



A Short Commentary on Tropical Fruits and their Nutritional Content

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DESCRIPTION

Fruits from the tropical and subtropical regions are not the only ones that have distinct health benefits. Despite this, fruit has recently received a bad rap in health conscious communities as "nature's candy," "fructose bomb," or "bad carb." Tropical fruit has received a lot of ridicule because of its higher sugar content. Tropical fruits and subtropical fruits, which grow in the hot, humid regions close to the equator, produce some of the best fruits on the planet. They are a "superfood" because they are packed with vitamins and minerals and have a high water content, making them juicy. These fruiting plants can be woody (like mangoes), herbaceous (like bananas), or vining (like passionfruit), and they typically cannot grow below 50 degrees Fahrenheit (10 degrees Celsius). The most common tropical fruits are well-known to the majority of us:

- Pineapple, which has a flavor that is intensely sweet, acidic, and tart and has fibrous yellow flesh.
- Mango, which has a flat inner seed and sweet, tangy yellow or orange flesh.
- Papaya, which has a delicately sweet flavor and creamy, buttery pink or orange flesh.
- Plantains and bananas, both of which are sweet and starchy when ripe.

However, a variety of other tropical and subtropical fruits can be purchased seasonally at ethnic food stores or local grocery stores. For instance:

- The longan, which is small and round and has a hard outer skin, a single pit, and white, jelly-like, sweet, musky, and fragrant flesh.
- The lychee, which is similar to the longan, has a skin that is reddish, and it tastes sweet, tart, and aromatic, like grape and rose.
- Rambutan, which has a red outer skin covered in soft, prickly spikes and is similar to longan and lychee.
- Loquat, which have flesh that is succulent, slightly acidic, and tangy. They are small, yellow or orange fruits.
- Guava, which has a flavorful flesh that is crunchy and grainy and tastes like a pear and a strawberry combined.

- The durian, a large fruit that has a hard, spikey shell (its name comes from the Malay word duri, which means thorns). Inside the shell are pods of creamy, custardy flesh that smell like onions. In fact, the durian smells so bad that it is often banned from hotels and public transportation in the Southeast Asian countries where it grows! One of the few fruits that contain both a lot of fat and a lot of sugar is the durian!
- Jackfruit, which can reach 120 pounds and is the largest fruit in the world with yellow flesh that is waxy and slightly crunchy and comes in pods. It can be eaten ripe (when it tastes sweet and like banana, pineapple, and mango combined) or unripe (when it tastes meaty and savory).
- Carambola, also known as the "star fruit," which, when cut, resembles a five pointed star and is yellow. It has a floral, sharp, citrusy flavor and crunchy, watery flesh.
- Mangosteen, which has a rind that is a deep purple and contains white flesh that is sweet, juicy, and tangy. It tastes like a peach, strawberry, or pineapple.
- Dragon fruit, whose bright red skin and green scaly spikes give it its name, has mild, sweet white flesh that is stuffed with small black seeds. It lives on a kind of cactus whose flowers only bloom at night.
- Cherimoya, also known as a "custard apple," has a cone shaped, green, scaly skin and custardy, tangy, and sweet flesh.
- Soursop, which has a green, prickly skin and creamy flesh that tastes like strawberry or pineapple.
- Canistel, also known as the "egg fruit," is a marigold-colored fruit that has a dry, sweet flesh that tastes like pumpkin pie and resembles hard-boiled egg yolk in texture.
- The round, hard skinned passion fruit has a fruity, tart pulp and numerous seeds that can be eaten.

The nutritional content of tropical fruits varies from species to species, but most contain a lot of vitamin C, and orange or red fruits also have a lot of carotenoids.

- One cup of pineapple has 83 calories, 2.3 grams of fiber, 131% of the daily value of vitamin C, 75% of the daily value of manganese, and significant amounts of thiamin, copper, folate, and vitamin B.

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- A mango has 135 calories, 3.7 grams of fiber, almost 100 percent of the daily value of vitamin C, a third of the daily value of vitamin A, and adequate amounts of copper, vitamin E, vitamin K, vitamin B, and potassium.
- One cup of papaya cubes has 54 calories, 31% of the daily value of vitamin A and 144% of the daily value of vitamin C, and a significant amount of folate and potassium.