

# GREEN MANGOES and kalo-jaams

Besides guavas, my dadabari had mango groves and kalo-jaam trees, and when the summer breeze would blow strongly, the sumptuous juicy kalo-jaams would drop on the ground, splattering the juicy magenta pulp. It was an unusual sight for me, and I used to pick the good ones, rub them on my pants, and pop them in my mouth before my mother could give me the hygiene lecture. Unfortunately, the season for these summer gems are very short lived, and now, I freeze the pulp of kalo-jaam for my child, who loves it, but is never home during the Dhaka summer.

Vacation in our times were fun; visiting my dada for a few weeks was a must, so I have some fond memories associated with deshi fruits.

I still remember how my uncles would often pick the fruits from the colossal trees using a cane and a metal hook attached to it. They would pamper me with the best mangoes ever, and having them with chilli flakes and a dash of sugar was a real treat.

Green jackfruits, chopped up and devoured in the same manner, with an addition of green tamarind, is still a much-cherished recollection. And of course, ripe mango is a whole different story in itself. Bangladesh boasts of many kinds of this sweet delight, and Rajshahi is actually the mango capital of the world.

And of course, the competition of collecting green mangoes during the 'kal baishkhi' were a thrill of another level in my city life. There was a huge playground opposite my nanubari, and at every hailstorm, or just any passing storms, my cousins and I would collect mangoes and eat them raw or ask our mums and aunts to make pickles; it was such a pleasure.

## THE TANGY AMRAS

Amras or hog plums are now a traffic-light snack, and I never forget to buy a stick and enjoy the tanginess while stuck; my favourite is a soupy gravy cooked with a dash of molasses, amra'r tok is a delightful chutney for our palate, and is a staple at puja feasts.

The hog plums of Barisal are also very famous. Flowers appear in the trees in the Bangla months of Magh and Falgun (mid-January to mid-February) and the fruit is plucked from Ashar to Ashwin (mid-June to mid-September).

Hog plum grown in Barishal division is known for its large size and sweetness. It is rare to find a homestead without several hog plum trees, while in recent years, many villagers have taken up its commercial plantation.

## THE NUT WE LOVE-COCONUT

Any village homesteads or farmyards in Bangladesh is lined with coconut groves, and my village home was no exception. On any quiet afternoon, after I have had my belly full of a sumptuous lunch, I would invariably lie down on the mud veranda, listening to stories of my great grandmother's childhood; she would stop and ask me to carefully listen to the passing summer breeze and the whooshing sound of the surrounding slender coconut trees, it was a feeling that, even now, if I imagine it in my mind, soothes my body and soul.

Coconut groves, the lush green exterior of rice fields boasts of gorgeous true deshi vegetation, and the romantic huts of the farmers, with their traditional interiors, give each of our villages a magical ambience.

In fact, in pastoral Bengal, visitors are always greeted with water from a freshly cut coconut; some young tots climb the difficult slender trees like Spider-man and cut off a bunch of green coconuts and you are entertained in a simple, yet gracious manner.

Coconuts are somewhat of a flagship low carbohydrate fruit due to all the ways you can use them; coconut oil, coconut milk, creamed coconut bars, coconut chips, coconut butter-- the list goes on.

Coconuts produce energy quickly so don't forget your daily dose of this wonder fruit and have it fresh, not from cans.

