Avara

Posted on

Freshly picked Avara beans

Long green vines draped around the king coconut tree, while purple-white flowers created an illusion of a motif. Purplish green beans dangled like decorations…This was the little known Avara plant.

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Avara, the nutritious bean

Avara is a leguminous plant and its beans are high in protein, as such it is highly nutritious. This plant is said to be native to Sri Lanka. Its roots release high levels of nitrogen thus making the soil fertile for other plants as well. The beans have a unique sweet smell and the purple-white blossoms are beautiful.

The seeds are planted in a mixture of cow dung and ash that have been kept for five days in a pit that has a width, length and depth of two feet each. The vines

grow on another tree for support or alternatively you can have a separate structure for the plant to grow.

In the little village of Urani in the East Coast, the Avara plant popularly grows in home gardens. These beans are prepared either as a *mallum* (a spicy mixture with coconut) or thel dala (stir-fried). We decided to make a wholesome dish of *mallum* with freshly plucked Avara from the garden.

The Avara was first washed and broken into pieces and placed in a small clay pot. Fresh *kochchi miris* (a type of spicy chilies) from the garden were added together with a teaspoon of salt. Water was added and the clay pot with the mixture was placed on the fire.

Soon the aroma of boiling chili and Avara wafted towards us. The pot was covered to allow the liquid to simmer while stirring intermittently. Coconut was scraped and turmeric powder, chopped onions and curry leaves were added to it. Once the Avara beans had turned a beautiful green and all the water had simmered through the coconut mixture was added and stirred until cooked. Fresh lime can be added at the end to give a bit of zest to the dish. For a non-veg version you can add dry fish, sprats or *kunisso* (small prawns).

> This freshly made dish is full of spicy flavour and wholesome goodness. Avara mallum is ideal as an accompaniment with rice.

This freshly made dish is full of spicy flavour and wholesome goodness. Avara *mallum* is ideal as an accompaniment with rice.

Pop open a bean and take a few seeds, plant these in your garden and you will soon have your very own supply of nutritious Avara right at your doorstep.