

Kava Consumer Fact Sheet

What Is Kava?



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The word kava can refer to the plant, the root, or the beverage made from the root of the plant.



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Kava comes from the root of the *Piper methysticum* plant, part of the pepper family grown in the Pacific Islands.



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For more than 3,000 years, Pacific Islanders have prepared and shared kava as a food and ritual of community, respect, and connection.



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Kava stands alongside tea and coffee as an enjoyable part of everyday culture shaped by history and shared across communities.

Kava In Today's World



Kava is legal in all 50 U.S. states.



Kava is enjoyed worldwide in many forms: powdered root, instant mixes, capsules, extracts, and modern culinary creations.



In the U.S., Pacific Islander communities keep traditions alive while introducing kava to new audiences through kava bars, cafes, and wellness spaces.





Common Misconceptions About Kava

“Kava Causes Liver Damage”

In the early 2000s, a single pharmaceutical product marketed as a kava product made people sick. This caused confusion and led to bans in some countries. Later reviews, including by the World Health Organization, confirmed that kava carries only a very low health risk, similar to other safe foods.

“Kava is Intoxicating”

The scientific name *Piper methysticum* means “intoxicating pepper,” a mislabeling from 250 years ago. Kava does not intoxicate. It supports calm, relaxation, and connection without impairing judgment.

“Kava is Addictive”

Unlike coffee, kava contains no caffeine and does not create dependence. People return to kava for its ritual and sense of connection, not because of chemical craving.

Why Kava Matters

For Pacific Islanders, kava is a cornerstone of identity, respect, and harmony.



For the global food system, kava deserves recognition and respect as a traditional food with a modern place alongside tea and coffee.



For consumers everywhere, kava is a safe, non-addictive food that offers relaxation and connection without intoxication.

About IKO

The International Kava Organization (IKO) is the global voice for kava. We work to ensure that kava is respected as a safe and traditional food, support fair policy and trade, and amplify the voices of those whose lives and livelihoods are connected to kava.

