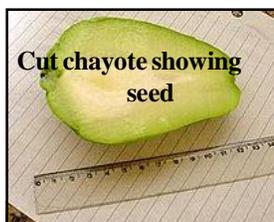




Introduction and importance of chayot (*Sechium edule*) vegetable fruit in India

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The chayote (*Sechium edule*), also known as christophene or cho-cho (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chayote_cite_note-GRIN-1) or merleton, chuchu (Brazil), Centinarja (Malta), Pipinola (Hawaii), pear squash, vegetable pear (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chayote_cite_note-GRIN-1) ishkus (Darjeeling, India) is an edible plant belonging to the gourd family Cucurbitaceae, along with melons, cucumbers and squash. Chayote is originally native to Mexico or Central America where it grows abundantly and has little commercial value, and it has been introduced as a crop all over Latin America, and worldwide. The main growing regions are Brazil, Costa Rica and Veracruz, Mexico. Costa Rican chayotes are predominantly exported to the European Union, whereas Veracruz is the main exporter of chayotes to the United States. The word *chayote* is a Spanish derivative of the Nahuatl word *chayohtli*.

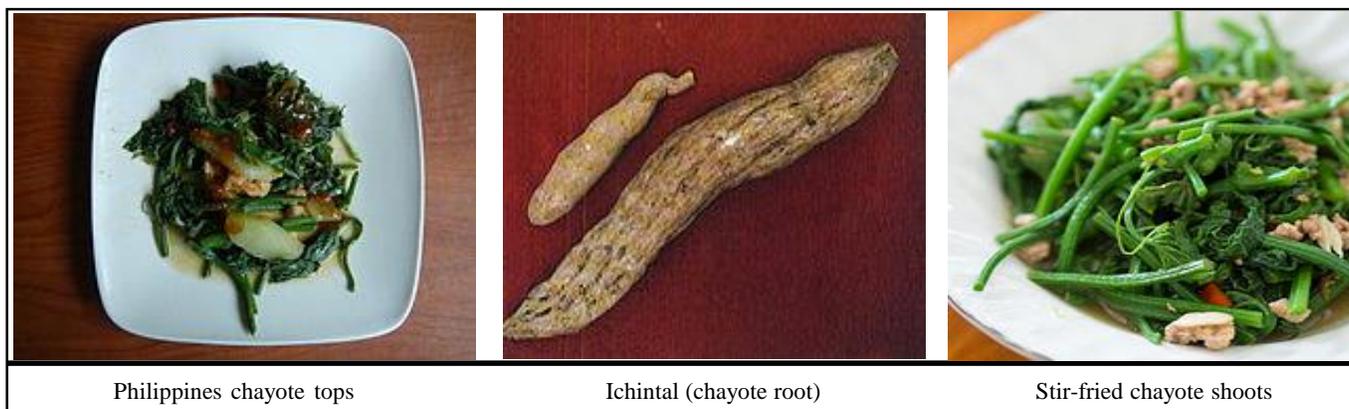
The plant was first recorded by modern botanists in P. Browne's 1756 work, the *Civil and Natural History of Jamaica* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chayote_cite_note-4) In 1763, it was classified by Jacquin as *Sicyos edulis* and by Adanson as *Chocho edulis*. Swartz included it in 1800 in its current genus *Sechium*. Chayote

was one of the many foods introduced to Europe by early explorers, who brought back a wide assortment of botanical samples. The Age of Conquest also spread the plant south from Mexico, ultimately causing it to be integrated into the cuisine of many other Latin American nations.

Nutritinal value: The chayote fruit is used in mostly cooked forms. When cooked, chayote is usually handled like summer squash, it is generally lightly cooked to retain the crisp flavor. Though rare and often regarded as especially unpalatable and tough in texture, raw chayote may be added to salads or salsas, most often marinated with lemon or lime juice. Whether raw or cooked, chayote is a good source of amino acids and vitamin C. Although most people are familiar only with the fruit as being edible, the root, stem, seeds and leaves are as well. The tubers of the plant are eaten like potatoes and other root vegetables, while the shoots and leaves are often consumed in salads and stir fries, especially in Asia. Like other members of the gourd family, such as cucumbers, melons, and squash, chayote has a sprawling habit, and it should only be planted if there is plenty of room in the garden. The roots are also highly susceptible to rot, especially in containers, and the plant in general is finicky to grow.

Discription : In the most common variety, the fruit is





Philippines chayote tops

Ichintal (chayote root)

Stir-fried chayote shoots

roughly pear-shaped, somewhat flattened and with coarse wrinkles, ranging from 10 to 20 cm in length. It looks like a green pear, and it has a thin, green skin fused with the green to white flesh, and a single, large, flattened pit. Some varieties have spiny fruits. The flesh has a fairly bland taste, and a texture is described as a cross between a potato and a cucumber. Although generally discarded, the seed has a nutty flavor and may be eaten as part of the fruit. The chayote vine can be grown on the ground, but as a climbing plant, it will grow onto anything, and can easily rise as high as 12 meters when support is provided. It has heart-shaped leaves, 10–25 cm wide and tendrils on the stem. The plant bears male flowers in clusters and solitary female flowers (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chayote> - cite_note-5). The plant's fruit is light green and elongated with deep ridges lengthwise.

Culinary and medicinal uses: The fruit does not need to be peeled to be cooked or fried in slices. Most people regard it as having a very mild flavor by itself (though some find it unpalatable). It is commonly served with seasonings (e.g. salt, butter and pepper in Australia) or in a dish with other vegetables and/or flavorings. It can also be boiled, stuffed, mashed, baked, fried, or pickled in escabeche sauce. Both fruit and seed are rich in amino acids and vitamin C (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chayote> - cite_note-Saade_p29-6). Fresh green fruit are firm and without brown spots or signs of sprouting. Smaller ones

are more tender. The tuberous part of the root is starchy and eaten like a yam (can be fried). It can be used as pig or cattle fodder, as well. The leaves and fruit have diuretic, cardiovascular and anti-inflammatory properties, and a tea made from the leaves has been used in the treatment of arteriosclerosis and hypertension, and to dissolve kidney stones (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chayote> - cite_note-Saade_p29-6). Chayote is an important part of traditional diets across Mesoamerica, and can be found in a variety of dishes. In Indonesia, chayotes are called labu siam and widely planted for their shoots and fruit. Along with the young leaves, the shoot is a commonly consumed vegetable in the region. In Brazil and other Latin American countries, it is breaded and fried, or used cooked in salads, soups and soufflés. In Nepal, the plant and fruit is called *iskus* in Nepali probably derived from the word squash. Its shoots, fruit and roots are widely used for different varieties of curries. Chayote is also popular in South Indian cuisine. It is popularly referred to as “Bangalore brinjal (Bengaluru vankayya)”, called in Kannada as “seeme badanekai” - brinjal/eggplant/aubergine of the plateau. It is used in vegetable stews like sambar and palya. In Tamil Nadu South India, it is known as “Chuw Chuw” and widely used in everyday cooking for “Saambar” or “Kootu”. In Andhra Pradesh it is called Bengaluru vankaya and sold in vegetable markets in the name of “chow chow”.

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