

Paddle Cactus Juice – *Jugo de Nopal*

Ingredients (for approximately two cups)

1 paddle cactus (*nopal*); cleaned, washed, and sliced
1 cup cucumber; washed, peeled (optional), and sliced
1 cup orange juice

Place all ingredients in a blender jar, and process until well blended. Serve immediately.



Other popular ingredients for this juice are fresh pineapple, celery and herbs, such as mint or parsley. There are a few scientific studies, and lots of anecdotal testimonies, reporting anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties for paddle cactus, as well as its benefits to regulate cholesterol levels and manage diabetes, in which case the juice is prepared primarily with cactus, greens and maybe lime juice, to minimize sugar content from fruit.

To clean and prep fresh cactus paddles: Place a garbage bag on working surface; wear thorn-proof gardening gloves to handle the paddles (photo below, left); using a paring knife, remove the base end, and continue trimming the thorny edge all around the paddle (photo below, centre). Starting at the stem end, and moving towards the tip, remove the needles on one side of the paddle by placing a vegetable peeler, or the tip of a paring knife, parallel to the surface and scrapping just under the base of each needle (photo below, right):



Flip paddle and repeat on other side; continue cleaning all the paddles. Transfer clean paddles to a colander, then simply wrap the needles and trimmings with the garbage bag and dispose. Rinse paddles under running water, drain and pat dry with a clean towel. To slice, cut into long strips lengthwise, then across, into pieces about one inch long:

