

Fluvanna County Public Library

Spice of the Month Club

Bay Leaves

Flavor Profile: pungent taste but slightly floral fragrance (not usually eaten whole)

Bay leaves come from the bay laurel plant, an evergreen shrub that grows slowly in warm climates. The plants are grown for ornamental use and dried and used in cooking. The thick and leathery leaves are elongated with pointy ends. Most often, recipes call for dried bay leaves, which have a slightly stronger scent than fresh.

To get the most flavor from bay leaves in your cooking, add them directly to any oil you're using in the dish. For example, if you're making a soup and the recipe has you sauté onion, go ahead and add the bay leaf along with the onion. It will infuse the oil and help the flavor spread throughout the dish. This works because many flavor compounds are soluble in oil, not in water, so adding ingredients like whole or ground spices directly to hot oil turns the oil into a flavor vehicle.

There are two main varieties of culinary bay leaves: Turkish (or Mediterranean) bay leaves and California bay leaves. The Turkish variety is the most common, with a more subtle flavor compared to California bay leaves, which have more potency and a slightly mint taste.

Bay leaves have a long history, originating as an ornamental symbol of honor and success, and worn by Roman and Greek emperors, as well as Olympians, scholars, heroes, and poets. Because of this, two terms were created: *baccalaureate*, which is the reward for earning a bachelor's degree, meaning "berries of laurel," and *poet laureate*, an honor given by a government to someone to compose poems for special events.

Since bay leaves aren't eaten, you may be wondering what they bring to a recipe – and that is up for much debate. Many cooks believe that bay leaves don't contribute any taste at all while others find the herb adds a subtle depth of flavor. So, while bay leaves do not add overwhelming and distinct flavors to any dish, they can be thought of as a "supporting actor," in that they help coax out other flavors and spices in whatever dish you are making.

Because the leaves do not soften as they cook, bay leaves are added to simmering sauces or included in a braising liquid, and then removed before serving. The leaves have sharp points that can cut the mouth, cause choking, or even slice into the digestive tract. Simply add the whole dried leaf to the recipe and take out once the dish is finished cooking. If using the fresh, California bay leaves, add half of the amount called for (which may mean tearing a leaf in half).

Bay leaf adds minimal calories to your food while boosting the amount of fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Some notable health benefits of bay leaf include:

- Immune system health
- Digestive aid – Bay leaf tea can help ease bouts of upset stomach. The tea is also very aromatic, which can help relieve sinus pressure or stuffy nose.
- Reduced type 2 diabetes risk factors

Bay leaf can add something extra to most savory dishes, and it makes an aromatic tea. However, it should not be eaten raw or in large quantities on its own since it can be hard to chew and digest.

Bay Leaf Substitutes

If your recipe calls for bay leaves, don't fret if you don't have any on hand. Just substitute a teaspoon of thyme or a teaspoon of oregano per leaf. This should take care of the herbal, floral flavor you're missing.

Bay Leaf Tea (Serves 4)

- 4 cups water
- 6 bay leaves (fresh or dry)
- Fresh mint leaves, to taste
- Fresh peeled ginger, to taste
- Honey, optional
- Milk, optional



1. To start, bring the water to a rolling boil in a large pot.
2. Meanwhile, wash the bay leaves (and mint leaves if you are using any). You can also peel the ginger while you wait.
3. Once the water is boiling, add the bay leaves. Leave it to boil for 3 minutes.
4. After three minutes, remove the pot from the heat. Add additional ingredients like mint and ginger. Stir them in well.
5. Cover the pot with a lid or a sheet of foil. Leave the ingredients to steep for about 5 minutes (longer if you like it stronger and more bitter).
6. After the tea has steeped, remove the whole herbs and aromatics. You can re-warm the strainer tea if you'd like.
7. Serve your bay leaf tea immediately with some honey and milk if you'd like.

<https://keeshaskitchen.com/how-to-make-bay-leaf-tea/>

Dauphinoise Potatoes (French) 8-10 servings

- 1 Tablespoon unsalted butter
- 8 ounces Gruyere cheese
- 2 ½ pounds Yukon Gold potatoes
- 3 cloves garlic
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. ground black pepper
- ½ tsp. ground nutmeg
- 2 dried bay leaves
- 1 tsp. fresh thyme leaves



1. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 350F. Coat a 9 x 13-inch baking dish or other 4-quart baking dish with 1 tablespoon unsalted butter. Grate 8 ounces Gruyere cheese on the large holes of a box grater (about 2 cups).
2. Peel 2 ½ pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, remove any blemishes, slice into ¼-inch thick rounds, and place into a large pot. Mince the garlic cloves. Add the minced garlic, heavy cream, whole milk, kosher salt, black

pepper, nutmeg, and dried bay leaves. Bring to a simmer over medium heat. Simmer, stirring often, until the potatoes are fork tender but still slightly firm, 5 to 7 minutes. Remove and discard the bay leaves.

- Using a slotted spoon, transfer half of the potatoes into the prepared baking dish and arrange in an even layer. Top with half of the grated cheese. Arrange the remaining potatoes on top of cheese in an even layer. Pour about 2 cups of the cream mixture over the potatoes, stopping just below the top layer. (Do NOT use all of the cream mixture). Top with the remaining cheese.
- Bake until the potatoes are golden brown and easily pierced with a knife all the way to the bottom of the baking dish, 40 to 45 minutes. Garnish with 1 tsp. fresh thyme leaves and let cool at least 15 minutes on a wire rack before serving.

<https://www.thekitchn.com/dauphinoise-potatoes-recipe-23009449>

Instant Pot Chicken Adobo (Filipino) 4 servings

- 2 to 2 ½ lbs. boneless skinless chicken thighs, patted dry and trimmed
- ½ cup low-sodium soy sauce
- 1/3 cup white vinegar
- 1 onion, sliced
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 bay leaves
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ tsp. ground cayenne
- Salt and pepper
- 2 scallions (green onions), sliced for serving



- Sear chicken:** Select sauté mode on pressure cooker for medium heat. Season chicken thighs on both sides with salt and pepper. When display reads HOT, add olive oil to coat bottom of pot. Add half of chicken thighs and cook for a few minutes on each side before transferring to plate. Repeat for remaining chicken thighs. Turn off sauté mode.
- Pressure Cook:** Add soy sauce, vinegar, onion, garlic, and cayenne to pot, stirring well and scraping up any brown bits stuck to bottom of pot. Return all chicken thighs to pot in single layer, snugly on top of onions. Top with bay leaves. Secure and seal lid. Cook at high pressure for 10 minutes, followed by quick pressure release.
- Thicken sauce:** Uncover and select sauté mode. Keeping chicken in pot, boil for about 15 minutes or until sauce is thickened. Remove bay leaves. Serve chicken and sauce, topped with scallions.
- NOTE:** Serve with fried cauliflower rice, roasted vegetable medley, or a fresh salsa.

Cacoila (Portuguese Stewed Beef) 8 servings

- 1 (4 ½ pound) chuck roast, cut into 2 to 3 inch chunks
- 2 Tablespoons crushed red peppers, or more to taste, or ½ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 large (9 oz.) onion, cut into slices
- 1 bunch parsley, coarsely chopped
- 6 to 8 cloves garlic, smashed and peeled
- 2 bay leaf
- ½ tsp. allspice berries



- 4 whole cloves
- Kosher salt, to taste (optional)
- 3 Tablespoons (1 ½ oz.) unsalted butter or lard
- 2 cups hearty red table wine
- 2 Tablespoons tomato paste
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon

1. Suggestions for serving: boiled white potatoes, roasted red peppers, and cooked greens (optional)
2. The day before cooking, in a large bowl, coat the beef with the crushed red pepper, cover, and refrigerate overnight.
3. About 4 hours before you intend to sit down at the table, scatter the onion slices, parsley, garlic, and bay leaves in the bottom of a Dutch oven. Tuck the allspice and cloves in a piece of cheesecloth tied together with kitchen twine or in a tea ball and toss them in the Dutch oven. If desired, season the beef with salt. Place the beef on top and dot with the butter or lard.
4. In a measuring glass or bowl, stir together the wine, tomato paste, and cinnamon and pour it over the beef.
5. Bring the mixture to a boil, reduce the heat to a very gentle simmer, cover, and cook until the meat is very tender, 3 to 3 ½ hours, turning the pieces occasionally. For a more concentrated, glaze-like sauce version, about halfway through cooking, remove the lid to let some of the liquid evaporate so the sauce can concentrate in consistency and flavor.
6. Remove the bay leaves and the cheesecloth pouch or teaball. If desired, serve the cacoila with boiled white potatoes, roasted red peppers, and cooked greens.
7. NOTE: Portuguese Stewed Pork – you can use the same amount of pork butt cooked in the same manor.

<https://leitesculinaria.com/7654/recipes-portuguese-stewed-beef-cacoila.html>

1-Pot Chickpea Noodle Soup

- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- ½ medium white or yellow onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 5 medium carrots, scrubbed clean and sliced into ¼-inch rounds
- 4 stalks celery, diced
- ¼ tsp. each sea salt and black pepper (or to taste)
- 7-8 cups vegetable broth
- 1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, well rinsed and drained
- 4 sprigs thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 8 ounces pasta noodles
- For Serving (optional): Sourdough bread, Fresh parsley or thyme



1. Heat a large pot over medium heat. Once hot, add oil and onions and sauté for 5 minutes, stirring frequently.
2. Add garlic and sauté for 2 minutes more. Then add carrots, celery, salt and pepper. Stir to combine.
3. Cover and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Then add broth (starting with lesser amount), drained rinsed chickpeas, thyme, and bay leaf. Bring to a low boil.

4. Add noodles – break into smaller pieces for bite-sized noodles. Stir to separate, then stir occasionally while cooking to prevent them from sticking together.
5. Once noodles are soft – about 10 minutes – reduce heat to a very low simmer and cover. Continue simmering for about 20 minutes to meld the flavors together.
6. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed, adding more salt or pepper to taste. Remove thyme sprigs and bay leaf and serve with rustic bread or as is. Thyme leaves (or fresh parsley) make a colorful garnish.
7. Store cooled leftovers covered in the refrigerator for 3-4 days, or in the freezer for up to 1 month.

<https://minimalistbaker.com/1-pot-chickpea-noodle-soup/>

Red Lentil Daal (India) 4 servings

- 2 Tablespoons coconut oil
- 1 cup sliced white onions
- 2 Tablespoons each minced fresh garlic & ginger
- 1 serrano chile, minced
- 2 tsp. ground coriander
- 1 ½ tsp. ground cumin
- ½ tsp. each ground cardamom and turmeric
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 cup dry red lentils
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 dried bay leaf
- 1 cup seeded and chopped Roma tomatoes (about 4)
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- Lime wedges



1. Melt oil in a sauté pan over medium heat. Add onions, garlic, ginger, serrano chile, coriander, cumin, cardamom, turmeric, and cinnamon, sauté until onions soften, about 2 minutes.
2. Stir in lentils to coat with oil and spices. Add broth and bay leaf, bring to a simmer, and cook until lentils are tender, about 5 minutes.
3. Mash Daal to desired consistency. Discard bay leaf.
4. Add tomatoes and cook until warmed through, about 2 minutes, season Daal with salt and pepper. Off heat, stir in cilantro. Top Daal with extra serrano slices and serve with lime wedges.

<https://www.cuisineathome.com/recipes/lunch-dinner/red-lentil-daal/>

Pioneer Woman Chicken and Sausage Gumbo (6 servings)

- ¼ cup salted butter
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup finely diced onion
- ½ cup finely diced green bell pepper
- ½ cup finely diced celery
- 2 cloves garlic, minced



- 12 ounces andouille, kielbasa, or other smoked sausages, cut into ¼-inch-thick pieces
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 1 (28 ounces) can petite diced tomatoes, not drained
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- ½ tsp. dried oregano
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 tsp. paprika
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper (or more, to taste)
- 3 cups cooked, shredded chicken
- 1 cup cut okra
- 2 green onions (white and green parts), chopped
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 2 Tsp. file powder (thickener – optional)
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 4 cups cooked long-grain white rice

1. Start by melting butter in a large Dutch oven over medium-low heat. Sprinkle flour over top and cook, stirring constantly, for about 10 minutes, or until roux is dark caramel in color. Be careful not to burn it.
2. Stir in onion, bell pepper, and celery, and cook for about five minutes. Stir in garlic and sausage; cook for one more minute.
3. Now, whisk in the chicken broth then increase the heat to high and whisk until smooth.
4. Next, you want to add the diced tomatoes (don't forget their juices), whisk, and bring to a boil.
5. Then reduce the heat to low and add the thyme, oregano, bay leaf, paprika, and cayenne pepper. Let simmer for 30 minutes while stirring occasionally.
6. After that, add the shredded chicken and okra to the pot and simmer for 10 more minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the green onions, parsley, and file powder.
7. In the end, taste the dish and adjust the seasoning, if necessary with additional cayenne. Serve with warm rice.

https://ourtableforseven.com/delrecipes_block_print/28903/?block-type=recipe-card&block-id=dr-dynamic-recipe-card&servings=6

Cranberry, Walnut & Sweet Potato Wild Rice Pilaf (6 servings)

- 1 can (14 ounces) low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 bay leaf
- ½ tsp. dried parsley
- ¼ tsp. dried thyme
- 1/8 black pepper
- 1 cup wild rice/brown rice blend, like Lundberg
- 1/3 cup chopped walnuts
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup sweet potato, peeled and diced small
- 1/3 cup chopped red onion
- 2 slices bacon, chopped small



- 2 cloves minced garlic
 - Packed 1/3 cup dried cranberries
1. In a medium saucepan bring the broth to a boil over high heat.
 2. Add the bay leaf, parsley, thyme and rice.
 3. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cover with a tight-fitting lid (don't lift it as it cooks).
 4. Cook 45 minutes. Remove from heat without lifting the lid and let it sit.
 5. Heat a frying pan over medium heat and add the walnuts, cook 5 minutes stirring often. Remove and set aside.
 6. Add 2 tablespoons olive oil to the frying pan over medium heat and add the sweet potatoes, onions, bacon, and garlic plus a couple dashes each of salt and pepper.
 7. Stir often and turn the heat down slightly if needed. Cook about 10 minutes until the sweet potato is fork tender. Stir in the cranberries and cook 1-2 minutes. Stir in the walnuts.
 8. Fluff up the rice with a fork and remove/discard the bay leaf. Add it to the sweet potato mixture along with the walnuts and combine everything together with a fork to keep it light and fluffy.
 9. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

<https://www.keyingredient.com/recipes/3024655032/cranberry-walnut-and-sweet-potato-wild-rice-pilaf/>

Chicken Etouffee (Creole) 4 servings

- 2 pounds chicken thighs, boneless and cut in chunks
- 2 Tablespoons canola oil
- 3 Tablespoons flour
- 2 Tablespoons butter
- ½ cup green bell pepper, diced
- ½ onion, diced
- 1/3 cup celery, chopped
- 2 tsp. garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. thyme, fresh or dried
- 1 (14-ounce) can tomatoes
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 Tablespoon Creole seasoning
- 1 Tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 3-4 cups chicken stock
- 2-3 Tablespoons parsley chopped
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 1 tsp. hot sauce, optional



1. Heat a Dutch oven with about two tablespoons of oil, and then add chicken. Let it rest for about 30 seconds before stirring. Cook for 4-5 minutes or until chicken is brown on both sides. Remove and set aside.
2. Add butter to the Dutch oven together with the oil and flour. Whisk until smooth.
3. Reduce heat and cook on medium heat, stirring continuously, for 6-7 minutes until you have achieved the desired color. The color should be pale. Don't walk away from the stove during this process because it might burn.

4. Add the onion, green pepper, celery, garlic, thyme, and bay leaf. Cook for 8-10 minutes – stirring frequently.
5. Next, throw in the canned tomatoes, Worcestershire sauce, and Creole seasoning, and let it cook for about 5 minutes.
6. Gradually pour in about 2 cups of stock, bring to a boil and let it simmer. Add the chicken, and simmer for 7-10 more minutes.
7. Adjust the soup's thickness and flavor with more broth or water and seasonings to taste.
8. Stir in the green onions and chopped parsley. Serve over hot cooked rice.

<https://www.africanbites.com/chicken-etouffee/>

Greek Black-Eyed Peas and Spinach (4 servings)

- ½ pound dry black-eyed peas
- 1 bay leaf
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ½ onion chopped
- 1 carrot sliced
- ½ red bell pepper chopped
- 1 pound fresh spinach washed
- 8 ounces canned crushed tomatoes or 2 small tomatoes crushed in a food processor
- ½ tsp. fine salt
- 2 tsp. breadcrumbs
- Lemon for serving
- Ground black pepper
- 1 Tablespoon fresh parsley chopped



1. In a large pot cook the black-eyed peas with a bay leaf for about 30-35 minutes, until they are almost done. Drain and set aside.
2. In a medium pot, heat the olive oil and sauté the onion, carrot and pepper for about 5 minutes. Add the spinach and continue heating for another 2-3 minutes until spinach wilts.
3. Add the beans, the crushed tomatoes and ¾ cup hot water and ½ tsp. salt and mix. Bring to a boil and then lower the heat and simmer for 25 minutes until sauce is thick. Make sure to check the water levels while simmering, adding more hot water as needed. Right before removing from the heat add 2 teaspoons breadcrumbs and mix well, to thicken the sauce even more.
4. Let it cool for 5 minutes and serve with a squeeze of lemon, parsley, fresh ground pepper and feta.

<https://www.olivetomato.com/greek-black-eyed-peas-spinach-recipe/>

Library Resources

Every Night of the Week Veg by Lucy Tweed – 641.5636 TWE

Every Season is Soup Season by Westerhausen – 641.81 WES

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