

CHAPTER 6

Fruit Culinary Culture

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In Malaysia, fruits are cultivated throughout the year and some are based on the season. Fruits like banana, papaya, guava, starfruit, jackfruit, mangoes, ciku (sapodilla) and melons are available all year round. Whereas, some fruits like durian, rambutan, mangosteen, cempedak, and duku are in season from May to July. Surprisingly, in recent years some of these fruits are available all year round. Fruits can be easily found at fruit stalls by the road-side, night markets, wet markets, supermarkets and hypermarkets as well as some provision shops throughout the country.

Fruits have unique physical features such as colours, textures, taste, and composition. Their textures vary from soft to hard. Some fruits are covered with a hard shell like coconut, mangosteen and durian, while others have a soft skin that needs to be peeled before eating, such as papaya, mango and melons. Additionally, there are fruits that can be eaten directly with the skin such as starfruit, apple, and strawberry. The colours of the different fruits not only provide an excellent source of different vitamins, minerals, and natural dyes, but also make a wonderful presentation on the plate.

Fruits are consumed in many different ways. It can be eaten fresh, juice, cooked with other ingredients, dried, preserved, and made into varieties of sweets. Banana is the most popular fruit in this country. It can be consumed in many ways. Fried banana or banana fritters is one of the favourite snacks and it is normally served for breakfast as well as afternoon tea. It is very cheap and delicious and served differently from one state to another. For example, in Muar, Johor banana fritters is served with a hot and spicy soy sauce dip. Besides that it also can be served with granulated sugar. Banana can be prepared in many other ways such as pancake, cake, ice-cream, chips and cooked as main dishes. Green banana can also be cooked with meat, chicken, and seafood and coconut as a main dish to be served with plain white rice.

Besides being eaten fresh or used in cooking, fruits can be preserved in many ways. Most fruits can be made into delicious preserves, spread on a piece of toast. With modern technology, the shelf lives of fruits have been extended. For example, fruits are dried using different methods such as natural drying, oven drying and freeze-drying. More fruits have been processed into paste and puree and applied into the food and beverage industry. The processing and advance techniques have helped to boost the cultivation of various local fruits. More research and development have to be conducted in order to create more Malaysian fruit products.

Fruits contain many nutrients and countless health benefits. Research suggests that natural pigments such as blue, purple and reddish colours of certain fruits may be able to alleviate diabetes, heart disease, cancers and also help to prevent obesity. Today, there are some fruit juices/concentrations formulated with high and rich pigmented fruits aimed to provide the phytonutrients (chemical components of plants that alter the function of the body) and antioxidants. Due to their numerous nutritional values, fruits could be one of the greatest foundations for food product formulation i.e. nutraceuticals of the future.

Fruits are fashionable products since they possess fantastic colours, fragrances, and flavours. Due to these characteristics the contribution of fruits in food product development in the country is undeniable. From the culinary spectrum, fruits are widely used and utilized in making dessert (cakes, tarts, ice-creams), appetizers (salad, soup) and main dishes (masak lemak nenas ikan masin (salted fish with pineapple cooked in coconut milk), kerabu mangga (mango salad)) as well as an important tool in food garnishing and decorating.