

BAY



Laurus nobilis

[law-russ no-BIL-iss]

Family: Lauraceae

Names: Bay laurel, Indian bay, Roman laurel, sweet bay, bay tree, Grecian laurel, baie, Poet's Laurel, Royal Laurel, Sweet Laurel, True Laurel, Daphne, Wreath laurel, noble laurel; (Edler) Lorbeerbaum, Lorbeerblatt (German); laurier commun, laurier franc, feuille de laurier, laurier d'Apollon (French); foglia di alloro, lauro franco, lauro poetico, lauro regio, alloro or lauro (Italian); hoja de laurel; bahia (Spanish); Greek--dháfni; Thai--bai krawan; dafne yepregi (Turkish); warak al gar (Arabic)

Description: Stout tree to 25 feet in cooler climates but up to 60 feet in warmer areas. Width: 30-40 feet. Flowers are small, yellow, in umbel clusters of 3-4. Leaves are 3 inches long, deep green, stiff, leathery, oblong and pointed on the end. Shiny on top, gray-green underside. Breaking the leaf produces a pungent aroma. The fruit is dark purple to

black berries, about 1/2 inch in diameter. Blooms June to July..

Cultivation: Tender perennial if temperatures go down much below 28F and extended freezes will kill it. Zone 8. Germination is 3-6 months in soil temperature of 70F. Prefers well drained, sandy soil with some moisture and a pH of 4.5-8.2. Sun or partial shade. Occasionally fertilize and make sure there's a good supply of water while it is getting established. Once the tree is 2 or 3 years old, it is fairly drought hardy. Propagation is easiest by cuttings from new growth. Take 6 inch heel cuttings (snap tips off branches rather than cutting with clippers leaving a heel 1/4 inch long) in summer. Trim these carefully with a sharp knife to eliminate any bark which overhangs the heel. Strip the bottom leaves off the cutting, leaving 2/3 of bare stalk to press into a pot of wet sand, firming it in with the fingers. Keep cuttings watered at all times. By the end of spring they should have made roots and will be ready to plant out into containers holding potting mixtures. Grow in sheltered location. Best to be container-grown so that it can be moved indoors if necessary.

Potted plants require special attention to light, moisture, and fertilization. Make sure they're in a sunny place and that the pots have good drainage. Allow the soil to dry slightly between waterings. Fertilize once a month while the plant is outdoors with liquid 10-10-10 fertilizer, in a solution half the recommended strength. Reduce fertilization to once every two months once the plant is inside.

Biggest problem is scale. Alcohol swabbed onto the leaves with cotton is the best remedy. Include all leaf surfaces and stems in the treatment. One suggestion from *Southern Herb Growing* to keep bay trees outside year round is to grow them in a pit where the earth is a natural insulator. In winter, a Plexiglas cover lets in the light and keeps out the cold. In the

example given the bay trees were in a pit 4 feet deep and planted in compost and sandy loam 2 feet deep. Two-ply Plexiglas cover was used.

Constituents: essential oils are geraniol, eucalyptol, cineol, pinene, eugenol, terpenes; tannic acid; bitters; berries contain glyceryl laurate and essential oil similar to leaves.

Properties: astringent, carminative, digestive, stomachic, stimulant, diaphoretic, diuretic, emetic, emmenagogic.

Nutritional profile: One oz of bay leaves has 54 calories. It provides 1.2 g protein, a trace of fat, 13 g carbohydrates, 53 mg calcium, 1.5 mg iron, 3,000 IU vitamin A and 15mg vitamin C. However, since bay leaves are usually removed from a cooked dish before it is served they do not contribute any appreciable amount of nutrients to your diet.

History: Ancient Greeks crowned Olympic winners, scholars and poets with bay (the Latin meaning to praise the famous). Bay wreaths are even now placed on Boston Marathon winners. Baccalaureate and "bachelor's" degrees come from the French *baccae lauri* or "noble berry tree. The emperor Tiberius (42BC-AD37) had a phobia that made him always wear a bay wreath during thunderstorms because it was said that lightning never struck bay trees. The bay was sacred to Apollo, the Greek god of prophecy, poetry and healing. So the fumes that the priestesses at Delphi breathed to inspire prophetic visions were probably burning bay leaves. The roof of the temple was made entirely of bay leaves for protection against disease, witchcraft and lightning. Bay was also dedicated to Apollo's son Aesculpius, the Greek god of medicine. In Greek the word for laurel is *dhafni* from the myth of the nymph, Daphne, who changed by Gaea into a laurel tree to escape Apollo's advances. Language of Flowers: glory

Culinary Uses: The main contribution of bay to foods is its fragrance, sweet but not cloying, pervasive but not overpowering. Its blend is one of balsam and honey, with faint tones of

rose, clove, orange, mint and other echoes. Its aroma peaks between three days and a week after it has been picked. The taste of bay is sharp, slightly peppery and of medium bitterness. Use fresh by a few days after it's been picked. If you use commercial dried bay, you will need to add more leaves than recipes require.

French cooks always use bouquet garni (a bouquet of fresh herbs tied together) in soups, stews and bean dishes and bay leaves are an integral component. It is found in most pickling spices. It differs from most herbs in that it does not lose its flavor with long cooking. Add to marinades, stock, potato soup, stuffing, pate, curry, game and poached fish liquid. Remove before serving. Boil in milk to flavor custards and rice pudding. Place in rice storage jar to flavor rice. Thread swordfish chunks on metal skewers, alternating with fresh bay leaves and thin slices of lemon. Marinate in olive oil, lemon juice and minced garlic and grill for 3 minutes per side. In periods when people appreciated more and stronger herbal flavors, bay was commonly ground fine and sprinkled over fresh vegetables and cooked or marinated in fruit compotes. Broil meat on twigs of bay wood, which impart the fragrance into the center of each piece. Or place two leaves inside the skin on the breast of a roasting chicken.

Bedouins put bay in their coffee.

Be sure to remove whole bay leaves before a dish is served. They are large enough to stick in the throat especially of young children. But traditionally the guest who finds the leaf in his portion was due to receive some minor or major fortune.

NOTE: Never use leaves from the mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) or the cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) as substitutes for bay leaves. California bay (*Umbellularia californica*) is often sold as bay but the aroma has eucalyptus overtones and the flavor is very bitter.

Recipes:

Spiced Mushrooms

1½ lb medium-sized mushrooms

1/3 cup olive oil

1 Tbsp lightly toasted coriander seed
1 tsp fenugreek seeds
6 black peppercorns
1 tsp pickling spice
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 cup dry white wine
2 large fresh bay leaves or 3 dried bay leaves
1 tsp salt or to taste
¼ cup red wine vinegar

Brush and stem the mushrooms. Reserve the stems for another use. Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan over moderate heat and sauté the mushrooms for 3 minutes, shaking the pan to coat them all over with oil. Tie the coriander seed, fenugreek seed, peppercorns, pickling spice, and garlic in cheesecloth, or put them in a bouquet garni bag. Add the spice bag, wine, bay leaves, salt and red wine vinegar to the pan with the mushrooms. Simmer the mushrooms for 10 minutes, turning them once. Remove the mushrooms to a glass or ceramic dish and cool them to room temperature, turning them occasionally. Chill them, covered, for at least 4 hours or overnight. Let the mushrooms come to cool room temperature and remove the spice bag and bay leaves before serving. (Herbs in the Kitchen)

Provençal Bay Soup with Potato

10 c veal or beef stock
9 fresh bay leaves
5 large egg yolks, beaten but not frothy
salt to taste
Simmer the bay leaves in the stock in a large saucepan for approximately 25 minutes. Remove the leaves. Cool 2 cups of the stock, then pour slowly into the eggs while mixing all the while. Pour the mixture back into the remaining broth slowly while still mixing. Heat the soup, being careful not to allow it to boil.
8 slices thick-cut French bread
3-4 Tbsp butter
2 large or 3 medium size potatoes
3 cloves garlic (or more)
pinch of salt
1/3 cup fine olive oil
freshly ground black pepper to taste

Butter each slice of bread. Heat a skillet so that it will be hot enough to brown the bread, but not so hot that it burns the butter. Sauté the bread in the skillet until it is golden brown and set aside. Peel potatoes and boil until they are soft but not watery; about 20 minutes. Drain and press through a potato ricer. In a blender or food processor puree the garlic with the salt. When it becomes a paste add the potatoes and mix until smooth. Slowly add the olive oil in a stream while beating to make a thick, smooth paste. Ladle the soup into bowls and grind fresh pepper into the soup. (Fresh Herbs)

Tomato Sherbet with Cloves, Bay Leaf and Thyme

3¼ cups tomato juice, divided
¼ cup sliced scallions
2 Tbsp tomato paste
1/8 tsp hot pepper sauce
¼ cup tarragon vinegar
1/8 tsp black pepper
½ tsp Worcestershire sauce
¼ tsp light honey
1 dried bay leaf
3 sprigs fresh thyme
3 whole cloves
2 tsp unflavored gelatin
¼ cup cold water
1 Tbsp lemon juice
2 egg whites

Mix together 1 cup of the tomato juice, scallions, and tomato paste in a blender or food processor until scallions are liquefied. Stir mixture into remaining tomato juice, and pour into a medium-size nonstick saucepan. Add hot pepper sauce, vinegar, pepper, Worcestershire sauce, and honey to tomato juice mixture. Combine bay leaf, thyme, and cloves in a square of cheesecloth, tie, and add to tomato juice mixture. Bring to a boil, then lower heat, and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove herb and spice bag, and discard. Mix gelatin with water, stir until dissolved, and then add to tomato juice mixture. Stir in lemon juice, and pour entire mixture into an 8¼ x 8¼ x 2-inch Pyrex (not metal) baking dish. Cool at room temperature for 10 minutes, and then freeze for 1½ hours.

Beat egg whites in a large bowl until stiff. Then remove tomato mixture from freezer, and break up with a spoon. Whirl in a blender on low speed until mixture is slushy. Fold into beaten egg whites, and spoon into a container to freeze again for at least 2 hours. When ready to serve, soften at room temperature and spoon out portions with an ice cream scoop or a deep spoon. This sherbet keeps well for 3-4 weeks in the freezer. (The Herb & Spice Cookbook--A Seasoning Celebration)

Veal and Bay Leaf Kabobs

4 veal escalopes (or turkey)
1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
2 oz caciocavallo, pecorino or locatelli cheese
1 Tbsp olive oil
½ cup finely minced onion plus 1 whole onion
¾ cup fine dried bread crumbs
3 Tbsp chopped, lightly toasted pine nuts
2 tsp minced parsley
1 tsp minced sage
¼ tsp salt
1/8 tsp freshly ground pepper
16 bay leaves

Cut each escalope in half lengthwise. You should have 8 pieces each about 4 inches long and 2½ inches wide. Place each piece between layers of plastic wrap. Using a flat meat mallet, pound gently until 1/8 inch thick. Transfer to shallow dish, pour lemon juice over escalopes, and let stand 30 minutes.

Grate enough of the cheese to measure 1/4 cup; cut the remainder into 24 uniform cubes. Set grated and cubed cheese aside. In a skillet over medium heat, warm oil. Add minced onion and sauté until soft (about 5 minutes). Remove from heat and stir in bread crumbs, grated cheese, pine nuts, parsley, sage, salt and pepper; mix well. Taste and adjust seasonings.

Cut whole onion lengthwise into eighths. Pull each eighth apart to form individual layers about 1 inch wide and 1/4 inch thick. You will need 16 pieces. Set aside. Pat veal slices dry with paper toweling and place flat on work surface. Divide crumb mixture evenly among slices, spreading it to cover, and then top each slice with 3 cheese

cubes. Starting at narrow end closest to you, roll tightly like a jelly roll. As you work, place rolls seam side down on work surface.

Prepare a charcoal fire, or preheat broiler. To assemble the kabobs, have ready eight 6- to 7- inch skewers. Thread ingredients onto each skewer in the following order: an onion section, a bay leaf, a veal roll, a bay leaf, and an onion section. Grill kabobs over hot coals or under broiler, turning often, until rolls are lightly browned (about 10 minutes). Serve hot. (Cooking from the Gourmet's Garden)

Daube Provencale

3½ lb topside beef cut 2½ in square, ¾ inches thick
8 oz green streaky bacon, diced
3 Tbsp olive oil
2 large onions, sliced
3 carrots, sliced
2 oz pork rind cut in 1/2 in squares
1 bouquet garni: thyme, bay leaf and parsley with 2 strips dried orange peel
3 garlic cloves, bruised
½ pt red wine
¼ - ½ pt beef stock
Salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1 Tbsp freshly chopped parsley

Heat the oil in a large pan or the casserole in which the meat is to be cooked. Lightly fry bacon, onions and carrots until slightly soft. Set aside. In the same oil brown the meat, and set aside. Put half the bacon, vegetables and pork rind in the bottom of the casserole, arrange the meat on top and cover with the rest of the bacon, vegetables and pork rind. Add garlic, bouquet garni with orange peel, salt and pepper. Pour on the wine to cover, adding stock if necessary. Bring to simmering point and cover casserole with foil or greaseproof paper before attaching lid. Cook in a slow oven, 300F, for 3-4 hours. Sprinkle with parsley and serve from the casserole. (Cooking with Spices)

Poached Peaches with Bay Custard Sauce

6 large or 12 small ripe peaches
3 cups water
2 cups sugar

Small fresh bay leaves for garnish

BAY CUSTARD SAUCE

1¾ cups milk

2 bay leaves, fresh if possible

½ cup sugar

4 egg yolks

1½ tsp vanilla extract

Fill a large bowl with boiling water. Drop the peaches in and let sit for 2-4 minutes to loosen the skins. The riper they are, the less time this will take. Drain and carefully remove the skins. Set aside. Combine the water and sugar in a large saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat. Once the sugar has dissolved, turn the heat down and simmer for a few minutes. Add the peaches to the syrup and continue to simmer gently until the fruit is tender but not soft, about 15 minutes. Again, the time will depend on the ripeness of the peaches. Remove from the heat and cool in the syrup.

Make the custard sauce. Scald the milk with one of the bay leaves; set aside. Place the sugar and egg yolks in a medium bowl and beat with a whisk or electric beater until the mixture becomes pale yellow and forms a ribbon. Add the hot milk gradually, beating constantly, and then pour the mixture into a non-aluminum saucepan. Add the second bay leaf and cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until the sauce thickens enough to coat a wooden spoon, about 15 to 20 minutes. Do not let the sauce come to a boil or it will curdle. As soon as the sauce is thick enough, remove it from the heat, stir briefly, then stir in the vanilla. Place a piece of waxed paper over the top to prevent a skin from forming as it cools. Remove the bay leaf before serving. If the sauce gets lumpy, strain it before using. To serve, place a puddle of sauce on each plate, drain the peaches and set them on the sauce. Garnish each peach with 2 fresh bay leaves if desired. (Cooking with Herbs)

Bay Leaf Pound Cake

4 bay leaves

½ cup milk

½ cup butter, softened

¾ cup sugar

2 eggs, room temperature

1½ cups cake flour

1 tsp baking powder

Mix together milk and bay leaves in saucepan. Bring to simmer, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat and cool completely. Beat butter until creamy. Add sugar. Beat until creamy. Add eggs, beating until fluffy. Sift together flour and baking powder. Add to creamed mixture just until blended. Strain milk and discard bay leaves. Mix cooled milk into batter just until blended. Spread into greased and floured 8" x 4" loaf pan. Bake at 350F for 40-50 minutes. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pan. Serve plain or topped with pureed strawberries or peaches. (Favorite Recipes with Herbs)

Bouquet Garni

12 whole bay leaves

12 tsp whole celery seeds

24 whole cloves

36 peppercorns

12 Tbsp dried parsley

6 tsp thyme

Divide the above ingredients equally onto 12, 4-inch square pieces of muslin or new cheesecloth. Tie with heavy white twine, leaving a long string attached for easy removal at the end of the cooking time. (Growing & Using Herbs with Confidence)

Bay Leaf Rice Pudding

¼ pint double cream

1¼ pint milk

1 pinch of salt

2 oz short grain rice

2 large eggs, beaten

3 oz soft dark brown sugar

1½ oz demerara sugar

Place the cream and milk in a heavy saucepan and slowly bring to the boil, with the bay leaves. Once bubbling, add the salt and rice. Stir, and then cover. Reduce the heat and simmer for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Preheat the oven to 300F. Beat together the eggs and the brown sugar. Remove the saucepan from the heat. Pour the egg and sugar mixture into it, stirring all the time. Mix well, and then pour into a buttered, round 3 pint oven dish. Place in the oven and bake for 1 hour; stir it once halfway through

this time. After the hour, remove the dish and using a couple of forks, dig out the bay leaves and discard. Smooth over the top and put aside to cool. Once the rice is completely cold, blot off any moisture from the surface, then sprinkle over the demerara sugar, ensuring it is evenly spread. Place the dish under a preheated hot grill for about 2-3 minutes or until the sugar has melted and the topping is dark brown and crunchy. Allow to cool and serve at room temperature. (Feasting on Herbs)

Medicinal Uses: The Romans used bay leaves and berries for the treatment of liver disorders. The French at one time used bay as an antiseptic. Now the Lebanese steep the berries and leaves in brandy in the sun for a few days and drink it to calm queasy stomachs. Bay oil from the berries and leaves can be used in salves and liniments for rheumatism, bruises and skin problems. Both fruit and leaves also stimulate the digestion. A decoction of fruit or leaves made into a paste with honey or syrup can be applied to the chest for colds and other chest problems. The oil contains a powerful bacteria killing chemical that is used in some dentifrices. For frequent migraines add bay leaves to feverfew. Bay leaves have demonstrated to help the body use insulin more efficiently at levels as low as half-teaspoon.

An experimental convalescent home in Russia encourages patients to smell bay leaves to sharpen the memory. Ancient Romans and Greeks placed a rolled bay leaf in the nose or stuck a leaf on the forehead when troubled by headaches.

A tea of bay leaves is excellent for the digestion and is somewhat astringent as well. A facial steam bath, for cleansing and clearing the skin, is made in the same way as the tea, with the addition of chamomile flowers, rosemary leaves, and rose petals. For hysteria: to calm the patient, have them drink tea made from a bay leaf. Pour 1 cup boiling water over 2 bay leaves. Remove the leaves after steeping 10 minutes and sweeten with honey.

In one study, laboratory animals were given a fatal dose of strychnine, and then promptly treated with a bay oil preparation.

They all lived, but researchers weren't sure why.

Energetics: spicy, warm

Meridians/Organs Affected: heart, spleen

Cosmetic Uses: In the *Grete Herbal*, a 1526 book by Peter Treveris, a paste of bay and honey was recommended for blemishes. The scent of modern bay rum products comes from the West Indian bay rum tree (*Pimento racemosa*) a relative of allspice. Used to flavor toothpastes. A facial steam bath containing herbs to clear the skin was popular and is becoming so again. For normal skins, a mixture of bay leaves, chamomile flowers, rosemary and rose petals is recommended. Dried bay leaves go into sleep pillows for insomnia.

COSMETIC RECIPES: *Bay Rum Cologne*--2 oz bay leaves, ¼ oz ground cardamom, ½ tsp ground cinnamon, ½ tsp ground cloves, 1 pint Jamaican rum. Crush the bay leaves and add them to the rum and spices. Shake, then let stand for 7 days. Strain out the leaves and bottle the cologne.

Shampoo: Gather a few bay leaves and dry them. Crush them with a rolling pin and mix with them a handful of dried chamomile flowers and one of rosemary. Place in a large jug and pour over a liter of boiling water. Strain after 2-3 minutes and mix in a teaspoonful of soft or liquid soap and apply to the hair massaging it well in. Use an herbal rinse after shampooing or a little lemon juice or apple cider vinegar in warm water.

Laurel Bay Mint Bath: 1 cup chopped fresh mint; 1 cup chopped bay leaves; 1 tsp coconut oil; 1 tsp almond extract. In a mixing bowl, toss all ingredients together. Place mixture into a 12-inch by 12 inch cheesecloth square; tie into a pouch with string. Submerge pouch in bath with hot water running. Water should be quite hot in order for herbs to infuse properly. After the water is a comfortable temperature, slip in and bathe for at least ½ hour. Makes enough for 1 bath.

Bay Oil (pre-shampoo treatment for dark hair) 1¼ oz crushed bay berries; 1/3 oz chopped bay leaves; 2/3 oz chopped ivy leaves; 1/3 oz powdered walnut husk; 1/3 oz sage leaves; 1 lb 2 oz sweet almond oil; 1¼ oz 95 proof grain alcohol. Steep the herbs and walnut husk in the oil and alcohol for three weeks, using a wide-mouthed screw-top glass jar. If possible stand the jar in the sun or near a moderate heat source. Place the mixture in a double boiler and evaporate the alcohol. Filter the mixture while it is hot, first through a sieve and then through a filter paper. Keeps a long time in a cool place. Massage into the scalp at least half an hour before shampooing.

Aromatherapy:

EXTRACTION: steam distillation of dried leaves and berries

CHARACTERISTICS: a greenish-yellow liquid with a powerful, spicy-medicinal odor, somewhat resembling cloves or cinnamon

BLENDS WELL WITH: bergamot, atlas or Virginian cedarwood, eucalyptus, fennel, ginger, juniper, lavender, lemon, sweet or Spanish marjoram, orange, patchouli, rose, rosemary, thyme, ylang-ylang, clary sage, labdanum

USES:

Mind: Stimulating in small doses and acts as a sedative in larger doses. Promotes confidence, insight and courage and suited to writers, poets, painters, musicians and creative artists.

Digestive: dyspepsia, flatulence, loss of appetite

Genito-urinary: Scanty periods

Immune system: colds, flu, tonsillitis and viral infections

Other Uses: fragrance component in detergents, cosmetics, toiletries and perfumes, especially aftershaves. Extensively used in processed food of all types, as well as alcoholic and soft drinks

RECIPES:

For a foot powder: 20 drops chamomile, 5 drops clove; 5 drops bay; 2 Tbsp cornstarch

For normal hair: 8 drops cedarwood; 8 drops rosemary; 8 drops bay; 3 drops geranium, 2 Tbsp jojoba

For restful sleep massage: 4 drops petitgrain; 4 drops lavender; 4 drops lemongrass; 3 drops sweet bay; 1 Tbsp carrier oil

Ritual: Gender-Hot, Planet-Sun; Element-Fire; Associated Deities: Aesculapius, Apollo, Ceres, Cerridwen; Part Used: leaves; Basic powers: protection, clairvoyance, exorcism, purification, healing. Specific uses: burn the leaves to induce visions. Wear as an amulet to ward off negativity and evil. Burn and scatter on the floor in exorcism and purification rituals. Put leaves under the pillow to induce inspiration and prophetic dreams. Add to purification incenses and baths. Use in healing incenses and sachets. Pick while facing east, just at sunrise. Protection against lightning. A potted bay is said to protect one's home during a thunderstorm, invoking the protection of Apollo. It is sometimes corresponded with Candlemas, when it is used to meditate upon the growing sunlight. Bay is used to attract romance and love. A modern custom is to make or purchase a small box as a magickal gift for a friend. It should be decorated with magickal symbols and ritually consecrated. Three leaves from a live bay should be picked at the new Moon and placed within the box. As the Moon waxes, the friend should make a wish, writing the wish upon the leaves. At the full Moon the box, leaves and all, should be taken outside and burned in a cauldron beneath the Moon and the ashes buried. Language of Flowers: My feelings will change only with death.

Other Uses: Bay leaves appear to repel roaches, moths and fleas. The active chemical in the leaf is eucalyptol. Put a whole leaf in a canister of flour to keep the insects out or put whole leaves in your closet, in drawers with woolens or around the drain under the sink. Distilled oil is utilized in the perfume and liquor industries. Use a whole leaf as a fragrant book mark.

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