# Seasonal Fruities in our Island Nation

Posted on

Sri Lanka is a paradise for tropical fruits, and with the beginning of seasonal fruits, the aroma pervades the air. Local fruit stalls and roadside fruit vendors are loaded with a lavish spread of these fruits. Stop by and pick your favorite!



Sighting the seasonal or summer fruits brings excitement, temptation, and curiosity to try out the island's popular fruits. It is a much-awaited time of the year for many islanders to feast on these sweet and tangy fruits. Be it at home gardens or in the wild, indulging in at least once these nature's delicious and juicy treats is a must-try.

**Kaju Puhulam (Cashew Apple)**

Blending with the season's family of fruits is the Kaju Puhulam. The fruit is prominent during the festive month of April, but it is also available throughout late May with the slightly changing weather patterns. The cashew tree (Anacardium occidentale) is a tropical tree native to Brazil, introduced to Asia and Africa by European explorers in the sixth century. Commonly called Cashew fruit, the exotic Kaju Puhulam is found in striking shades of yellow-red with a kidney-shaped drupe hanging at the bottom of the puhulama. It is a single seed enclosed in a hard layer. The pear-shaped fruit (puhulama) is exceptionally juicy, and a much-loved delicacy. Apart from feeding on these juicy treats, bats, squirrels and birds help in dispersing the seeds.

Kaju Puhulam is fused with the island's culinary value, and one needs to take care while enjoying the puhulama as it contains a slightly astringent nature. The cashew fruit is commonly boiled or simmered into jams, preserves, and chutneys, sliced and consumed by sprinkling salt or added to curries. In addition to consuming the flesh, the juice is a favorite ingredient in smoothies and cocktails. The Kaju Puhulam is loaded with vitamins A and C and other nutrients. The roadside stalls lining the ever-popular Kajugama (the village of cashew nuts) have a cluster of vendors engaged in cultivating, processing, and selling Kaju. The fruits are handpicked from the branches drooping with a bunch of this delightful goodness, and the kaju is separated, cleaned and packed.

A journey along this wayside tempts locals and foreigners to stop by and take home this island's tempting treat.

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**Guava**

May to August is the season for Guava. Guava, or Pera, known by the locals, is a

nutritious fruit. Guava is believed to have been derived from the Spanish term guayaba, while pera is presumed to be a derivation of pear, influenced by either Portuguese or Spanish. Considered to have origi-nated from Central and South America, guava is now grown in tropical and subtropical regions. Various areas are dedicated to guava cultivation on the tropical island, especially Eththala, Kalpitiya.

Going beyond the thick green skin that opens to a white interior with tiny orange seeds, once sliced, is sweet and crunchy and tastes best by seasoning with chili and salt. Guavas are rich in vitamins A and C, dietary fiber, and minerals and are an excellent choice for individuals with diabetes. The fruit flavor is used in making candy, toffee, jellies, jams, juice, and more. There is a treat of guavas from supermarkets to roadside fruit stalls to enjoy, so stop by and grab a handful during the season.



Pera or Guava is a crunchy fruit loaded with nutrients.

**Gaduguda**

Apart from its scientific name of Lansium domesticum, Gaduguda has acquired several names. In Malaysia, it is called langsat, in the Philippines as lansones, in Thailand as langsad, in Burma as lansak or duku, and in Indonesia as langsat or duku. In Sri Lanka, the fruit is known as Gaduguda, but in some villages, the locals refer it to as toku gedi. Growing up to 30 meters, the trees are found in Gampaha,

Hanwella, Horana, and Avissawella, to name a few areas close to Colombo. The fruits grow in clusters sprouting from their branches. Gaduguda possesses several health benefits, including vitamins A, B, and C. These yellow bulb-like fruits in elliptical or round shapes are another seasonal treat. The fruit contains one to three seeds and, once split open, has small white wedges. It can be enjoyed by dipping it in sugar syrup or adding it to a mixed fruit cocktail or a fruit salad with ice cream.

**Durian**

They call it the ‘King of Fruits’. With a spiky, thorny skin, the fruit is adored by most of the locals. However, ‘it is not everyone’s cup of tea’ due to the unusual strong odor of this fruit. The durian is believed to be native to Borneo and Sumatra. It is known that the Portuguese brought Durian to Sri Lanka in the 16th century from Southeast Asia. However, the fruit’s cultivation has been widespread since then. In Sri Lanka, the fruit is grown across various regions, including Kandy, Matale, Kalutara, and Kegalle districts.

A durian tree can grow up to 50 meters tall, and the fruits can usually grow up to 30cm and weigh up to 3kg. Once split open, the love for creamy wedges has attracted many to indulge in this goodness regardless of the strong, pungent odor. The fruit has creamy pearly pods that are tempting. It is a bellowed delicacy for some who have savored its taste. Durian ice cream is a popular dessert in Indonesia, and the fruit is canned in syrup for export. Chunks of this fruit are sliced and sold near roadside fruit carts. Durians are rich in energy, vitamins, and minerals and are known to be super healthy.



The King of Fruits – Durian will attract your attention with its strong odor.

Jambu These rose-pink fruits, also called wax apples or rose apples, have a crunchy taste when chewed. Everyone from little children to grown adults loves it. Home gardens are dotted with plenty of these fruits during the season. There are two types of Jambu descending from the Myrtaceae family found in Sri Lanka. Native to the island is the smallest and sweetest, crunchy with a slight tang. It has waxy skin with a pink-red color. The other variety found here hails from Malaysia and is known as pini-jambu as it is creamy in color and bigger and juicier. In Sri Lanka, you can find the red variety of this, and it is called the Malaysian red jambu. The bell-shaped fruit can be crunched or prepared as a salad by slicing the fruit and mixing it with salt, pepper, a few drops of lime, and apple vinegar, and served with lettuce. Some roadside stalls have a tempting display of jambu achcharu, fused with the island's flavors. Or try it as a sweeter version by stewing it in sugar syrup. Add sugar to water and boil, and add clove and cinnamon stick. Add the sliced jambu and store in a jar, and enjoy anytime.

**Lovi**

The bright cherry-like fruit is native to the Philippines and spread to Asian and African countries. Brilliant scarlet, round fruits dangle in clusters from the branches. It is a medium-sized tree that can grow in small backyards. Lovi (Flacourtia Inermis) has a tart flavor, sharp and acidic. It turns into a brilliant red color once it's ripe. It's

an excellent choice for jams, wines, and chutneys. The fruit's attraction is its unique and tempting taste. Preparing lovi jam requires extracting the pulp and placing it on a pan. Add sugar, and let to boil and stir consistently till the mixture becomes thick. Lovi is a powerhouse of rich vitamins and minerals and balances nutritive and medicinal values. Lovi trees are also beneficial. Wooden ornaments are prepared from the wood obtained from the trees, while the leaves and roots are known to carry medicinal properties. Biling Averrhoa bilimbi, commonly known as bilimbi, or biling, is said to have originated in Indonesia and is found in many parts of Asia, mainly the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Malaysia. The tangy, thrilling taste of the fruit makes it quite popular among the islanders. The glossy green fruit in cylindrical shape has a strong punch of sourness and tanginess; therefore, it can be eaten on its own or sliced and washed in warm water to remove the acidity. Biling requires fertile soil and a moderate climate and is also found in many Sri Lankan home gardens growing bountiful in bunches on the tree trunks.

> The tangy, thrilling taste of Biling makes it quite popular among the islanders.

The islanders love to experiment with Biling, and thus, there are some exciting ways they have found to prepare and enjoy it. Due to its tangy nature, Biling is used as a substitute for tamarind in curries, and one of the tastiest options is to relish it as a Biling Maluwa, a delicacy that tingles the senses. Here's a way to try Biling as a refreshing cool drink to beat the heat of the noonday sun. Cut the fruit into pieces, put it in a pan, fill it with water and add sugar. Once the pieces are cooked on a medium fire, blend them with mint leaves. Transfer the juice to a glass, add a dash of soda and some chilled water, mint, and unwind. The preparation of juicy Biling jam is a must-try during the season. Slice the Biling and soak it in water for two hours. Squeeze excess water from the fruit. Place the pulp in a pan and add sugar and bring to a boil to a thick consistency by adding little water. Transfer it to a glass jar and try it with roti/bread. Biling can also be savored with salt and chili or, prepared as a pickle, which provides a distinctive taste.

**Mangosteen**

Mangosteen (Garcinia mangostana) is the 'Queen of Tropical Fruits' and is most admired by the islanders. It is believed that the fruit has been cultivated in Java, Sumatra, Indochina, and the southern Philippines from antiquity. It is a common

dooryard tree in Indonesia. The mangosteen was fruited in English greenhouses in 1855, and subsequently its culture was introduced into the Western Hemisphere, where it became established in several of the West Indian islands, notably Jamaica. On the island, the fruit is cultivated primarily across Kalutara, Kegalle, Kandy, Matale, Galle, and Gampaha. The Mangosteen trees are typically large in nature and produce an abundant harvest during their season. The fruit has a dark purple shiny skin and striking pearl white wedges inside. The soft, white wedges are similar to those of an orange with a seed. The smaller fruits are seedless and easily digested. It has a pleasant juice with a perfect balance of acidic and sugar nature. Mangosteens are rich in antioxidants, and anti-inflammatory proper-ties, support blood sugar control, promote a healthy immune system, and maintain healthy skin. The fruit is rich in energy, protein, carbohydrate, and fiber. The fruit is also dried and powdered to make tea in some countries.



Grab a handful of plump mangosteens during the season.

**Mango**

One of the unbeatable summer fruits from the list is Mango. Picking a juicy ripe mango with a thick sweet golden-hued flesh will leave a heavenly taste lingering in your taste buds. A ripe mango has a silky texture that melts in the mouth. These

sweet treats taste their best if they fall off the stem, but plucking fresh from home gardens and sharing among families during the season is quite common among the islanders. Several varieties of mangoes differ in flavor, texture, and fragrances from various regions, each unique ranging from shades of golden yellow to dark orange. The popular is the Karuthakolamban, found in Polonnaruwa and Vavuniya; however, the Jaffna Karuthakolamban is unbeatable due to its size and taste. Villard has a slight purplish tinge; however, some are slightly red and quite round in shape when ripe. Mangoes are rich in vitamin A, C, and many nutrients. Mango is commonly eaten as a fruit itself; however, it’s excellent when relished as a smoothie or juice. The fruit is a perfect accompaniment for meat curries as well as seafood. Its flavor is also used in preparing ice cream and jams. Sri Lankans love to savor it as a delicious chutney, where the glossy fruit is prepared in a mix of spicy and sweet forms. It can be eaten on its own and goes well with biryani and rice, and curries. The raw mangoes are prepared as pickles and enjoyed as achcharu, while the sweet fruit can be sliced and sprinkled with chili powder and salt, giving an irresistible taste.



Relish in the sweet and spicy flavors of mangoes.



Jambu achcharu is a fusion of sweet and tangy flavors.



Mouthwatering Lovi achcharu.

**Palu and Weera**

Growing in the wild, dry zone, the Palu (Manilkara hexandra) is a yellow bulb-like fruit dotting the trees. The striking yellow glossy texture of Palu has a unique taste that is a favorite among many. Sweet or sour Palu and Weera are an absolute summer treat to enjoy in the wild, especially in Kumana National Park. However, it is also found in Wilpattu, Yala, Udawalawe, Bundala, and Wasgamuwa National Parks. As the season approaches, furry sloth bears come out in search of their quest. The sloth bears and the other residing wildlife also love to indulge in nature's treat, including the giant squirrels, monkeys, elephants, and civets. There is no greater feast for the black bear than indulging in a feast of palu. Overindulgence in the berry often leads to drowsiness, and that's when you can spot these furry bears lazing on treetops after a hearty feast. While the brilliant red Weera is also equally loved by the wildlife. As the season approaches, the aroma of these tropical delights in the woodlands and forests attracts many indicating a rich yield.

Weera (Drypetes sepiaria) is an orange-red round fruit with a moderately sweet, slightly astringent taste. It is also popular among humans and bears. Growing commonly in the wild and scrublands, these fruits retain their unique sweet tang. Rambutan Rambutan (Nephelium lappaceum) is native to Malaysia. It is believed that the Portuguese brought the first Rambutan seeds to Sri Lanka from Malaysia. According to ancient folklore, they had a fortress in Malwana and found that the soil in the Kelani Valley was ideal for the plant to thrive. Rambutans are popular in Malwana and in various parts of the island. The first thing to attract one's attention is heaps of these delicious fruits on road-side carts during the season, drawing the passersby. One can frequently glimpse roadside fruit vendors displaying a pile of rambutan varieties during the season. It is so tempting and exciting that one cannot simply pass by without buying a bagful of these seasonal treats. The Malaysian Yellow is very sweet and delightful, but the demand is relatively low due to its yellowish-red appearance. The fruit with soft red spikes, once opened, has a white jelly-like pulp inside. Peel the fruit with your hands and split open to remove the seed and consume it.

**Uguressa**

(Governor's Plum)  The fruit, also called Governor's Plum, Madagascar Plum, and Batoko plum is a fruit etched in memories of a small bushy tree in the garden of a childhood home. There are two varie-ties on the island, the slightly larger rata uguressa of Malaysian origin and the plain uguressa, slightly sourer. Uguressa is a small berry type of fruit resembling an English plum. It appears green with a tough skin, and then as it matures, it turns into dark red. The first tints of dark pink and

red begin to appear at this stage. When it is fully ripe, it is reddish black or purple. The fruit is high in calcium, potassium, and antioxidant qualities. It is best to roll the fruit in the palm to reduce the astringent nature before consuming it. The fruit can be stewed in sugar to be served as a dessert or pickled. This is done by sautéing Uguressa with ginger, garlic, chili, and oil. Add asafetida and fenugreek and place it in a jar and refrigerate. Among the many fantastic experiences on the island, indulging in delightful summer fruits reflect the island's endemic nature and blessings. These tropical seasonal delights are heavenly treats of the island and are not to be missed.





Palu and Weera, commonly found in the wild, dry zones, have a unique taste.



Awaiting for the Rambutans to ripe.



Uguressa or Governor’s Plum are small berries