

Hang Loose Flower

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Very few in US know that Banana flower is eaten as a vegetable in Asian culture.



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## *Hang Loose Flower*

Subba Rao

Not many people eat flowers for lunch or dinner for that matter. Banana flower or blossom is an exception particularly in Asian culture; it is cooked with curry and eaten with steamed white rice.

A large cone shaped dark purple flower emerges from top of the Banana tree to hang loose and tough like a newly born calf hanging out of cow's behind. As the large flower opens slowly over a period of time, each rubbery purple red petal drops to the ground exposing layers of pale pink florets that slowly develop into young green bananas. As young Bananas develop layer by layer around 3 to 4 feet long bunch, the plant runs out of food to turn the remaining florets into fruits, leaving the residual small cone shaped flower dangling from tip of the fruit bunch, at this stage, it is cut off to sell as a vegetable or left it to dry to fall off to the ground.

Preparing Banana flower for cooking is like preparing chicken dish starting with a live bird. Layers of tough petals have to be removed to expose the tender pink florets. In a slow and painstaking process a tough matchstick look-alike bitter stamina and tasteless transparent wing cover from each floret has to be removed to make it edible. When all said and done, hundreds of individual florets with stamen and wings removed are ready for cooking after washing with buttermilk to remove mild bitterness. As long as somebody else is cooking, eating curried Banana flower is a treat. With all the labor involved, if curried Banana flower were to be served as a dish in a restaurant in USA, its price can top a serving of *Fillet Mignon*, an expensive cut of steak. If curried Banana flower is labeled with a fancy name like *Curry Pushpak Paradesi* it could be a good sell with a hefty price at a fancy restaurant.

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