

# When Wi Roas Di Yellow Yam

"What a glorious day, when wi roas di yellow yam!" Trelawny, Usain Bolt's birth parish, is famous for yam.  
When Wi Roas Di Yellow Yam (Jamaican Folk Song)

When wi roas di yellow yam (When wi roas di yellow yam)

An wi slice it eena two (An wi slice it eena two)

How nice it will be

Wid di ackee an di saltfish

An di sweet flour dumpling (stick eena mi ribs)

An di coconut ile

What a glorious day

When wi roas di yellow yam

Yam has been a staple of many a Jamaican rural and urban household for generations. So big and important is yam that Trelawny hosts an annual yam festival, which sees thousands of locals and foreigners, descending on the parish, to sample various yam dishes and just enjoying a 'yamfest'. Here you see yams bigger than you had ever imagined. The entertainment is always great with songs, poems and even dances about yam.

Yam is part of what we refer to as ground provisions in Jamaica or if you are being more Jamaican 'food'. So you go into a restaurant and order a chicken, or oxtail, or curry goat meal, and they ask 'yuh want it with rice or with food?'. If you say food, then you know yuh getting some yam – sweet yam, renta yam, soft yam, St. Vincent, mozella, taw (found mainly in Clarendon), yampie, negro yam, white yam, imba (wild yam), Lucea yam, bitter gashie, moonshine yam, hack yam, afoo yam, and the famous 'pum pum' yam, along with maybe a finger or two of green banana and some 'irish' or sweet potato.

And how do you eat yam? You can roast it, boil it, bake it, crush it. Yam can be eaten as an accompaniment to meat or vegetable or you can get really interesting options such as yam casserole, yam pudding and yam salads. You can boil it, then blend it and sweeten it with a little milk, add a dash of nutmeg and if you wish a tip of rum and serve a 'belly fulling' drink. Yam is also added to the famous Jamaican potato pudding, the one with the wetty wetty top, to make the top even more gummy and wetty wetty. Jamaicans love that.

In addition to the carbohydrate content, yellow yam also encourages the body to produce more estrogen and is highly recommended for pre-menopausal and menopausal women. Mothers also boil yam and crush it with milk to feed babies who are just beginning their solid diet.

When a farmer goes to his 'grung' announcing on his departure "Mi a gaa grung", and he digs a helluva size yellow yam, it is cause for celebration. He doesn't usually cut it immediately because the prize needs to be shown off to his friends and detractors. Sometimes a yam is so big it may take him a few hours to dig it, as he tries to remove the soil without damaging the yam.

This is backbreaking but very delicate work. Of course even while the friends and detractors are 'oohing and ahhing' over the size of the yam, they are wondering 'den a when him ago cut di yam?'. All this time they have visions of a piece of the yam on their plate beside some ackee and saltfish, or corned pork, and are thinking 'What a glorious day, when wi roas di yellow yam.'