

Families around us



- ✱ **1 - Preparing for conversation** - How big is your family? How big are families in your region? What are the most common names in your country and region? Is it common to find people with indigenous names? Do you know how your parents came up with your name?

◆ *Think of the answers for the questions above, take some notes of your ideas and prepare for a conversation time in groups.*

- ✱ **2 - Reading:** In the Brazilian Amazon region there is a fruit called Açaí. Have you ever heard of it? Do you know what Açaí means? Read the text below and then answer some questions about it.

THE LEGEND OF THE AÇAÍ BERRY

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by Inge van Schooneveld

Undoubtedly, many of you have been introduced to the Amazonian fruit Açaí, a dark berry that grows high up in the Açaí palm, famous for its highly nutritious values if its juices are extracted straight after harvest. What you probably don't know is that this berry was named after the daughter of a well-known native chief in Brazil, who discovered the berry at a time of great famine. Legend has it that the chief of the local tribe had all new-borns murdered simply because there wasn't enough food to go round, right before his own daughter Iça gave birth to her first child. Being a man of his word, even Iça couldn't escape his decree.

Iça cried for months, grieving the loss of her beautiful daughter. One night, as she walked in mourning under a full moon, Iça heard the cry of a child. She hurried towards the sound and came upon a tall, slender palm tree. At the top of the tree, Iça could see clusters of dark fruit and at the bottom of the tree, she saw her daughter waiting for her with open arms. Iça ran toward the vision, but as she reached out to embrace her child, she was overcome with joy and died happily beneath the tree.

The next day, the Chief found his daughter under the tree. She had a smile across her face and she was looking up to the sky. He followed her gaze up the tree and saw the dark, purple fruit. The Chief immediately ordered these fruits to be harvested by his people, who soon discovered that a juice could be extracted from the berries that would satisfy the hunger of the whole tribe. The Chief's decree was lifted, and out of gratitude to Iça, from that day on, the fruit of the palm tree that saved the tribe was known as Açaí ("Açaí" is "Iça" spelled backwards).

Why are we telling you all this? Not only is this a beautiful native story that we think should be passed on, it is also exemplary for the importance of the berry for many tribes in the Amazon since its discovery. Stretching across 6 million acres of rainforest, the açaí palm is an important source of nutrition for these tribal communities. Even more so, with the increasing popularity of super-fruits in Europe and the United States, it offers a steady income to a lot of these communities and a reason for the government to keep these 6 million acres of rainforest intact. And the good news is, methods of harvest have not been changed since Iça found the first palm many centuries ago, making it a fully organic product and thus good for the local ecosystems.

Thank you Iça!

source: Sinchi - <https://sinchi-foundation.com/about/>



Questions

1. What is Açaí famous for?

2. Whom was Açaí berry named after?

3. Why were the new-borns murdered by order of the chief of the tribe?

4. What happened to Iaçá's first child?

5. What's the relationship between the words Iaçá and Açaí?

6. Was it a boy or a girl the child of Iaçá?
