

## DISCOVERING THE AMAZONIAN YAMS OF THE LECOS PEOPLE



Santo Domingo is just one of several Lecos indigenous communities in the Apolo region that contributed unusual Amazonian yams. Rob Wallace/WCS



Mocolo and Motocio are just two of six unusual Amazonian yams with huge gastronomic potential. Rob Wallace/WCS



The rolling hills of the Apolo region are home to a unique mid-elevation grassland with associated gallery forests and adjacent montane forests. Rob Wallace/WCS



The colors and textures of the Amazonian yams found on the first Sabores Silvestres were central to the Gustu tasting menu. Patricio Crooker/Gustu

**Name of Product:** Amazonian Yams – Mocolo (*Dioscorea trifida*), Papa Voladora (*Dioscorea bulbifera*) Achira (*Canna edulis*), Jamachiipeke (*Maranta arundinacea*), Motocio (*Calathea allouia*), Chuquioca

**Name of Producer:** Central Indígena del Pueblo Leco de Apolo (CIPLA)

**Location:** Chirimayo, Inca, Santo Domingo & Irimo communities, Lecos Indigenous Territory, Apolo Municipality, Franz Tamayo Province, La Paz Department.

Near Madidi National Park and Natural Area of Integrated Management



**Conservation Importance:** The Lecos Apolo Indigenous Territory partially overlaps and is otherwise immediately adjacent to Madidi National Park and Natural Integrated Management Area – the world's most biologically diverse protected area - and is found in the montane forests and natural mid-elevation grasslands of northern La Paz which are renowned for high levels of endemism. CIPLA are committed to the preservation of their forests and the sustainable management of natural resources across their territory, and a diversified income stream for Lecos communities including ecologically friendly agriculture.



**Cultural Relevance:** The Lecos cultivate these rather sweet yams within and around their agricultural plots for traditional use as an alternative to bread to accompany coffee at breakfast, as well as in traditional soups and stews. The Lecos language and culture are threatened, and CIPLA and the Leco communities are committed to a number of efforts to prevent further cultural loss.



**Sabores Silvestres Contact:** For 12 years, WCS has provided technical support to CIPLA on a broad range of territorial management issues including the sustainable use of a variety of natural resources. This approach included the implementation of garden plots to preserve cultural knowledge, diversify and secure household foods, and provide an additional income stream. Within this activity the partnership identified a number of novel ingredients with gastronomic potential.



**The Challenge:** The principal challenge was to assess the gastronomic potential of relatively unknown ingredients, whilst developing the organizational capacity within CIPLA for a centralized harvest among several families across multiple communities. This centralization was made more complicated with the addition of several Amazonian tubers and other products such as queen leafcutter ants and manioc flower buds.



**Economic Impact:** Gustu has purchased a total of 208 kg of a selection of Amazonian yams for a total of \$780. This payment was divided between 25 Leco indigenous families from the Santo Domingo, Inca and Chirimayo communities in Apolo. Essentially the sale of these products was a new activity which only required the harvest of the tubers. To feed this new demand and potential source of income and not jeopardize domestic use in the future, the communities will need to consider increasing production as part of their normal agricultural plot activities.

