

A Taste of Bitter Eggplants

BACKGROUND

Student researchers aim to bring awareness to this culturally significant crop, evaluate its adaptability to the Pacific Northwest climate, contribute to public agricultural data, and facilitate food sovereignty. *Solanum aethiopicum*, gilo, garden egg, beetim, jiló, djakattou, nakati, bitter tomato, scarlet eggplant, rotonda red eggplant or African eggplant is a popular culinary crop in a diverse range of communities, known to be Indigenous to Africa and widely introduced to Asia, Italy, South America and the United States, through colonization and the African slave trade; also due to agricultural trade and diaspora patterns. (Han M., et al, 2021).

NUTRITION

Contrary to the perception of bitter and its association to unsought produce, *Solanum aethiopicum* is certainly a healthy addition to your diet! It contains mostly water, with small amounts of fats, dietary fibers, and protein. *Solanum aethiopicum* has high nutritional contents of Vitamins A,B,C,D, E, and K as well as high amounts of niacin, thiamine, folate, zinc, and high antioxidant levels. *Solanum aethiopicum* also contains minerals that support the heart, the muscles, the bones, and your cellular metabolism.

**Cook them, boil them, fry them,
we want you to try them!**

SEED ORIGINS

This project is possible with the generous donation of seeds from North Circle Seeds and Thresh Seed Company.

The seeds for 'Simeon's White' and 'Zebra' varieties originate from Simeon Bakunda, an immigrant from Congo. These seeds have been selected for the past 7 years in North Dakota where he grows them with the Growing Together project (North Circle Seeds, 2024).

Seeds from Thresh Seed Company, 'Morro Redondo' and 'Comprido Verde Claro' were originally provided by the USDA National Genetic Resources Program (Thresh Seed Co., 2024). These seeds are thought to be alike varieties used in Brazilian cuisine, while seeds from North Circle have origins alike other African eggplants.

| Description | Variety |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Round, dark green fruits. | Morro Redondo |
| Ovular, long, light green fruits. | Comprido Verde Claro |
| Egg-shaped white fruits with a yellow hue. | Simeon's White |
| White fruits with green striped variegation. | Zebra |

GARDEN EGG

Solanum aethiopicum



**The Evergreen State
College's "bitter eggplant"
variety field trial.**

SIKKIMESE BEETIM CURRY

This recipe is created by Jongmu Lepcha from Sikkim, India. Beetim is the Lepcha name for bitter eggplant that is grown in her village. This recipe makes enough for 2-3 people.

Ingredients:

- Oil - 2 tsp
- Onion – ½ a medium size
- Medium size tomato 1
- Bitter eggplant – 3-4 pc
- Chili peppers (optional) fresh or dried to taste
- Cheese (farmer cheese, ricotta, gouda , or any sharp cheese) ½ cup
- Salt to taste
- Panch phoran (Indian 5 spice including fenugreek seed, nigella seed, cumin seed, black mustard seed and fennel seed) ½ tsp
- Turmeric ¼ tsp

Prep: cut beetim in thin slices and soak in salt water for 5 minutes. Rinse with cold water and drain.

- Heat oil and toast panch phoran.
- Turn heat to medium.
- Dice and add onion to caramelize.
- Add beetim, diced tomato, and optional chili peppers.
- Add salt and turmeric to taste.
- Fry to incorporate ingredients for 5 minutes.
- Add cheese and mix well to melt together.
- Add 1/4 cup of water and cover.
- Simmer for 8-10 minutes on medium heat.
- Serve on the side of rice.

Yes, raw bitter eggplants are edible!

Enjoy them as they are or incorporate them into a salad. Enhance your salads with a touch of sweetness for a delightful combination. Experiment with a new salad recipe today and remember to gather more of your ingredients at the farm stand!



The perfect eggplant salad. Make it how you like!

- Start with **Spinach**, or if you're not afraid of bitter try **Kale**
- 1 cups of fresh **Blueberries** or **Strawberries**
- 1/2 cup of **Almonds**, or toasted **Walnuts**
- 3/4 cup of **Feta Cheese** or **Goat Cheese**
- 1 chopped **Bitter Eggplants** of your choice
- A chopped **Cucumber**
- Then top with a light **Viniagrette** or a sweet **Balsamic Reduction**



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*What do you call an eggplant that tells bad jokes?
An egg-groan-t!*