



AÇAÍ, THE BERRY

Should you travel to the Amazon one day and enter one of the ubiquitous stores selling “AÇAÍ”, you may be in for a surprise: No açai berries anywhere, only plastic bags containing a dark, thick liquid! Why? Because nobody eats the açai berries themselves as they consist of a large seed covered by a very thin layer of pulp and skin. Imagine a blueberry with a hard seed in place of its fleshy pulp and just the purple skin around it: you could scrape the skin off the seed in your mouth but how much fun would that be?

AÇAÍ, THE FOOD

Therefore, since ancient times, Amazon natives eat the pulp of the açai berries in the form of a thick, creamy liquid they call “açai”. (In fact, in the vast majority of occasions, the word “açai” is used to refer to this liquid and *not* to the fruit.) Açai, however, is not the juice of the açai berry in the sense of a liquid extracted by juicing the berry. Why? Because the açai berry contains practically no moisture, so there is no way to get a juice by pressing it! Rather, it is an emulsion of açai fruit solids, that is, tiny bits of açai berry pulp (separated from the large seed in a manual or machine-based grinding process) suspended in water.

In the Amazon açai is much more than a fruit-based beverage: It is a food. In its heartland, the Amazon river estuary, it is one of the main dietary staples – if not the principal one. Rightly so! Açai is one of the healthiest and most nutritious foods known to man. It provides energy in the form of heart-healthy omegas 6 and 9 and supports the body’s vital functions through an unrivaled concentration of antioxidants. It also contains a high amount of fiber, some protein and over 10 vitamins and minerals. And what better way to get all this nutrition than through a creamy, delicious liquid with a dark-chocolaty, fruity flavor.

In the Amazon you have açai two ways. Either unsweetened, as a savory sauce accompanying fish, shrimp or meat, or as a stand-alone dish or snack: The açai is sweetened (the fruit pulp contains no sugars), often topped with crunchy manioc root pellets and spooned straight out of a gourd. In rural areas açai is often consumed with every meal and is even given to small babies as a substitute for their mother’s milk - a meal here is just not complete without it!

GRADES OF AÇAÍ

In the Amazon, natives know what to look at to determine the grade of açai: Its viscosity. The thicker, the better. Why? Because the thicker the açai is, the more açai fruit pulp - and correspondingly less water - it contains. And, as all the nutrients of açai come from the pulp (and not the added water, of course) the thicker the açai is, the more nutrition it offers. The Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture has formalized this age-old Amazon wisdom by defining the grade of açai according to the amount of açai fruit pulp it contains: Açai “popular” (lower grade) must contain at least 8% pulp, açai “medio” (middle grade) at least 11% pulp and açai “especial” (special grade) a minimum of 14% pulp.

In the US, the FDA does not yet oblige manufacturers to disclose how much açai berry pulp there is in their beverages. Luckily, there is still a way for consumers to figure out the açai pulp content of a beverage, namely, by looking at how much fat, fiber and protein (the 3 macronutrient constituents of açai) the beverage contains. For details visit the “Açai Content” page in our website.