The Soothing Savour Of Kirala

Posted on



Just when you think you have discovered every possible fruit within your reach, you are proved wrong, as there is a pleasant surprise waiting to be discovered just within your grasp. The discovery and the experience it brings is an adventure in itself as it leaves you with a feeling of satisfaction that you have dared to try this unique scrumptious blend that proved to be one of the most delicious that you have ever tried.

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The Fruit

Kirala (*Sonneratia caseolaris*) or Mangrove Apple is a fruit that is endemic to the isle of Sri Lanka and is mostly grown near salt water bodies. Therefore, as we drove through Ambalantota, a coastal city down south, we came across many shops that served ‘Kirala’ juice, which piqued our curiosity. The Kirala tree grows quite tall with thin branches. The fruit is green coloured with a star shaped covering on the top, which once removed uncovers a reddish rim that contrasts with the green peel and the white flesh inside the fruit. Inside embedded in the flesh, there are many seeds and once ripened it cannot be stored at room temperature for more than a day as it perishes rapidly, becoming liable to insect damage. Most of the time the fruit is not

plucked from the tree, but is awaited, till it drops from the tree after ripening.Even then one has to be very careful to ascertain that the fruit is not infected with insects and not left on the ground too long. However, the ripened ‘Kirala’ has a very delightful taste as a fruit and is used to make an even more delightful fruit drink that is rich in vitamins. It is also said that ‘Kirala’ is a very cooling drink that soothes the body and is also a good remedy for stomach related ailments.

The Preparation

Kirala juice can be prepared in two different ways – by hand and by blender. Most prefer to do it by hand as blending would damage the seeds, thus rendering a different taste and a dicolouration of the fruit pulp. For the preparation of the juice, the following are needed: two strainers – a fine strainer and a colander used for draining rice or pasta, a bowl, some mineral water, salt and sugar. First the fruits are broken into halves. Using the colander, the fruit is squeezed while adding water, into a bowl. Usually one glass of water is used with one fruit, but the more concentrated the juice is, the better it tastes. Now the bowl is filled with a pulp reminiscent of mustard colour, seeds floating atop. In order to be rid of the tiny seeds, the pulp is then strained through a fine strainer and some sugar and salt is added to enhance the taste. While honey can also be used, sugar is preferred to preserve the colour of the juice and some people use a little bit of coconut milk to enhance the richness and the colour of the drink.

The Drink

The aroma that wafted from the Kirala juice strongly reminded me of the aroma of woodapple juice. Taking a tentative sip, I was again reminded of woodapple juice.Yet the more I tasted, the more distinct the taste grew and more appealing it became. A little sweet and a little salty, it was definitely a taste that would appeal to many. Furthermore, the cooling effect of the juice is instantaneous as it helped me to endure the scorching heat that predominated the surroundings. I sat there, enjoying the blissful chill that stole over me as I took one sip after the other while watching the making of ‘Kirala’ juice…. all over again.

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