cool treat. Kulolo is a traditional treat made with kalo, coconut milk, and sweetener. Kalo is also delicious in stir-fries, stews, soups, or just steamed, baked and sliced. Leaves are made into lū'au stews and laulau (veggies and meats wrapped in kalo leaves). They can also be used as a substitute for collards or boiled spinach.

Did you know?

1. Kalo is a major dietary staple in many cultures and is the world's fourteenth most consumed vegetable.
2. Kalo is often fed to babies as their first whole food since it is easy to digest and very nutritious.
3. Kalo must be cooked thoroughly to break down the calcium oxalate crystals that would otherwise irritate the throat and mouth.
4. Mud from the taro patch was used to color kapa and lauhala cloth.
5. Some infections respond to crushed taro leaves mashed with Hawaiian salt. It is applied to an injury and covered with a larger taro leaf.
6. Kalo is used in Hawaiian medicine to ease upset stomachs, soothe burns and insect bites, and heal cuts and wounds.
7. 'Oha is the offshoot of the kalo. It is also the root word for 'ohana, or family in Hawaiian.
8. Kalo has been cultivated for at least 7,000 years.



Fresh Choice Hawaiian Harvest celebrates the diverse, nutritious, and delicious bounty grown in Hawai'i, encouraging children and their families to eat more locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. The Fresh Choice Hawaiian Harvest Toolkit includes educational resource sheets, family take-home letters, produce preparation sheets, and a poster showcasing Hawai'i-grown crops. For downloads and more information, visit www.kokuahawaiifoundation.org/HawaiianHarvest.

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