

GOLLAI ÀPPAN SUNI YAN KAMUTI or TARO AND SWEET POTATOES IN COCONUT MILK

Gollai àppan, pronounced gogh-lie aw-pan, comes in many forms for Chamorros. Gollai means vegetables and àppan means to evaporate or dry up. Thus, gollai àppan is a vegetable dish cooked with coconut milk that is simmered until the water has evaporated. There is a sweet version of gollai àppan made with sugar and cinnamon, and there is a savory version made with salt – some folks also use bacon or a piece of pig fat to flavor the savory dish. Gollai àppan dishes include breadfruit or gollai àppan lemmi (le-my), sweet cooking bananas or gollai àppan aga' (a-ga), unripe cooking bananas or gollai àppan chotda (tsot-da), taro or gollai àppan suni (sue-knee), tropical sweet potatoes or gollai àppan kamuti (ka-moo-tea), and tapioca or gollai àppan mendioka (men-dyo-ka), and tropical yams or gollai àppan dàgu/nika (daw-goo or knee-ka). Here is the link to my fave, gollai àppan aga'.

The savory version of gollai àppan suni mixed with kamuti is delectable as the sweetness of the kamuti pairs well with the saltiness of the coconut milk. The taro flavor and texture are also a nice compliment.

This recipe may be adapted to simply using enough coconut milk to cover about 2/3 of the cut vegetables and using enough salt or sugar to taste. Use a pot size that will fit your vegetables perfectly in one or two layers. This will enable you to use an optimal amount of coconut milk. You don't want to use too much coconut milk because the water may not evaporate enough by the time the vegetables cook.

If using purple sweet potatoes, the milk will turn a pretty shade of purple-pink.

SAVORY VERSION

INGREDIENTS

Set 1

10 ounces or two medium sweet potatoes

7 ounces or two small taros

2 ½ cups thick coconut milk

Scant teaspoon of salt

Set 2

1 to 2 pieces of bacon, optional but delish

Tools: medium pot, potato peeler, knife, cutting board

DIRECTIONS

Scrub the outside of the sweet potatoes then skin with a potato peeler. Rinse.

Scrub the outside of the taro then skin with a knife on a cutting board. Rinse.

Heat bacon in the pot on medium heat to release its fat. The bacon doesn't need to cook to a crisp.

In the mean, cut the sweet potatoes and the taro to 1 ½ inch thick pieces.

Once the fat has cooked out of the bacon, add a thin layer of coconut milk to coat the bottom of the pot. Add the taro, sweet potatoes, salt, then remaining coconut milk. Stir to mix. Bring to a gentle boil then reduce to a simmer. Taste the coconut milk and add a bit more salt if you like. If your stove doesn't hold a simmer, crack open the lid of the pot and keep at a gentle boil.

Stir every now and then to keep the taro and potatoes from sticking to the bottom.

After about 35 minutes of simmering, use a fork to check for doneness. The taro will feel dense compared to the sweet potatoes, but you should be able to easily slide the tines of a fork through both. If not done, simmer another 5 to 10 minutes.

SWEET VERSION

If you prefer the sweet version, omit the bacon. A pinch of salt is optional. Cinnamon is a must.

INGREDIENTS

Set 1

10 ounces or two medium sweet potatoes

7 ounces or two small taros

2 ½ cups thick coconut milk

3 to 4 tablespoons granulated sugar

Cinnamon for sprinkling

Pinch of salt, optional

Tools: medium pot, potato peeler, knife, cutting board

DIRECTIONS

Scrub the outside of the sweet potatoes then skin with a potato peeler. Rinse.

Scrub the outside of the taro then skin with a knife on a cutting board. Rinse.

Cut the sweet potatoes and the taro to 1 ½ inch thick pieces.

Add a thin layer of coconut milk to coat the bottom of the pot. Add the taro, sweet potatoes, 3 tablespoons of sugar, cinnamon, pinch of salt, then remaining coconut milk. Stir to somewhat mix. Bring to a gentle boil then reduce to a simmer. Taste coconut milk. Add a bit more sugar if it's not sweet enough for you. If your stove doesn't hold a simmer, crack open the lid of the pot and keep at a gentle boil.

Stir every now and then to keep the taro and potatoes from sticking to the bottom.

After about 35 minutes of simmering, use a fork to check for doneness. The taro will feel dense compared to the sweet potatoes, but you should be able to easily slide the tines of a fork through both. If not done, simmer another 5 to 10 minutes.

Recipe courtesy Paula Quinene of Paulaq.com.