

## PAPAWS (OR PAPAYAS.)

(CARICA PAPAYA.)

By G. H. Murray, Director of Agriculture.

A fruit common to the Territory, but not appreciated as it should be, is the papaw or papaya, known botanically as *Carica papaya*. Indigenous to the West Indies and Central America, it has spread throughout the tropics and is now wild in the bush of this Territory, the seed apparently having been distributed by birds. Although growing to a height of 15 to even 30 feet, it is hardly worthy of being called a tree, and might more correctly be described as a tall herbaceous plant, and is dioecious in habit, i.e., having male and female blossom on different plants. It is of rapid growth, ripe fruit being borne in slightly less than twelve months. The plant is at its best from its first to third or fifth year, though it will frequently bear for several years, but the fruit usually deteriorates in quality with increasing age. It bears no lateral branches, but frequently forms divided erect stems. A "self-sown" plant alongside the offices of the Department of Agriculture, which has received no attention, is about 30 feet in height, has divided stems and has been bearing a large crop of fruit for at least a couple of years.

The fruit is somewhat variable in form, being commonly spherical or round. A few years ago, at the Demonstration Plantation, Keravat, there was a well-flavoured variety, weighing about 6 to 7 lb. each and obscurely angled, like some forms of rock or musk melons, but it deteriorated in quality with age. There are also elongated forms up to about 20 inches in length, and weighing as much as 20 lb., hence the fruit is sometimes known as "tree melon". The inside cavity of the fruit is usually filled with wrinkled seeds about the size and shape of pepper corns and when soft and green have a peppery flavour which is not unpleasant to some palates. There is also an almost seedless form which is generally considered to have the finest flavour and it is certainly the pleasantest to prepare for the table.

A form recently introduced to the Demonstration Plantation, Keravat, from Hawaii, is round and small, sufficient for one or two persons, well flavoured and is considered better for table use than the large size. The latter, however, would, no doubt, be more suitable for issue as pig feed, and even to native labourers, whose palates may not be quite so sensitive as those of Europeans.

The fruit can be put to many uses, although principally favoured as a breakfast dish. As a crystallised fruit it is good, but without a very distinctive flavour. It can be used in a salad sliced with lettuce, boiled green in the same manner as summer squash. It can also be used for pickles, preserves of different kinds, jellies and pies. As a jam, prepared with some Davidsonia plums (a wild, acid, purple coloured fruit in North Queensland scrubs) in place of lemons, it is particularly attractive in appearance and flavour, and I have no doubt any ingenious housewife could find other equally attractive methods for its preparation.

The plant has digestive properties, long recognized in the tropics, where it is a common practice to rub the juice over tough meat to make it tender, and old fowls are frequently wrapped in *papaya* leaves, bruised, if I remember rightly, and allowed to remain overnight before cooking.

The fruit also contains a milky juice known, when dried, as papain, which has pronounced digestive properties, having the same use as animal pepsin. This juice is collected by making longitudinal incisions in the fruit and collecting it in non-metal vessels. The hands of the collectors should also be protected and absolute cleanliness is essential. It is customary to have a small quantity of water in the vessel into which the milky juice or latex is collected. As the liquid falls into the water it coagulates and is dried on trays, formed of muslin or calico, stretched on light wooden frames. The production of papain is a minor industry, conducted mainly by peasants in some West Indian islands, Ceylon and Philippines, and can hardly be recommended for planters in this Territory, except for their wives and daughters who should find it an occupation combining pleasure with profit.

It is a plant, however, that should receive greater attention by planters in this Territory, not only for their own use, but as food for their labourers and pigs. It is also a particularly suitable plant for growing in a fowl run, as it provides sufficient shade for the birds, besides, of course, yielding good crops of fruit. It is one of the plants that could be planted between rows of young coco-nuts, with other subsistence crops. Though requiring little attention when once established, and its cultivation is easy, seedlings of the better types require attention in their earliest stage. Seeds should be sown in well prepared nursery beds or seed flats, and will germinate in two to six weeks, according to freshness of seeds and climatic conditions. When 7 or 8 inches high they should be transplanted 10 feet apart each way and shaded until established in their new position. If the weather is showery, there should be no losses, but to avoid any risks, the leaves, except those at the top of the plant, may be snipped off without removing the stems.

### **Papaya Récipes.**

#### **PAPAYA COCKTAIL.**

Cut papaya in dice and serve in glasses with cocktail sauce and chipped ice. Or serve with orange, lemon, or lime juice, and little sugar in same manner.

#### **PAPAYA SALAD No. 1.**

On a strip of peeled papaya lay small bits of pomelo and orange. Serve with mayonnaise on separate plates, and garnish.

#### **PAPAYA SALAD No. 2.**

Cut papaya in cubes and add eight small onions and five pieces green celery chopped fine. Serve with boiled dressing.

#### **PAPAYA WHIP.**

To 1½ cups papaya pulp add juice of 1 lemon, ½ cup sugar, and beat into 2 stiffly whipped whites of eggs.

#### **PAPAYA PICKLE.**

Make a syrup of 1 measure sugar and ½ measure vinegar. Add a few whole cloves and peppercorns and 2 measures of half-ripe papaya cut into small pieces. Boil until tender.

## ORANGE AND PAPAYA MARMALADE.

To 1 measure papaya allow  $\frac{1}{2}$  measure oranges. Wash oranges well. Squeeze out seeds and juice. Put skins through a meat chopper and add to the juice, strained free of seeds. Add papaya pulp cut in small pieces (without rind) and boil all together; then add as much sugar as pulp. Boil again for 15 to 20 minutes.

## PAPAYA—FLAVOURED GELATINE DESSERT.

$\frac{1}{2}$ box gelatine.	1 cup boiling water.
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup cold water.	1 cup papaya pulp.
juice 1 lemon.	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar.

Soak gelatine in cold water five minutes. Dissolve the sugar in the boiling water; add the gelatine and strain. When cool, add the papaya and lemon juice. Place on ice to harden.

## PAPAYA AND GINGER.

Make a syrup of 1 measure sugar,  $\frac{1}{2}$  measure water, some finely sliced dried ginger, and a few slices of lemon. Add 2 measures half-ripe papaya sliced lengthwise, which has been previously simmered in water until clear but not broken.

## PAPAYA PIE.

2 eggs.	1 cup sugar.
1 cup papaya pulp.	juice $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon.
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter.	

Make a bottom pie crust and bake. Cream butter and sugar. Add beaten eggs, lemon juice, and papaya. Pour into pie crust and bake. Make a meringue of whites of eggs and 2 tablespoonsful sugar. Place on pie and brown in oven.

## PAPAYA SHERBET.

Mix 4 cups papaya pulp with 2 cups sugar and juice of 2 lemons and freeze.

## STEWED PAPAYA No. 1.

2 cups diced papaya.	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup water.
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar.	Juice of 2 lemons.

Cut papaya in dice and stew with sugar, water and lemon juice  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour. Serve in sherbet glasses as a first course for luncheon or a dessert. Can use 4 oranges in place of lemons.

## STEWED PAPAYA No. 2.

Cook in the same manner as No. 1 with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar and only enough water to keep from burning. Serve as vegetable.

## BAKED PAPAYA.

Cut papaya in halves lengthwise. Add a little sugar and orange, lime, or lemon juice, or a little cinnamon in place of the juice. Bake 30 minutes and serve immediately on taking from the oven. This is a vegetable.