

DESHI FRUITS: summer's bestie

OF PAPAYAS, BANANAS AND PINEAPPLES

My favourite trail in the country is ascending the hills of Bandarban through the majestic wilderness. The thick jungles, with their dark green foliage, dresses up the steep road, while the emerald ferns glistening in the sun, bejewel Mother Nature. Virgin beauty of the hill tracks, small thickets, colourful tribal villages and their neat, minimalistic huts, their roadside random bazars, are some of the things I die for.

The range of orchards that you see while going up is honestly admirable. The lines of pineapples planted in perfect geometric harmony around the hillocks, the papaya plants in almost every homestead are heavy with the bumper harvest always; the banana plantation pregnant with flower stalks — some with ripe yellow bananas, some green and some as tiny flowers, makes the entire setting idyllic and refreshing.

Sitting by the roadside tea stores, you can have as much sweet papayas, bananas, and pineapples literally for few takas only. The wild bananas, usually a favourite of elephants, have an out of the world taste, with a slight vanilla

flavour to it. The small pineapples, freshly cut and minus any seasoning, is juicy, and the ripe papayas just melt in your mouth. These are 'deshi' fruits at their organic best.

MY LOVE- THE GREEN GUAVAS

A particular favourite of mine is the tiny 'deshi' guava, which, when bit into its soft outer skin, reveals the juicy peach/pink coloured pulp. It is now an almost lost variant of peyara, but trust me when I say, it is divine, if you can avail a plump one at the right time!

I just love guavas and my summer vacation at my dadabari was filled with memories of swinging on the low guava branches and eating to my heart's fill.

Then, there is the southern region of Bangladesh which is famous for its guavas. The floating market appears as the centre of Barisal, famed as the Venice of Bengal. Nobody knows when the idea of this floating market began, but the hundred-year old tradition of the floating guava market at Bhimruli in Jhalakathi, is now a very big tourist attraction.

The eye-soothing surrounding guava orchards and the farmers on dinghy boats on canals over Jhalakathi's rivers, carry on their trade season after season. And just like the ebb and flow of the river, this sweet fruit business continues without a damper.

