Beneficial Bites

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1. **What is Bay Leaf**
   1. Bay Leaf is an aromatic, leaf that is usually dried. It comes from the bay tree and it is predominantly used in cooking.
   2. Bay leaf refers to the aromatic leaves of several plants used in cooking. Including Bay Laurel (Laurus Nobilis).
   3. Fresh or dried bay leaves are used in cooking for their distinctive flavor and fragrance. They are bitter and sweet in taste.
   4. Mostly used in teas, stews, and braises in Mediterranean cuisine and beans in Brazilian cuisine.
   5. Bay leaves can be purchased in most grocery stores.
2. **History of Bay Leaves**
   1. Native to the Mediterranean countries and Asia.

Bay Laurel can be a small tree, evergreen shrub or grow up to 60 feet tall in some parts of Greece.

* 1. Bay Leaves have been used since Roman times, to symbolize victory and greatness. It was used to crown emperors, poets, writers, and now champions in the Olympic Games.
  2. The term Baccalaureate and bachelor for academic degrees is derived from baccalaures, because of the ancient Greek and Roman practice of honoring scholars and poets with garlands of bay branches. Roman Generals crowned themselves with bay leaves when they returned home from victorious battles.

1. **Health Benefits of Bay Leaves**
   1. Contain vitamins A and C, magnesium, calcium, manganese, potassium, and iron.
   2. Good source of antioxidants, which may help fight cancer.
   3. Can help settle an upset stomach.
   4. The vapor effect of the bay leaf can help break up mucus and phlegm from the common cold.
   5. Some research discusses use of the bay leaf topically to help alleviate inflammation, pain, and arthritis. The bay leaf contains a phytonutrient called parthenolide which helps aid pain.
   6. Bay leaves contain caffeic acid and rutin which can help enhance heart health. Rutin can help strengthen capillary walls in the heart and body’s extremities. Caffeic acid can help eliminate HDL cholesterol.
2. **Selection, Storage, Preparation**
   1. Dried bay leaves have a long storage life of a year or more as long as they are stored in an airtight container.
   2. The freezer is the best place to store bay leaves. This helps retain its flavor and aroma.
   3. If bay leaves are stored in the spice cabinet, you would have to use twice the amount of bay leaves that are fresh or frozen to have the same taste.
   4. Fresh bay leaves are rarely available.
   5. The leaf is usually added to foods that have a long cooking time.
3. **Serving Ideas:**
   1. Always remove the bay leaf before serving to avoid choking hazard.
   2. Can use a powdered version if worried about forgetting to remove the bay leaf.
   3. ¼ TSP crushed bay leaf = 1 whole bay leaf
   4. Bay leaves are typically used in soups, stews, meat, seafood, vegetable dishes, and sauces.
4. **Fun Facts**
   1. Bay leaves have been used as a cockroach deterrent. Place whole leaves behind appliances, near entry points, in pantries and other corners of the home. A bay leaf can be burned in the home to give off a nice natural smell while providing extra cockroach protection.
   2. Despite what you may have been told, bay leaves are not poisonous. They are a choking hazard, and that’s why all recipes call for the removal of the leaf upon serving… the leaf remains stiff even after long periods of cooking so is too rigid to eat safely and could cause choking.