

# The Wonders of Eating Saluyot

by Dr. Lydia A. Marero, RUMD



Did you know that the popular Ilocano favorite vegetable, saluyot (jute leaves), originated in Egypt, and was the source of health and beauty of the Egyptian royalties including Cleopatra? You might as well decide to eat it too, if you want to look young, healthy, and beautiful.

Saluyot thrives almost anywhere in the country, requires little care in cultivation, and can be grown year-round. It is a green, leafy vegetable that is rich in: beta-carotene for good eyesight, iron for healthy red blood cells, calcium for strong bones and teeth, and vitamin C for smooth, clear skin, strong immune cells, and fast wound-healing.

Saluyot is one if not the most nutritious vegetable in the Philippines. One-half cup cooked saluyot leaves (45g) contains 20kcal, 1.3g protein, 0.3g fat, 3.1g carbohydrates, 0.4g fiber, 87.3mg calcium, 22.5mg phosphorus, 1334mg carotene or 222 $\mu$ g Retinol Equivalent (vitamin A), 1.0mg iron, 0.02mg thiamin, 0.04mg riboflavin, 0.3mg niacin, and 10mg Ascorbic Acid or vitamin C. Moreover, saluyot has an antioxidant activity of 77% or  $\mu$ -tocopherol equivalent (vitamin E) of 48.9. In other words, saluyot contains all the important nutrients needed by the body.

Free radicals are highly unstable by-products created as our cells use oxygen. Because they are so unstable, they react easily with many chemicals inside the cells, and these reactions can cause tremendous damage to the delicate cellular control mechanisms. When those mechanisms are damaged, the cell may malfunction or die. Biologists tell us that this cumulative cell damage is the cause of many of the common degenerative diseases: arthritis, hardening of the arteries, heart and kidney ailments.

Vitamins A, C and E present in saluyot "sponge-up" free radicals, scooping them up before they can commit cellular sabotage.

Saluyot can make you look younger. Due to the high antioxidant activity of saluyot, eating it reduces the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines in the face and body. Thus, regular consumption of saluyot can make you appear young.

Saluyot can be prepared into dishes like dinengdeng of the Ilocano, bulanglang, or sauteed with bamboo shoots or dried beans. It can be steamed and pureed, mixed with chicken, and prepared into soup like how the Japanese prepare it as molohiya.

Source: Food & Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI), Philippines