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SHOBA NARAYAN

MANGOES A GO-GO

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It's that time of year again, when the sweet scent of mangoes fills the air. Every Indian bazaar is stacked with crates and crates them, and hungry Indians everywhere slice and slurp their way to mango ecstasy. This "king of fruits" comes in batches with musical names: Punjabi Chausas; Bangalore's Badami and Bangloora varieties; Hyderabad's Banganapalli and Roomani; Tamilnadu's Neelam and Malgova; and, of course, Alphonso from Pune in Maharashtra.

People's mango preferences depend on mood, moment, and, not the least of all, oral health: Many older people hate the fibrous Neelam because its thick flesh tends to get stuck between their teeth, preferring instead the juicy Chausa or Daseri. Kids love the tart, slightly unripe-tasting Banganapalli, which they slice and dust with a sprinkle of salt and chili powder. The purists swear by Alphonso, while those who like a bit more flesh and some juice go for the Malgova.

During mango season, one weird recipe that Indians gorge on is *poori-aamras*. *Pooris* are fried, puffy breads made from wheat flour; *aamras* literally means mango essence. All the simple recipe involves is beating the mango into pulp, and maybe adding a little milk, cream and cardamom—or sugar, or even some cumin powder to spice things up. But during peak mango season, all it really takes is fresh pulp with a dash of cardamom. Pop the *aamras* into the fridge. Serve it chilled with piping-hot *poori*. And you'll have the Indian equivalent of, say, warm brownies and ice cream.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHOBA NARAYAN

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