

Juicy Tropical Treats: Star Fruits

Star fruits are a local favorite. The juicy, succulent loaded with goodness has a delectable taste, and its fruiting season starts from early May and is seen again in late October.



A juicy snack - with a dash of salt and pepper.

The beauty of the fruit is the star-shaped resemblance that gained its popularity. The fruit has prominent ridges down the sides, and when it is sliced, it is in the shape of a star. The light-green shade of the fruit turns light yellow when it is ripe. It has a delicate, sweet taste that is adored by those who savor mouthfuls of this tender, juicy fruit.

The origins of the star fruit are quite unclear, whether it was in Sri Lanka or the Moluccas, the islands of Indonesia, and this fruit is now cultivated diversely across Asia. It is commonly grown in India, Southern China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and several parts of China, Australia, the United States, and Africa. The fruit has gained much attraction and love among the islanders, and it is commonly grown in home gardens and backyards. The star fruit tree usually grows up to a height of 12 meters high and produces a good yield in warm climates. During the season, the tree is dotted with small blooms of purple or pink flowers, which eventually grow into buds of star fruits.

Interestingly, the fruit has acquired different names across countries; in Sinhala, it is called Kamaranka, Kamrat in Tamil, Belimbing in Indo-Malay, Yangtao in China, Ma Feung in Thailand, Khe in Vietnam, and Babingbing in the Philippines, and Carambola in English and Spanish. The scientific name is (*Averrhoa carambola*).

The fruit is rich in vitamin C, sodium, potassium, and other nutrients. It is also rich in antioxidants and is best to lower cholesterol levels, improve digestion and the immune system. The leaves and roots are also known to possess medicinal properties. At the same time, the fruit has potential health benefits such as strengthening bones, effective functioning of the nervous system, regulating blood sugar levels in the body, as well as curing several ailments.

Star Fruit can be consumed as a whole fruit or sliced and sprinkled with a dash of salt and pepper. The citrusy nature of the fruit makes it great for preparing salads. Choose a yellow star fruit and slice it thin. Add finely chopped green chilies, squeeze lime, add a pinch of salt and pepper, and mix them.

In Sri Lanka, the tanginess of the unripe fruit makes it a great combination to add to meat dishes. To prepare a star fruit curry, slice the star fruit and pound it by adding chili, turmeric, curry powder, and salt, then keep it aside. Take a pan, add

oil, finely cut onions, garlic, green chilies, curry leaves, rampe, or cinnamon stick, and fry them. Add the star fruit mixture and sauté until it turns golden brown, then add some coconut milk and let it simmer slightly. Another way to enjoy it is to pair it with a spicy pol sambol. Grind the chili, onions, salt, and coconut, and then add the sliced star fruit.

Star fruit juice makes an ideal summer drink too. Slice the fruit and add three or four oranges, lemon juice, ginger, chilled water, and sugar and blend it. A Daiquiri is a cocktail shaker that combines a mix of light rum, two ounces of star fruit juice, three-fourths of an ounce of sugar syrup, and ice cubes. Upon straining it into a chilled cocktail glass, enjoy the refreshing beverage. Star fruit jam is prepared by cleaning the fruit and removing the inner and outer ridges and seeds, and the fruit is mashed. Heat a clay pot, add the mashed fruit pulp and four cups of sugar, and stir well until the sugar dissolves. Transfer it into a sterile glass jar and refrigerate. Enjoy it as a sweet star fruit jam that makes a great combo with roti or bread. Preparing Star fruit Chutney requires cleaning the fruits and removing the inner and outer ridges. Cut the fruit into small pieces. Heat a clay pot and add sesame oil and mustard seeds. Once the mustard seeds splutter, add the sliced fruit and kittul jaggery. When the jaggery has dissolved, add chili powder and salt and continue to cook until the fruit has softened.

Star fruits are a super refreshing tropical fruit. Whichever combination this tangy fruit is consumed in, it will leave your taste buds tingling with its sweet-sour taste. So next time you spot a starfruit, enjoy it in the form of your favorite preparation or just crunch it as a whole fruit.



During the season, trees are dotted with a bunch of star fruits.



This fruit is rich in vitamin C and other nutrients.



A cool seasonal drink.