

Season:	Spring, summer, autumn
From the garden:	Taro leaves or silverbeet leaves, onion
Type:	Side dish
Difficulty:	Medium
Country of origin:	Samoa
Serves:	8-10 adult serves, 20-30 tastes in the classroom
Source:	Adapted from Mea'ai Samoa by Robert Oliver

Equipment

aluminium foil (10 squares)
chef's knives
small knives
roasting tray
wire rack to fit into roasting tray
measuring cup
measuring spoon

Ingredients

40 young taro or silverbeet leaves
4 cups coconut cream
1 onion
½ teaspoon salt

How to make it:

1. Prepare squares of aluminium foil before starting the palusami. Preheat the oven to 180 degrees Celsius.
2. Peel the onion, cut in half and chop finely. Combine the onion and coconut cream in a medium sized bowl and add the salt.
3. If using taro leaves, remove the hard stems, stalks, and tips of the leaves* or if using silverbeet leaves, remove the stems.
4. Lay 3 small taro or silverbeet leaves on top of a larger leaf. Cup the leaf bundle in the palm of your hand or place in a small bowl to make a 'bowl' shape.
5. Slowly pour approximately ¼ cup of the coconut cream mixture into the taro or silverbeet leaf 'bowl'.
6. Wrap the leaves around the coconut cream into a ball shape. Wrap the bundle in a square of aluminium foil to hold it securely together.
7. Repeat the process with the rest of the leaves and coconut cream mixture.
8. Fill a large roasting pan halfway up with water and place a wire rack over the top, making sure the rack is not touching the water. Place the palusami bundles on the wire rack.
9. Bake in the oven for 1 hour, or until the leaves are cooked through and have started to disintegrate into the coconut cream. *It is very important the leaves are really soft and well cooked.*
10. Serve hot or at room temperature with slices of cooked taro, cooked green banana, or other starchy vegetables.

Notes: Palusami is a delicious mixture of onions and coconut cream cooked in pockets of taro leaves. In Samoa, the taro leaves are expertly folded into a pocket but if you've never made palusami before it's easiest to use aluminium foil to hold it together.

* It is important to prepare taro leaves correctly because if eaten raw, taro leaves can be irritating to the mouth and throat or even poisonous in large quantities. Always cut off the tip of the taro leaf, the stem/stalk, and a bit of the leaf around the stem - do not eat these parts. When well-cooked, the rest of the taro leaf is safe to eat.

Skills: Chopping, measuring, steaming