

Crunchy Colourful Veggies



Makeshift stalls display a range of fresh and colourful vegetables

Small green patches neatly laid caught our attention as we neared Nuwara Eliya. The soil of the hills is known for its fertility and the fresh and crunchy colourful produce that you see on the side of the road will make you stop in your tracks.

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Photographs Menaka Aravinda

As travellers head to the cooling hills away from the heat of the rest of the country, you are bound to think about the many fresh veggies that you can take back home. As you slowly make your ascent along the contours of the hills, orange, red, green and white colours will beautifully stand out from the monochromatic landscape.

As we made our way to Nuwara Eliya, fresh vegetables were on sale in make-shift stalls or simply laid out on mats for passers-by. Along the slopes amidst the tea estates as well as town areas were different types of vegetation.

A harvest was in progress and sacks full of leeks had been bundled and kept on the side of the road for collection in Westador, Nuwara Eliya. Peering down, we saw a group of people busy as bees working in the fields. Manoeuvring the

slippery slopes we reached the lower level and watched as lush dark green leeks were plucked out of the soil.



The climate and rich fertile soil is apt for the freshest produce in Nuwara Eliya. The seeds are first nurtured and after five months the saplings are planted in the fields. After two months, the leeks are ready to be taken to the market. With sacks laden with leeks the farmers scaled the hills, while we scrambled behind!

We were told that the soil on the potatoes, beetroot and carrot had not been washed as this would keep the produce fresh a little bit longer.

Travelling through the small lanes of Nuwara Eliya town, we came across a large area planted with various crops. Most striking was the lettuce planted amongst carrots. Here too, a lone farmer was washing the freshly removed carrots that shone in bright orange hues. Lettuce in a light green shade seemed almost ready for a nice and fresh salad.

Venturing farther, we came across cabbage, that had not yet begun to form into balls. Many referred to this variety as kola gowa. In certain vegetable patches beetroot too had been planted. Yet, leeks seemed to be in majority as we continued on our way.



Harvested leeks along the roadside are ready to be taken to the market

Horseradish, potatoes, daikon radish, capsicum, beans, carrots and more were laid out for sale at numerous points. In Talawakelle, we came across newly picked colourful veggies on the side of the road. We were told that the soil on the potatoes, beetroot and carrot had not been washed as this would keep the produce fresh a little bit longer before it is taken to the kitchen.

While most of the fresh veggies are transported to the markets in Colombo, the farmers themselves sell their harvests on the side of the road. Even if you venture beyond Nuwara Eliya, you will continue to see either small or large areas prepared in an organised manner with a variety of veggies planted. Enjoy a crunchy and wholesome salad made out of the vibrant veggies of Nuwara Eliya.

