

## Kudzu Vine

*Pueraria montana*

**Region of Origin:** Japan and China  
**Habitat:** Perennial, deciduous, vine  
**Current Range:** Every continent except Antarctica  
**Flowering Season:** Late Summer



Kudzu was introduced to the U.S. as a forage crop for cattle in the 1930's. While the plant currently has a limited distribution in the western United States, this is an invader to keep a close eye on. With a growth rate of a foot per day, it's one of the fastest growing plants in the world. It smothers everything it grows on including large trees and, as the American South can testify, it is able to cover vast areas seemingly overnight. Luckily, most of the plant is edible. Stems, leaves, flowers and starch from the root are all used in cooking. In Asia the flowers and roots are used medicinally<sup>5</sup>. The flowers are also quite beautiful, but don't let this plant fool you; it's "the vine that ate the South" so eat it before it eats your landscape.

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## Stuffed Kudzu Leaves

*Recipe and Photo by Molly Marland*

Molly notes that when cooking with kudzu, choose only the smallest, most tender leaves. Large leaves are too tough. The small leaves have plenty of body, are fresh and tender, and have a flavor similar to that of a green bean.

30 ea Kudzu Leaves  
 1 can Diced Tomatoes (15 oz)  
 3 cloves Garlic, cut in half  
 3 ea Lemons, Juice of  
 Several Soup Bones (optional)

**STUFFING:**  
 1 cup Rice, rinsed in water  
 1 lb Ground Beef or Lamb  
 1 cup Canned Diced Tomatoes  
 ½ tsp Allspice  
 To Taste Salt, Pepper, Other Seasoning

- Wash leaves.
- Drop into salted boiling water.
- Blanch for 2-3 minutes, separating leaves.
- Drain and remove to a plate to cool.
- Remove heavy center stems from the leaves by using a knife and cutting down each side of the stem to about the middle of the leaf.
- Mix all the stuffing ingredients together.
- Push cut together and fill with 1 teaspoon stuffing and roll in the shape of a cigar.



### **Stuffed Kudzu Grape Leaves**

- Place something in bottom of a large pan so that rolled leaves will not sit directly on the bottom of the pan.
- The round rack that comes with a pressure cooker works very well (soup bones also work well).
- Arrange kudzu rolls alternately in opposite directions.
- When all are in the pot, pour in tomatoes, salt (and any other seasonings), and garlic, cut in half.
- Press down with an inverted dish and add water to reach dish.
- Preheat oven to 350.
- Cover pot and cook for 40 minutes.
- Add lemon juice and cook 10 minutes more.