

# *Gnetum spp* (Okok or Eru)



*Gnetum spp* is a sub-spontaneous liana in forest fallows. There are about thirty species of *Gnetum* in the tropics. In Africa, particularly in Cameroon, there are two species: *Gnetum africanum* and *Gnetum bucholzianum*. Consumers and traders do not distinguish these two species easily. Like other NTFPs, *Gnetum spp* has food, medicinal and cultural values.

## Production area

The Center province, particularly the Lékié division is the 'storehouse' of *Gnetum spp* in Cameroon. This area alone supplies local and external markets. The South-west is also a production area. However, the quantity is less and non-sustainable exploitation makes the product less available in this area. Small quantities are collected in the East, South, and Littoral provinces.

## Harvesting technique

*Gnetum spp* leaves are collected in four ways:

- Only the leaves on the liana are gathered. Because of greed or ignorance, all leaves are harvested leaving the stem naked. New leaves sprout quickly, thus allowing the normal course of the photosynthetic activity, necessary for the survival of the plant;
- The upper part of the plant is cut making sure no leaf is forgotten and thus, in good conditions the cut part grows again;
- The plant is uprooted after which the leaves are removed. This type of harvesting does not permit the plant to grow again;
- The tree on which the liana grows is felled.

## Processing

Processing of *Gnetum spp* is very simple. Producers gather the leaves and cut them (chop) in small slices using a sharp knife. The size of these slices depends on consumers. For "Eru", the size is relatively large compared to Okok.

## Preparation, recipes, complements and substitutes

This varies according to the area or the origin. In Cameroon, there are two types of dishes. As the table shows, these dishes differ according to the ingredients used. The dish prepared by Anglophones is called "Eru" and that prepared by the Francophones is generally called "Okok".

Ingredients for the preparation of Okok and Eru.

Eru	Okok
• Water Fufu ("wild" spinach)	• Groundnut
• Shrimp	• Palm nuts
• Oil palm	• Salt
• Onion	• Shrimp (optional)
• Salt	• Sugar (optional)
• Cow skin (in the absence of which meat or fish is used)	• Ripe plantain is used in the absence of sugar.



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# *Gnetum spp* (Okok or Eru)



Palm nuts and groundnut paste are basic ingredients in the preparation of Okok. On the other hand, palm oil and “water fufu” are used for Eru. The main complements for Okok are cassava in all its forms (roots, sticks, fufu) and plantains. On the other hand, “eru” is exclusively eaten with “water fufu».

## Quality criteria

There are none for *Gnetum spp*. However, the preparation of Eru requires relatively ripe leaves. Okok amateurs prefer young leaves. This distinction is made by those who buy uncut leaves. Those who buy uncut leaves doubt the quality and cleanliness of cut leaves. Those who buy cut leaves claim they don't have time to cut it themselves.

## Medicinal value

The leaves of *Gnetum spp* are used as a disinfectant for wounds. *Gnetum spp* is used to treat hemorrhoid. The fresh leaves are crushed and used to neutralize the effects of alcohol. The “Bulu” use the leaves to treat cold. The leaves of *Gnetum spp* increase blood production in the human organism. These leaves are also used for the treatment of the spleen.

## Marketing

*Gnetum spp* is exported to Nigeria. Contrary to other NTFPs, *Gnetum spp* grows throughout the year. Its price increases slightly during the dry season; this is due to the weak production of other vegetables. On the other hand, the price of this liana differs according to location. The average price in 2003 per kilogramme was approximately 1000 CFAF at the Mfoundi market (Center province) and 1500 CFAF in Limbe (South-west province).

## Preservation

*Gnetum spp* is preserved after it is processed (it is cut into small slices). These slices can be dried in the sun and kept in the open or in the refrigerator. There is no information on the precise duration of storage of *Gnetum spp*.