

To be honest, I have a hard time eating gooseberries because they are just so extremely sour, but that glass of cold water right after it, leaving a sweet taste on your palate is incredible! That's how my father lured me into having this peridot coloured gem of a fruit. They are packed with antioxidants and potential health benefits.



THE YUMMY POMELO

I mean who doesn't like the age old 'jambura makha' with rock salt and chilli flakes! It was my favourite after-school staple; years later, I came to know about a magical fruit that was doing wonders for my friends abroad who were dieting – grapefruit, and someone translated it for me as jambura. Much later, I was corrected that citrus fruits are of many variants, but in Bengali, grapefruit is called malta or musam-bi, and pomelo is jambura. Thus, do not get confused about pomelo and grapefruit. The skin of our pomelo is never red, while grapefruits are red/orange in colour.

But whatever the colour inside out, our jambura is rich in potassium, vitamin C and vitamin A, but low in sodium, cholesterol and fat, and is better at controlling blood sugar; just the thing for dieters.

A BRIGHT YELLOW SLICE OF LEMON AND TINY GREEN LIMES

I cannot think of having my piping hot steamed rice, without the seasoning dash of lemon and salt when I am having my *kachkir gura chorchori* (yellowtail mullet), another tasty peculiarity my father taught me. I enjoy my tall glass of lemonade with an overdose of sugar in it. In fact, I cannot think my life without lemons. Similar to other citrus fruits, lemon contains a good amount of vitamin C.

But it's a blessing for us middle-aged and senior women, because there is a significant decrease in blood pressure with increasing lemon intake, and the antioxidative polyphenols found in lemons show promise by helping suppress body fat accumulation.

OLIVES BUT THE JOLPAI KIND

Every Bengali worth their salt cannot ever deny having a whole raw jolpai, seasoned with salt on their palm. Or not having stolen their grandmother's pickled sundried olives from the roof, or being able to deny oneself the pleasure of the spiced jolpai, soaked in mustard oil with their illish bhaja and steamed rice.

Part of the human diet for thousands of years, olives are one of the healthiest fruits, and they grow on small trees found in our region. They are possibly the lowest carb fruit out there and they're one of the most significant sources of oleic acid, a monounsaturated fat known for its heart-protective properties. Olive oil appears to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Thus, be it the Mediterranean kind or the deshi kind, olives rock.

WHOLE STRAWBERRIES AND STRAWBERRY HALVES

The humble strawberry is one of the most popular fruits in the world, and a recent addition to our market. Though not a favourite of mine, but a jar of no-sugar strawberry spread made by my cousin is a seasonal breakfast staple for me; hot, crisp toast, speared with fresh strawberry jam, is indeed an indulgence.

Strawberries help prevent diseases related to oxidative stress (an imbalance between free radicals and antioxidants in your body) thus, a bowl of the bright fruits, smeared in kashundi, does wonders to our moods.

WATERMELONS OF PATENGA

My friend Rita and I were going out on a long drive to Patenga beach on a beautiful sunny afternoon. Rita knew

The peridot COLOURED GOOSEBERRY



how to drive, and putting on some music, us cool teenagers were thoroughly enjoying the freedom, when suddenly, we had a flat tyre, right beside a watermelon field.

We ruled out calling her parents and my mother, for the fear of getting caught; we called my father from a nearby landline and while waiting ate our heart's fill of watermelons straight from the fields until my father rescued us with juice smeared dresses and faces. So much for being cool teenagers!

Speaking of watermelons, there is a widespread misconception that it is nothing more than sugar and water. The fruit is actually reasonably low in carbohydrate.

Much has changed since those days of summer. While the ancestral house is still there, most miss a home. The cosy feeling of winter underneath a blanket; or the hunt for fruit under the blazing sun is something the new generation of children miss out on. Even in their urban existence, the strawberry and the gooseberry are lost over lollies and frozen delights!

There has also been a paradigm shift in our adult mind-set; irrespective

of the love that we once had for summer fruits, they were indulgences — something we could consume for days on end. Now, the consumption of fruits is something forced upon ourselves, and not to mention – children!

As a nation we are now more health conscious than ever, and fruits comprise a great portion of our urban diet, not as an indulgence, but a compulsion. The best option comes down to your own personal taste. No matter what kind of low carb diet you are following, reasonable portion sizes of all these fruits are fine. If you are careful, they can even fit into a strict plan of the current fad — the ketogenic diet.

So, whatever the case, diet or healthy eating, or simply binging on, let 'deshi' fruits be your summer's best pass-time, here's to 'deshi pholl'!

— RBR

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