

6. Package the viscous Aloe bitter gum in a clean sack (Plate 5).
7. Allow the gum to cool for 24 hours to solidify.



Plate 4. Stirring the boiling sap



Plate 5. Packaging Aloe bitter gum in a sack

8. Store the packaged solidified gum in a cool dry place ready for sale (Plate 6).



Plate 6. Stored Aloe bitter gum

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## Production of Aloe Bitter Gum from *Aloe secundiflora*



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## Introduction

*Aloe secundiflora* is a drought tolerant plant. It grows well in arid and semi-arid areas. The species is indigenous to Kenya and is locally used as; medicine for human and livestock, a fermenting agent in local beers and a border plant. Other uses include bee forage and rangeland rehabilitation.

In Kenya, *Aloe secundiflora* has traditionally been harvested from the wild (Plate 1). However, there are efforts to bring the Aloe to cultivation to enhance sustainable production of Aloe bitter gum. Aloe bitter gum is obtained from boiling Aloe sap, and is commercially used as an ingredient in manufacturing of medicines and cosmetics.



Plate 1. *Aloe secundiflora* growing in the wild

## Material and equipment used in Aloe bitter gum production

- *Aloe secundiflora* plants and sap
- Firewood
- Sieve
- Sharp knife
- Plastic bucket
- Plastic jerry cans
- Metallic drum
- Wooden handle stirring shovel
- Ropes
- Sacks

## Steps in Aloe bitter gum production

1. Cut mature outer leaves of Aloe plants at the base with a sharp knife (Plate 2). Harvest during the dry season. For easy and quick dripping of Aloe sap harvest the leaves during the day between 10 am and 4 pm.
2. Immediately place the cut leaves in a slanting position in a plastic bucket/basin with the cut base facing down for sap to drip (Plate 3). Allow sap to drip for 20-30 minutes
3. Sieve the Aloe sap into a bucket or jerry can.
4. Pour the sieved Aloe sap into the metallic drum.
5. Boil the Aloe sap in the metallic drum for about 4 hours while continuously stirring with wooden handle stirring shovel (Plate 4) until the sap becomes viscous and black in colour, to form the Aloe bitter gum.



Plate 2. Harvesting Aloe outer leaves



Plate 3. Collecting Aloe sap in a bucket