

## **Amazon Acai fruit: Brazil's antioxidant-rich superfood.(vital vittles)**

**Date:** 4/1/2005; **Publication:** New Life Journal; **Author:** Childs, Matthew

Until recently, blueberries have taken the star role in many morning "smoothies" due to their great taste, high fiber content, and ability to battle disease and aging. However, a recent import from Brazil, Acai(pronounced "ah-sigh-ee") is quickly taking over blenders as the new superfood of choice. Acai is the fruit from a special palm tree that grows in the Amazon rainforest and tastes like a cross between blackberries and chocolate. It has been a staple for the Indians that live there for hundreds of years, and they call the tree that bears this small purple fruit "the Tree of Life." The fruit contains a large pit, so it is necessary to crush the skins and puree them in order to extract the juice. This thick puree was traditionally used as a sauce to put over grains and fruit, or it was mixed with water and sugar to create an energizing beverage. Today, everyone from gourmet chefs to health food aficionados are hooked on this luscious purple puree, and its availability is increasing rapidly.

Acai's health benefits are astounding, and scientists are touting the fruit's high level of proteins, fiber, vitamin E, minerals, and important essential fatty acids. Acai's antioxidant concentration surpasses even blueberries, and it is also a valuable, natural cholesterol controller. Additional studies on Acai have also discovered that it builds the immune system, fights infection, protects the heart, and can control prostate enlargement.

All of this adds up to quite a few reasons why to incorporate this new found superfood into your daily routine.

Here are a couple of ways in which you can sample the energizing, healthy qualities of Acai before you start your day. (In the event that your local health food store doesn't carry the frozen pulp, substitute blueberries and just pretend you're in Brazil.)

### ACAI SMOOTHIE

1 package Acai pulp  
1/2 of a banana  
6 ounces frozen raspberries  
8 oz unfiltered apple juice

Combine and blend till smooth, garnish with a banana slice.

### ACAI BREAKFAST BOWL

1 package Acai pulp  
6 ounces frozen strawberries  
3 to 4 ounces unfiltered apple juice  
20 grams chocolate protein powder  
3 to 4 ounces soy milk  
22 ounces ice  
1 cup organic granola  
1/2 sliced banana

Put Acai, strawberries, juice, powder and soy milk into the blender. Mix ingredients. Add ice and liquefy. Pour over granola and add banana slices.

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