



Thai Fruits





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Climate and geography have provided Thailand with a cornucopia of tropical fruit. Some are only to be found here, while others taste even better than their equivalents abroad thanks to the expertise of Thai fruit growers. There is an abundance of fruit all year round, be they durians or jackfruits, mangosteens or rambutans, guavas or sapodillas, mangoes or bananas, lychees or longans. Their availability and cheapness always appeals to foreign visitors. Certain provinces to the east of Bangkok are known as the major source of quality fruits. There are fruit fairs around May and June in Rayong and Chanthaburi, when fruit production is at its most plentiful.





Ao To Ko Market, Bangkok

Outstanding Thai fruits

Durian: The 'King of Fruits' has a thick, spiny husk. Its light yellow flesh is fragrant but can be quite heady when it is too ripe. Rich in potassium, its taste is sweet and addictive, though if you eat too much you may suffer heartburn and indigestion. The many varieties of durian have different tastes and smells, but the most popular ones are Monthong, Chani and Kan Yao. You should buy durians already un-husked. Press softly on the flesh; it should be neither too hard nor too soft. If not ripe enough, the flesh will be hard and won't be sweet; if too ripe, it will be mushy and its smell overpowering. Durian should be eaten sparingly and never with alcohol, as this provokes a massive burning of calories in your body leading to high blood pressure. According to old Thai wisdom, you should eat mangosteens along with durian to reduce the heartburn.

Durian is used to flavour ice cream and to make sweets such as khao niao thurian, with the addition of coconut cream, sugar and sticky rice. Roasted durian keeps for a long time and is pleasantly crunchy. Preserved durian is more chewy and sweet than fresh durian.

Mango: A fruit with many varieties, eaten ripe, unripe or pickled. Ripe mango is sweet and soft with yellow skin, whereas unripe mango remains green and tastes acidic and crunchy. Ripe mango provides energy and has diuretic and mildly laxative properties. Even though mango flowering varies according to type, Thai farmers are able to provide markets with mangoes throughout the year.

The golden yellow flesh of the ripe mango is particularly succulent eaten with steamed sticky rice topped with coconut cream. This khao niao mamuang is a treat you mustn't miss when visiting Thailand. Make sure that the mango you have with sticky rice is ok-rong mango, as it makes the tastiest combination.



Mango



Banana



Durian

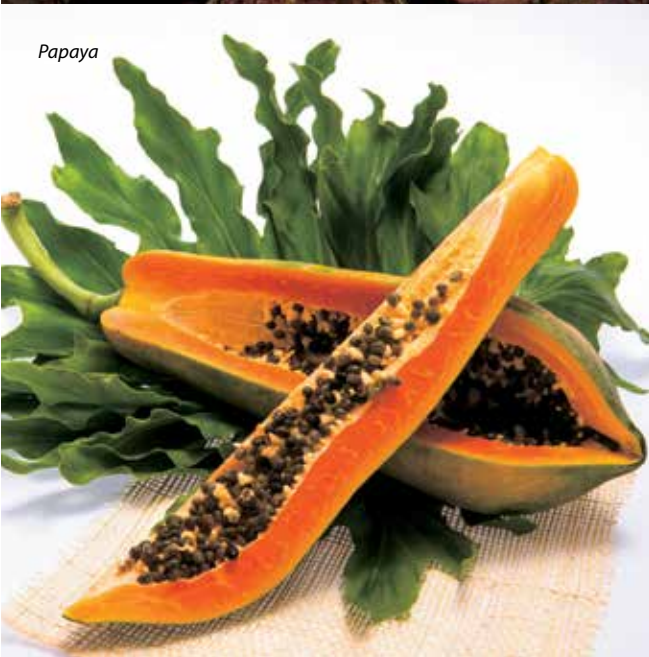


Mangosteen



Banana: Perhaps the most popular of all tropical fruits, bananas are available in Thailand all year round with a dozen of different varieties. For examples, the kluai hom or “fragrant banana” is the one familiar to shoppers in western supermarkets. Smaller, firmer, and sweeter are the dark-yellow kluai-khai, or “egg banana”. Protein-rich kluai namwa are considered nutritious enough to be a baby’s meal. The fruit is among the most versatile and turns up at Thai meals in numerous forms besides eating fresh at the peak of ripeness. When young and green, they may be eaten raw as a vegetable with a spicy sauce; more developed, but still unripe, they are sliced, dried in the sun, and fried for a snack. Bananas are also grilled and soaked with syrup (kluai ping), boiled in coconut milk with salt and sugar (kluai buat chi), boiled in syrup (kluai chuam), smoked in the peel (kluai phao), and turned into golden fritters (kluai khaek). Banana blossoms are used fresh as a garnish for the famous Phat Thai noodle dish, used in Thai salads or yam, or eaten raw as a salad vegetable served with chilli dips called nam phrik.

Papaya



Mangosteen: A round fruit with a purple-black rind and white flesh, some call it the ‘Queen of Fruits’. Its cooling flavour is sweet and tangy, astringent if unripe. In season between April and August, it provides calcium, phosphorus, iron and vitamins. When selecting mangosteens, press the fruit softly; it should be slightly soft. Hard rinds hold hard, granule-like flesh unfit for consumption. To eat a mangosteen, draw a knife along its ‘equator line’, then take out the flesh with your fingers. Eat only the white flesh, not the seeds unless they are very small. In the absence of a knife, you can crush the rind open; it won’t look good, but will still taste fine.

Mangosteens have many medicinal properties and are used in the production of toothpaste, soap, lotions, capsules and fruit juice.

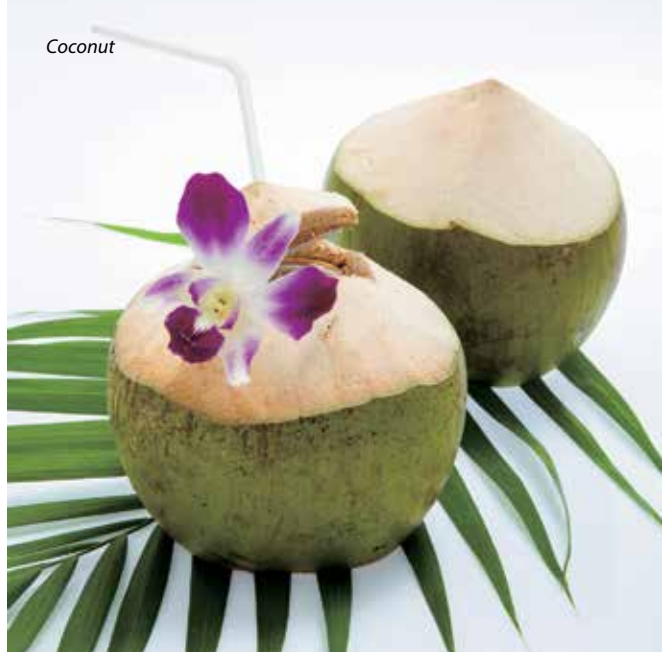
Papaya: A fruit as simple as the banana, found everywhere and widely popular. Ripe papaya is sweet with an alluring fragrance. It is one of the cheapest and most popular fruits on the market. Rich in vitamins and pro-digestive properties, papaya appeals to the health and beauty conscious. Moreover, Somtam - one of the most famous and sophisticated Thai dishes is made from the simple green papaya.

Rambutan



Rambutan: Without the soft spines on the rind, the rambutan would resemble the lychee (or litchee) which is in the same botanical family. The structure internally is quite similar, with a single central inedible seed and edible white flesh wrapped around it. The fruit forms in clusters and some of these can be quite large, numbering in the dozens. The green fruits start to turn yellow and then red, sometimes quite rapidly. Keep in mind that the ripe rambutan is typically red but there are some varieties that finish with a bright yellow color and some that end up with an orange blush. The flavor is pretty sweet and juicy. The rambutan is such a wonderful, delicious and nutritious fruit that it is very popular whether in season (May-July) or preserved in canned syrup.

Coconut



Coconut: Coconut trees are common along Thailand's beaches. Almost all parts of coconut tree and fruit can be utilised. Coconut water is held to be a pure drink, used in religious ceremonies. Sweet and fragrant, it provides a feeling of freshness and sprightliness thanks to its natural glucose and fructose content. Young coconut meat is soft, sweet and gelatinous, rich in potassium and with little fat. Old coconut meat is hard and fatty and is used to make coconut cream, which goes with various dishes and desserts. Almost all tourist beaches have young coconuts on offer to quench your thirst and fight the heat. Sellers will chop off the top part of the shell and provide you with a straw to suck on the sweet and fragrant water. Then you can use a spoon to scrape out the meat for a nutritious snack.

Coconut growers mix sap from the trees' flowers with palm sugar to make soft cakes, and sometimes mix the fresh sugary sap with ice to create a natural energy drink. Coconut trees produce fruit all year round, and coconut is a basic ingredient in many Thai desserts.





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Printed in Thailand by Promotional Material Production Division,
Marketing Services Department,
Tourism Authority of Thailand for free distribution.
www.tourismthailand.org E/MAR 2019
The contents of this publication are subject to change without notice.



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