Easy Nduma Recipes | Creative Ways to Cook Kenyan Arrowroot

Ask ten Kenyan home cooks how they like Nduma and you will probably hear ten different answers: boiled and served with tea, mashed with peas, fried into crisps, or simmered gently in coconut milk. That flexibility is exactly why this humble tuber is worth learning to cook well.



This guide focuses on practical, repeatable recipes. You will find ten dishes for breakfast, dinner, and snack time, each with ingredients, timing, and clear steps. You will also get flavor pairings, lighter cooking tips, storage advice, and answers to the questions cooks ask most. Every recipe was written for ordinary home kitchens, with ingredients you can find at a local market or supermarket.

What Can You Make With Arrowroot?

Quick answer: Nduma, the Kenyan name for taro or arrowroot, can be boiled, roasted, mashed, fried, or simmered in sauces. The easiest beginner recipes are boiled slices with tea, crispy oven wedges, and creamy mash. Always cook it until a fork slides through easily, because raw taro irritates the mouth and throat.

The 10 recipes at a glance:

1. Arrowroot pancakes
2. Savory arrowroot hash with eggs
3. Cinnamon arrowroot porridge
4. Coconut arrowroot curry
5. Arrowroot and bean mash
6. Creamy arrowroot soup
7. Arrowroot and lentil patties
8. Crispy arrowroot chips
9. Arrowroot fritters
10. Honey-cinnamon roasted rounds

Before You Cook: Nduma Prep Basics

A few habits make every recipe below turn out better.

- Choose firm roots. They should feel heavy, with no soft spots or sour smell.
- Protect your hands. Raw sap can itch, so wear gloves or rub a little oil on your hands before peeling.
- Cut evenly. Pieces of the same size cook at the same speed.
- Salt the water. Seasoning the cooking water gives flavor from the inside out.
- Cook until fully tender. Boil chunks for 20 to 30 minutes. A fork should meet no resistance.
- Mind your portions. It is a starchy food, so balance it with protein and vegetables. People who must limit oxalates, such as some who are prone to kidney stones, should ask a doctor or dietitian about portions.

Many of the recipes below start with boiled roots. If you boil a large batch once, you can use it across several meals.

Breakfast Nduma Recipes That Keep You Full

Because it is filling and digests slowly, arrowroot suits the first meal of the day. If you want even more morning variety, browse our full list of easy and quick breakfast ideas and mix in whichever dishes fit your schedule.

1. Arrowroot Pancakes

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 15 minutes | Makes: about 8 small pancakes

Ingredients

- 250 g (about 1 cup) boiled arrowroot, mashed smooth
- 1 egg
- 4 tablespoons flour (wheat or oat)
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon sugar or honey (optional)
- 2 to 3 tablespoons milk
- Pinch of salt and a little oil for the pan

Method

1. Mix the mashed arrowroot, egg, flour, baking powder, cinnamon, sugar, and salt.
2. Add milk a spoonful at a time until you have a thick, scoopable batter.
3. Heat a lightly oiled pan over medium heat.
4. Spoon in the batter and flatten gently. Cook 3 to 4 minutes per side until golden.
5. Serve with banana slices, yogurt, or a drizzle of honey.

2. Savory Arrowroot Hash With Eggs

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 15 minutes | Serves: 2 to 4

Ingredients

- 400 g boiled arrowroot, cut into small cubes
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 bell pepper, diced
- 2 tablespoons oil
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- Salt and black pepper
- 4 eggs

Method

1. Heat the oil in a wide pan and cook the onion and pepper for 3 minutes.
2. Add the cubes and turmeric. Cook for 8 to 10 minutes without stirring too often, so the edges crisp.
3. Make four small wells, crack in the eggs, cover, and cook until the whites set.
4. Season and serve straight from the pan.

3. Cinnamon Arrowroot Porridge

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 10 minutes | Serves: 2

Ingredients

- 300 g boiled arrowroot, mashed
- 500 ml milk (dairy or coconut)
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1 to 2 tablespoons honey
- Pinch of salt

Method

1. Whisk the mash and milk together in a small pot until smooth.
2. Add the spices and salt and simmer on low heat for 8 minutes, stirring often.
3. Sweeten with honey and serve warm, topped with chopped nuts or fruit.

Dinner Ideas: Pairing Arrowroot With Fish and Stews

The root's mild flavor soaks up sauces beautifully, which makes it a dependable dinner companion. For a complete plate, serve any of the recipes below beside a seasoned fish. This step-by-step guide on how to make whole tilapia is a natural match.

4. Coconut Arrowroot Curry

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 35 minutes | Serves: 4

Ingredients

- 600 g arrowroot, peeled and cut into 4 cm chunks
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 2 ripe tomatoes, chopped
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- 400 ml coconut milk
- Salt, lime juice, and fresh coriander

Method

1. Boil the chunks for 15 minutes until just tender, then drain.
2. In a pot, soften the onion in oil, then add the garlic, ginger, and curry powder for one minute.
3. Add the tomatoes and cook until they break down into a sauce.
4. Pour in the coconut milk, add the arrowroot, and simmer gently for 10 to 12 minutes.
5. Finish with salt, lime juice, and coriander. Serve with rice or chapati.

5. Arrowroot and Bean Mash

This dish is inspired by the Kenyan comfort food irio, which combines mashed starch with peas or beans and greens.

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 30 minutes | Serves: 4

Ingredients

- 400 g arrowroot, peeled and chunked
- 1 cup cooked beans or green peas
- 1 cup chopped greens (spinach or pumpkin leaves)
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon oil or butter
- Salt to taste

Method

1. Boil the arrowroot for 25 minutes until very soft, then drain.
2. Meanwhile, sauté the onion in oil, then add the greens and cook until wilted.
3. Add the beans or peas and warm through.
4. Add everything to the pot with the arrowroot and mash roughly. Leave some texture.
5. Season and serve with grilled meat or a tomato stew.

6. Creamy Arrowroot Soup

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 30 minutes | Serves: 4

Ingredients

- 500 g arrowroot, peeled and cubed
- 1 onion and 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 750 ml vegetable or chicken stock
- 100 ml milk or coconut milk
- 1 tablespoon oil, salt, pepper, pinch of nutmeg

Method

1. Soften the onion and garlic in oil for 4 minutes.
2. Add the cubes and stock. Simmer for 20 to 25 minutes until very tender.
3. Blend until smooth, return to the pot, and stir in the milk.
4. Warm gently, season, and serve with crusty bread or a squeeze of lime.

7. Arrowroot and Lentil Patties

Prep: 20 minutes | Cook: 12 minutes | Makes: 8 patties

Ingredients

- 400 g boiled arrowroot, mashed
- 1 cup cooked lentils, lightly mashed
- 2 spring onions, chopped
- 1 teaspoon cumin and ½ teaspoon paprika
- ¼ cup breadcrumbs, plus extra for coating
- Salt, pepper, and oil for shallow frying

Method

1. Combine the mash, lentils, spring onions, spices, and breadcrumbs.
2. Shape into eight patties and chill for 15 minutes so they hold together.
3. Pan-fry in a little oil for 5 to 6 minutes per side until golden and crisp.
4. Serve with a yogurt-and-lime dip or tucked into a bun.

Snack Time: Crispy and Sweet Arrowroot Treats

Snacks are where this root truly shines. Serve these alongside tea, and consider adding freshly fried doughnuts from our guide on how to make East African mandazi for a full chai spread.

8. Crispy Arrowroot Chips

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 15 minutes | Serves: 3 to 4

Ingredients

- 2 medium arrowroot, peeled
- Oil for frying or spraying
- Salt, with chili powder or paprika if you like heat

Method

1. Slice into very thin rounds using a sharp knife or mandoline.
2. Soak in cold water for 10 minutes, then pat completely dry. Dry slices crisp best.
3. Fry in hot oil in small batches until golden, about 3 minutes. Or air-fry at 180°C (355°F) for 12 to 15 minutes with a light oil spray.
4. Drain, season right away, and cool for a minute so they crunch up.

9. Arrowroot Fritters

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 15 minutes | Makes: about 12

Ingredients

- 300 g arrowroot, boiled for 10 minutes, cooled, and coarsely grated
- 4 tablespoons gram (chickpea) flour
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon cumin, 1 chopped green chili, salt
- Oil for frying

Method

1. Mix everything except the oil, adding a splash of water if the batter is too dry.
2. Heat oil in a deep pan to medium-high.
3. Drop in spoonfuls and fry for 3 to 4 minutes per side until deep golden.
4. Drain on paper towels and serve with tamarind or tomato chutney.

10. Honey-Cinnamon Roasted Rounds

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 25 minutes | Serves: 3

Ingredients

- 400 g boiled arrowroot, sliced into 1 cm rounds
- 1 tablespoon oil or melted butter
- 1 tablespoon honey
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon and a pinch of salt

Method

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (400°F).
2. Toss the slices with oil, cinnamon, and salt, and spread them on a lined tray.
3. Roast 15 minutes, flip, and roast 8 to 10 minutes more.
4. Drizzle with honey while hot and serve warm.

Low-Carb Cravings: What to Know

Taro contains roughly 34 grams of carbohydrate per 100 grams cooked, so it does not fit a strict ketogenic diet. If you follow a low-carb plan and still want something bread-like and satisfying, try these fluffy keto bagels that taste like the real thing instead. Everyone else can enjoy arrowroot in sensible portions.

Lighter Cooking Tips for Healthy Eating

Arrowroot offers fiber and potassium, and a few simple choices keep recipes lighter:

- Prefer boiling, roasting, and air-frying over deep-frying.
- Use herbs, lime, garlic, and spices for flavor instead of heavy cream sauces.

- Pair each serving with protein and vegetables to balance the plate.
- Keep portions to about a fist-sized serving of cooked root.

If you are planning meals around weight goals, these healthy breakfast ideas for weight loss offer helpful inspiration. For personal advice, consult a healthcare professional.

Flavor Pairings and Easy Substitutions

Flavors That Work Well

- Warm spices: cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg, and turmeric
- Fresh aromatics: garlic, ginger, spring onion, and coriander
- Heat and tang: chili, black pepper, lime, and tamarind
- Creamy partners: coconut milk, butter, yogurt, and avocado

Handy Substitutions

If you do not have	Try this instead
Coconut milk	Regular milk plus a little butter
Gram flour	Plain flour or cornflour
Lentils	Chickpeas or finely minced meat
Fresh coriander	Parsley or spring onion tops

Meal Prep and Storage Guide



Planning ahead saves time on busy days. Boil a large batch of Nduma on the weekend, cool it quickly, and refrigerate it in airtight containers for three to four days. Use the cooked pieces for hash, patties, pancakes, or soup through the week. For longer storage, freeze boiled chunks on a tray, then bag them for up to two months. Always reheat until steaming hot, and avoid reheating the same portion more than once.

Troubleshooting: Fixing Common Problems

- Itchy throat after eating: the root was undercooked. Boil it longer next time.
- Gluey mash: it cooled before mashing or was over-processed. Mash by hand while hot.
- Chips not crisping: slices were too thick or still damp. Slice thinner and dry well.
- Patties falling apart: the mixture was too wet. Chill it and add more breadcrumbs.
- Bland flavor: season the cooking water and finish with acid such as lime juice.

Conclusion

Arrowroot rewards simple cooking. Pancakes and porridge start the day gently, curries and mash anchor dinner, and chips or fritters turn tea time into a treat. Choose firm roots, cook them until completely tender, and balance every portion with protein and vegetables.

To get started, pick one recipe from each category: one breakfast, one dinner, and one snack. Boil a double batch, use the extra through the week, and adjust the spices to suit your family. Once you have a favorite, this versatile tuber will quickly become a pantry regular.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the easiest way to cook Nduma?

Boiling is the easiest. Peel, cut into even chunks, and simmer in salted water for 20 to 30 minutes until a fork slides in easily.

Can I use arrowroot instead of potatoes in recipes?

Often, yes. It works well in mash, soups, patties, and roasts, though it is denser and slightly sweeter. Expect a creamier, nuttier result.

Why does my arrowroot make my throat itchy?

Raw or undercooked taro contains calcium oxalate crystals. Thorough cooking breaks down the irritation. If it happens, boil the remaining pieces longer.

Can I freeze it?

Yes. Boil it first, cool it, freeze it in a single layer, and then transfer to freezer bags for up to two months. Do not freeze it raw.

Is it gluten-free?

The root itself is naturally gluten-free. Check other ingredients, such as flour or breadcrumbs, if you need a fully gluten-free dish.

Can I make the chips without a fryer?

Yes. Slice very thin, dry well, spray lightly with oil, and bake or air-fry at about 180°C (355°F) until crisp.

What spices go best with it?

Cinnamon and cardamom suit sweet dishes. Cumin, turmeric, garlic, ginger, and chili work well in savory recipes.