



Tamarind 101: Get to Know this Unique Fruit & Ingredient

November 17, 2020. Share: [f](#) [t](#)

Here are some interesting facts about tamarind that will change the way you look at this fascinating ingredient! Chefs may be familiar with tamarind, a tasty ingredient that is used in a variety of sauces and dishes. But how much do you really know about this unique fruit? In this article, we'll explore some fascinating tamarind facts that not every foodie may know.

What is Tamarind – fruit, sauce, paste or candy?

Tamarind is a dark-coloured fruit that grows in a pod. Its naturally sour taste adds to its universal appeal and versatility. You'll find tamarind available as a sauce or paste to add a delicious, sour flavour to dishes – or as a candy that kids (and even adults) love to savour. Tamarind is a common ingredient in many classic Indian, Thai and Western recipes.

How tamarind is harvested and processed

Did you know that besides being made into paste and sauces, tamarind is also a popular snack in parts of Asia? Here's how this pod-like fruit is harvested from tamarind trees, then transformed into tasty treats. Unlike many common fruits like apples or bananas though, harvesting tamarind involves quite a bit more effort.



Harvesting

Tamarind fruits either fall from the tree naturally, or are harvested when they're ripe. Unripe fruits that fall from the tree aren't collected immediately but are left on the ground until they're ripe and ready for collection. Meanwhile, harvested fruits are graded and sorted accordingly.



Preparation

Each fruit's skin is peeled off, revealing the pulp (which contains the seeds). The pulp is then sorted according to its use – as a paste, sauce or candy.



Steps to making tamarind candy, paste and sauce

Tamarind candy
The pulp is dried in the sun for up to 7 days, then boiled in water until softened.

The pulp is then separated from the softened paste/juice.

Afterwards, the pulp is processed into sugar-coated candies, and further dried at 70 to 100°C.

Finally, the sugar-coated candies are packaged and sold to retailers, hotels and F&B establishments for customers to enjoy.

Tamarind paste

- The pulp is soaked in water for about 20 minutes, until soft.
- The soft pulp is then mashed, and the water drained.
- The mixture is pressed through a sieve.
- The strained pieces of fruit are stirred into the concentrate, creating the thick and flavourful tamarind paste.

Tamarind sauce

- The pulp is broken up, then soaked for 20 minutes in hot water.
- The mixture is then drained into a separate container.
- Ingredients such as brown sugar, ginger powder, garam masala and cumin are added.
- The mixture is simmered until it thickens slightly into a tasty tamarind sauce.



12 Interesting facts about tamarind

1. Did you know: The word "tamarind" comes from an Arabic term "Tamar Hindi", which means "Indian date".
2. India is the largest producer of tamarind and supplies approximately 300,000 tonnes of the ingredient annually. They are followed by Thailand and Mexico respectively.
3. Tamarind is used in many of Singapore's most popular dishes, including Assam-flavoured fish head curries, laksas, as well as Western and fusion dishes, dips, desserts, drinks, and others.
4. While there are both sweet and sour varieties of tamarind, sour tamarind is by far the more popular fruit – comprising 95% of the world's total production.
5. A tamarind tree has a lifespan of 10 to 15 years and produces between 50 to 100kg of fruit throughout its life.
6. It's been said that in some parts of Ghana, tribes can use tamarind pulp as a pickling agent to make poisonous yams safe to eat.
7. Meanwhile in Southeast Asia, tamarind has been used as a traditional remedy for fever. How? By applying it to the forehead of a person who has the ailment.
8. The lumber from tamarind trees is especially suitable for making furniture and specialty wood items.
9. While tamarind paste and sauces are well-known in Singapore, the fruit is also made into lollipops and candies which are well-loved for their innovative mix of sweet, sour, and spicy flavors.
10. In some Asian cities, natives use tamarind pulp to polish brass lamps and statues, as well as copper and bronze items.
11. Some cultures use a thick tamarind paste as a substitute for a cast to heal broken bones.
12. Tamarind extract is also used in some traditions as eye drops to lubricate dry eyes.

Disclaimer: The content on this page is merely suggestive and based on chef experiences. Nothing on this page is providing any assurance regarding an increase in sales, demands, profits or any other aspect whatsoever. Results arising from implementing the suggestions may vary and the website owner shall not be held liable.