

DO YOU KNOW

By Anna Vivienne

Getting to know... Local vegetables

MOST of us love bayam. It is a leafy vegetable, the edible being the leaves. It is cooked after the roots and the tougher lower stems are discarded. It is then washed very thoroughly and then cooked. It can be added in soups, stir-fried with salted fish or just by itself.

Bayam is called 'sansam' in some Kadazandusun dialects but it is called Amaranth in English and botanically called *Amaranthus gangeticus*.

Actually there are many types of amaranth. They are known by various names including unbeautiful ones such as careless weed and pigweed but they are eaten in various parts of the world.

There is a type of bayam that is coloured red and it is called Chinese Spinach or sansam sina but it is not spinach. The plant has dark green leaves splotched and deeply veined in red.

Some people love this type believing that it has even more nutritional value than spinach. It is recognisable by its pink roots and oval leaves which may have patches of red along the centre vein.

Green amaranth grows to about a metre tall. The leaves are oval with pointed tips and slightly furry undersides, and have a flavour that stands up to spices.

Some species of Amaranths produce seeds in abundance. The people in Sabah will pick those seeds and strew it over land, which had just been prepared for planting. They grow very fast and within a couple of week the family will have bayam for dinner.

Kacang buncis is also something that the people will serve you if you happen to be staying in a homestay.

This is because this vegetable is quite common here and one of the easiest to prepare. Kacang buncis or Green bean is botanically called *Phaseolus vulgaris* but it is also known as French bean, runner bean, climbing bean, snap bean, string bean, stringless bean and wax bean.

These beans are easy to prepare and cook. Just nip off the tail and top and cut. It is usually fried with salted fish or just drop into boiling water and mixed with prepared batter of your choice.

Some of us simply love hot spicy food while others like tangy ones. One of the local favourite is the 'Sambal Udang masak Petai'.

Petai is not a vegetable in the strictest sense of the word. It is actually a type of bean found in the wilds. They come in twisted clusters of long big pods.

Getting to like petai or *Parkia* can take a while because of its odd smell but once you get over the odour, you can be hooked.

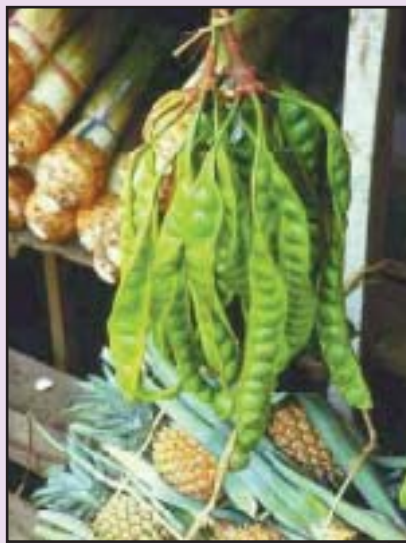
Botanically called *Parkia speciosa* petai can be found along the Kota Kinabalu-Ranau road and of course the Central Market in Kota Kinabalu.

And then of course, we have our very own Sabah Vegetable. Actually the vegetable is known as 'Sayur Manis' or 'cekur manis' but it became known as Sabah Vegetable because a vegetable grower in Sabah discovered a method of cultivation resulting in quick growth and tender stems.

It grows wild in some South East Asian countries, and in Sabah, we used to plant this vegetable along fences and at the backyard. They grow very fast and contribute a lot to our cooking pot accompanying anything from chicken to eggs and salted fish.

However, the just-discovered method of planting is believed to be superior and regarded as the local equivalent of asparagus, though the stems are darker green and more slender.

Well, these are some of the vegetables that you may get sample when you stay in a homestay.



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