

#FOOD

Exploring the world of EXOTIC FRUITS

Most people unfortunately fail to consume the two recommended servings of fruits a day. Even if your daily midday summer treat consists of your favourite fruit, rarely will that provide you with all the health benefits a balanced fruit intake has to offer. Thankfully, various online merchants are there to bring the world of exotic fruits to your doorstep, erasing monotony from daily servings.

The 'exotic' label

The term 'exotic' itself is up for debate amongst most fruit enthusiasts. While many of us would imagine fruits like durians or rambutans as 'exotic' due to their pungent smell or extra-terrestrial appearance, the term is often more inclusive than that. According to Taskin Rahman, the founder of The Food Talk, fruits which make their way to shops from other countries during typical Bangladeshi 'off-seasons' count as exotic as well.



You can find Australian mangoes online during winter. As soon as the Egyptian season for oranges ends, the one for South Africa begins. Online fruit shops usually play into the variation to supply a high number of common, yet exotic fruits all year round. If your tastebuds crave fruits such as these, you no longer have to spend months waiting.

As Abdullah Nihal Siddique, a fruit wholesaler put it, "There really is no 'off-season' for most common fruits anymore. Such markers do not exist at present as the fruits you typically associate with specific seasons are probably being brought in from one hemisphere or the other due to differences in seasonal variations worldwide."

Then there are fruits which are known to be both exclusive and exotic by those involved in the fruit business. Berries, dragon fruits, rambutan, and stone fruits like peaches, cherries, and apricots constitute this category. These fruits are usually shipped in smaller windows during certain times of the year, and are known to be region specific which helps them earn their 'exclusive' label.

From the Land Down Under

AL1F, an online shop based in Australia delivers fruits, meat, and dairy goods to Dhaka. They specialise in avocados, cherries, mangoes, and grapes. One of their big-ticket items are mangoes, sold online during Bangladeshi winters which spans the usual duration of the Australian mango season. Stone fruits such as cherries, apricots, nectarines and peaches



are popular on AL1F's Facebook page too, with cherries taking up the limelight. These stone fruits are also delivered during winter months.

One of the aspects customers love about online shops which sell fruits such as AL1F is their trademark freshness.

"We operate on pre-orders, and usually ship on a weekly or fortnightly basis depending on the demand and season.



The fruits are shipped off by air the same day they are bought. The produce arrives in Bangladesh the next day, and is promptly delivered. I believe that building strong relationships with customers is crucial, and selling fresh, preservative-free fruits is vital for establishing their trust.

I aspire to be a merchant with a strong relationship with customers rather than a mere seller," remarked Jamil, the CEO of AL1F.

And the Land of Smiles

Thai fruits are also loved by locals. Dragon fruits are almost synonymous with a Bangladeshi's definition of an exotic fruit, and one of the most popular. Thailand has a lot more to offer besides dragon fruit, be it heavily odorous durians, musky yet sweet longans, or the alien-like rambutan. If you want to get adventurous with your fruit cravings, Fruit BD and Royal Fruitz are your perfect online portals for Thai fruits.

Berries Galore

Most online fruit sellers usually have inclusions of berries in their collection. These tiny powerhouses hold significant amounts of antioxidants, anti-inflammatory ingredients, and fibre. If you are a desert enthusiast, they can make a wonderful addition to your pantry. Blueberries and blackberries, along with the faux members of the family — strawberries, are scrumptious additions to a plethora of sweets and baked goods.

Although exotic fruits can be slightly pricier than local ones, they are the perfect way to incorporate more fruits into your diet. They open up an immense number of options, catering to all types of taste buds while also ensuring freshness. Your body will thank you as well if you add more variety as it will ensure that you get the right mix of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fibre.

Essentials —

<https://www.facebook.com/Al1ftinb>
<https://www.facebook.com/fruitbd1/>
<https://www.facebook.com/royalFruitz>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/thefoodtalk>

By Tasfia Ahmed
Photo Courtesy: AL1F



MANGOES

A love for the ages

The only reason you are not rioting about this sweltering summer heat is because it coincides with the season of the 'King of fruits,' Mangoes. Auspicious, fragrant, juicy, pulpy, having mangoes is nearly therapeutic. Sour or sweet, ripe or unripe, mangoes in any form never fails to hit your taste bud right.

All of us have our most preferred way of eating mangoes. You can slice them up and eat the pulp. Or you can just peel off the skin and start devouring like you never had. Get your arms sticky and your clothes stained. Make a mess. Because for me, that's the right way of doing justice to this unparalleled gift of God.

From morning milkshake to kissing goodnight to the mango ice-cream, mango covers it all. You sigh in bliss. The ease with which mangoes lend themselves to versatile recipes sets your every mood



right. Mango is as refreshing in a drink as it is in a tangy pickle and chutney.

Mangoes has a significant place in the kitchen too. Apart from sauces, chutneys and pickles, mango sabzi and salsa dip with mangoes are some must do.

Beat the heat with mangoes. Add sour mangoes to your dal couple with fluffy white rice, a concoction that can never go wrong. Make yourself a mango lassi, perfect for hot summer days.

Chapainawabganj, one of the leading mangoes producing districts, is in lockdown amid the upsurge in Covid-19 infections in the district. But even when everything is shut and the sun hurts, 'Special Mango Train' is delivering mangoes to Dhaka all the way from Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj.

Usually at midnight when the country is sleeping, the train reaches Dhaka and the station comes alive and buzzing with people. The stations get filled with the aromas and all you see are tonnes of mangoes. So, the mango in your hand is a treasure of memories and emotions.

It indeed is rightfully called the 'King of fruits' and has found a special place in poetry, literature, history, culture and cuisine. From cuisine to ceremonies, mangoes are an inseparable part of the Bengali culture.

By Tahmid Azad Sohan
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad