

Fijian Kava Ceremony

Na Yaqona Vakaturaga

(Chiefly Kava Ceremony)



INFORMATION FOR DELEGATES

United Nations General Assembly Hall

Monday 5 June, 2017

09:10Hrs- 09:55Hr

**Fijian Traditional Welcome
Kava Ceremony
PROGRAMME
UNGA Hall, Monday 5 June, 2017
09:10Hrs- 09:55Hr**

Time	Event
09:00hrs	Arrival of Delegates
09:05hrs	First Call of the Conch Shell¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signal to delegates that the ceremony is about to commence - Traditional Party enter the UNGA Hall and take up position
09:10hrs	Second Call of the Conch Shell <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - VIP Parties escorted in and take Seat - Garlanding
09:15hrs	Third Call of the Conch Shell <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traditional Ceremony Commences - The “<i>Sau</i>” is rolled out - Greeting Chants/Closed Clapping of hands - Traditional Party – Kava presentation Speech - Secretary-General’s Herald-man traditional acceptance - Chants/Closed Clapping of Hands
09:25hrs	Kava Ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mixing of pounded Kava - Chants & Traditional Ceremonial Dance
09:30hrs	Drinking of Kava <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secretary – General (<i>On behalf of the UN & Members States</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o UN-SG’s Herald man - President of the UN General Assembly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o UN-PGA Herald man - Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden (Co-President) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Sweden’s DPM’s Herald man - Prime Minister of Fiji (Co-President) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Fiji PM’s Herald man
09:35hrs	UN Secretary-General (<i>Vosa Vakaturaga</i>, Chiefly Speech.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acceptance of UN-SG’s Speech (Traditional Party)
09:40hrs	Fijian Meke – Cultural Dance
09:55hrs	Conclusion of Ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - VIP escorted out - Traditional Party Depart - Podium Cleared

¹ Fijian Ceremonies are carried out in complete silence, Delegates are requested to observe silence throughout the ceremony

Yaqona Vakaturaga - the Chiefly “Kava” Ceremony

The *Yaqona*² or Kava Ceremony is an important and a hallowed component of the seven ceremonies that forms the traditional Fijian welcome rituals. Accorded to Chiefs, Tribal Leaders, and high Dignitaries, the presentations and the drinking of Kava signifies highest respect and deepest reverence for the Chief, for his or her people and the land (“vanua”) from whence they hail. The completion of the kava ceremony marks the occasion when the visitor and the visited become one people, striving for the same purpose.

The “Kava” Plant

The Yaqona or Kava (*piper methysticum*) is a plant shrub native to most of the islands in the Pacific. The root and stems are pounded, mixed with water and made into a, non-alcoholic beverage that has been used socially and ceremonially in that part of world for hundreds of years³.



Kava Plant -*piper methysticum*

Drinking Kava

Kava is mixed in a wooden bowl called “*Tanoa*” carved from a hardwood “*Ves*” (*intsia bijuga*). Attached to the front end of the *Tanoa*, is a string made of coconut husks fibers with white cowrie shell(s) tied at its end. This string is called the “*Sau*”. When the *Sau* is rolled out, it signifies that the commencement of the ceremony and when rolled back, it marks the end of the kava ceremony. The honored guest is seated directly in front of the *Sau*.

Kava is served in a coconut shell called “*Bilo*” carried around by the cup/*bilo* bearer the “*Tu Yaqona*”. When presented, the recipient drinker **must clap his/her hands three times**, take the *bilo* and drink the Kava until empty in one gulp. The *tu yaqona* will proclaim “*maca*” (pronounced- mother) to signal the emptying of the *bilo*. Everybody will clap their hands.

Kava is usually served in pairs, the first cup is for the chief guest, the second is drunk by his/her “*Matanivanua*” (Herald) on behalf of the people. The herald is known in some Pacific cultures as the “talking chief”. The *matanivanua* decides the strength of the kava mix and the number of people to drink.

Silence

Fijian kava ceremonies and other traditional protocols are presented and observed in “silence”. People seated crossed legged on the floor or on the ground at a lower elevation than the chief guest signifying a bond of humility and respect. A “dignified silence” is observed by everyone all throughout the ceremony, except for the “*Matanivanua*” who directs the ceremony and act as the link between the people and the chief.

² Yaqona, pronounced “*yangonna*” is the Fijian name for Kava. Kava is a mildly narcotic drink made from mixing water with the powdered root/stems of the pepper plant (*piper methysticum*). Drinking Kava gives a numbing sensation around the mouth, lips and tongue leading to a sense of relaxation.

³ Shimoda LM, Park C, Stokes AJ, Gomes HH, Turner H. [Pacific island 'Awa \(Kava\) extracts, but not isolated kavalactones, promote pro-inflammatory responses in model mast cells.](#) *Phytother Res.* 2012 Dec;26(12):1934-41. doi: 10.1002/ptr.4652. Epub 2012 Apr 4.

KAVA in Pictures



Green Kava & Roots



Dried Kava Roots



Pounded Roots



Powdered Kava Roots



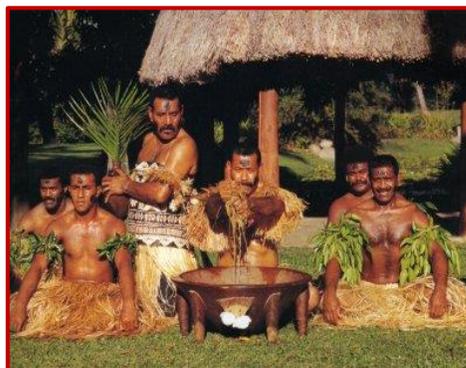
Tanoa- Kava Bowl



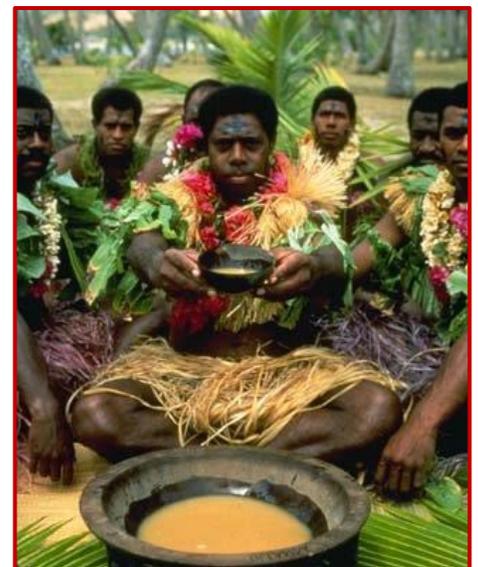
Coconut Shell - Bilo



Tanoa & Sau



Mixing of Kava



Have a drink!