

## びわ茶 *Biwa Cha* **Loquat Leaf Tea**



Drying 10-12 fresh *biwa* (loquat) leaves will enable you to prepare several (2 liters/2 generous quart) batches of beverage. Once dried, loquat leaves can be stored (in a cool, dark, dry location in a non-reactive container) for up to six months. **2 tablespoons of dried, shredded leaves will yield about 1 (generous) quart or liter.**

Prepare the leaves for drying: Rinse them under cold running water and pat dry with a paper towel or clean dishcloth.

The furry coating on the underside of the leaves can potentially cause throat irritation so it's best to a butter knife (or non-cutting edge of a sharp knife) and scrape off the fur off. Next, with the sharp cutting tip of a knife, or scissors, trim away the ribs from each leaf.

Spread the trimmed leaves out on a mesh rack to dry in the shade and dry until brittle. In my Tokyo kitchen in June that takes about a week. Much depends upon that year's rainy season and just how high the humidity is. I was told by several home cooks to avoid artificial heating (oven or microwave) as it would reduce the efficacy of the final brew so I rely on "natural" drying.

Tear or shred the leaves and place about 2 tablespoons (5 grams) in an enamel-lined (or other non-reactive surface) pot. Over medium heat, bring to a boil. Lower the heat to barely maintain a simmer and cook for 2 minutes. The liquid will darken to a reddish brown

Remove the pot from the stove and let the leaves steep for 2-3 minutes. Strain and drink as a hot beverage, or chill and serve cold.

