



## A Question of Taste

By Hilary Keating Callegahan

# Mango presents challenge

In a characteristically practical moment, James Beard suggested that mangoes be eaten in the bathtub or at least in private. Mangoes, when eaten out of hand, present a challenge to the decorous eater.

A relative of poison ivy, this fruit has oils in its peel which may cause a rash when it comes in contact with the skin of sensitive individuals. Consequently, the mango should be peeled before being eaten, a procedure which leaves one holding a soft fruit dripping juice which will stain clothing — hence the bathtub solution.

Actually, a compromise solution might be to cube the fruit and eat it with a spoon, either alone or in combination with other fruits.

In any case, it is well worth the trouble involved to enjoy this sweet, mellow fruit. It is in peak supply during the months of June and July, so there is little time left to enjoy this year's harvest.

**THE DELICIOUS** taste of the mango has been described as a cross between that of a peach and a pineapple. The texture of the ripe fruit (it should yield lightly to gentle pressure) is like that of a juicy peach and the color of the flesh is bright yellow.

If you opt for a bowl rather than the bathtub approach, you might wish to combine the mango with other compatible summer fruits and use this as the occasion of a lovely summer brunch.

The delicate, sweet tastes of the summer fruits would be a perfect foil for a spicy egg dish. An omelet topped with a Mexican hot sauce would make the refreshing effect of these fruits doubly welcome.

You will probably want to make the hot sauce a day ahead to allow it several hours to simmer, intensifying the spices and to free yourself for the last-minute work involved in dicing fruits and cooking omelets.

Allow two to three eggs per omelet, cooking one omelet at a time rather than attempting a five- or six-egg omelet.

Cook the omelet in a heavy-bottomed pan, about eight inches across, with gently sloping sides. Preheat the pan over medium heat. When hot, melt about a tablespoon full of butter, tilting the pan to coat the bottom and sides. Beat the eggs briskly and pour into the prepared pan.

For the first few seconds, stir the mixture quickly with a fork, scraping the bottom of the pan. Continue cooking without stirring but occasionally lift the edge of the omelet with a spatula and allow the uncooked egg to slide under the cooked portion. Cook until the underside is slightly golden and the top still moist. Slide onto a warm plate.

**IF YOU ARE** making omelets for more than two persons at a time, it would be ideal if a friend could bring a suitable pan and be cooking omelets along with you, unless you plan to eat in shifts.

Omelets don't hold well. If either of you is less than adept at omelet making, simply change the menu to read "scrambled eggs with Mexican hot sauce" and no harm will be done.

If, in fact, you have a particularly congenial group, this could be a real participatory meal. Another guest could be asked to assemble the fruit salad. Just be sure to supply a substantial, no-nonsense apron. Another guest could put the finishing touches on the omelets as they slide out of their pans. Someone else could pour hot coffee and make boiling hot pots of fresh tea.

**IDEALLY**, all of this should flow like a beautifully choreographed Agnes de Mille ballet. In practice, it will more closely resemble a scene from a Woody Allen movie.

Even this chaos, however, is more convivial and practical than a hurried host or hostess attempting to perform all of these last-minute functions single-handedly.

Since so much associated with a brunch is, of necessity, last minute, as much advance preparation as possible should be made.

With this in mind, the rolls I am recommending to accompany this meal can be mixed and shaped the evening before and allowed to rise overnight in the refrigerator. These cream rolls have an unusually light, velvety texture and would be delicious served with the eggs or later with sweet butter and homemade jams as guests lean back and savor cups of hot coffee and tea, resting from their labors.

### WESTERN OMELETS

- 6 two- or three-egg omelets
- 3 tsp. corn oil
- 2 medium onions, sliced
- 2 stalks celery, thinly sliced
- 1 medium green pepper, diced
- 6 large wheat tortillas

Mexican Hot Sauce (recipe follows)

Heat the corn oil in a large skillet. Sauté the onions and celery about five minutes. Add the green pepper and continue cooking until crisp-tender. Divide the vegetables evenly among the six omelets. Fold the omelets closed over the vegetables. Lay a tortilla over each omelet, tucking the edges of each tortilla to enclose it loosely. Spoon the warm hot sauce over the tortillas. Top each with two tablespoons yogurt or sour cream. Serve immediately. Makes six servings.

### MEXICAN HOT SAUCE

- 1 cup chopped onion
- 2 crushed cloves garlic
- 3 cups chopped tomatoes
- 1 cup water
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1/4 tsp. ground coriander
- 2 tsp. dry red wine
- 1/4-1/2 tsp. cayenne
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- 1/4 tsp. chili powder
- 2 tbsp. tomato paste
- 2 tsp. olive oil

Sauté onions and garlic in olive oil with 1/4 tsp. salt until onion is clear. Add spices. Transfer to saucepan and add tomatoes, water, tomato paste and wine. Add remaining salt. Cover and simmer 1/2 hour, or longer. Several hours is best.

Hot spices tend to get hotter as they cook. It is recommended that you add the cayenne a little at a time, so the degree of hotness is to your tolerance.

This sauce can be left in chunky form or you can puree all or part of it.

### MANGO COMPOTE

- 2 large, chilled mangoes (supposedly, unchilled mangoes have a taste akin to turpentine. Having read that, I was afraid to try them any way but chilled so I can't verify the accuracy of the allegation.)
- 4 oranges peeled and sliced crosswise
- 1 pint fresh strawberries, sliced
- 1 cup chilled orange juice

Peel and dice the mangoes. Stir together gently with the oranges and strawberries. Pour the orange juice over the fruit. Serve immediately. Makes six servings.

### CREAM ROLLS

- 1/4 tsp. yeast
- 3 tsp. warm water
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 large egg, slightly beaten
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 cups unbleached flour

Dissolve yeast in water; add salt. Stir together egg and cream; combine with yeast mixture. Add one cup flour. Beat 100 strokes. Add one more cup flour and mix.

On a board, knead lightly for 30 seconds. Add the minimum amount of flour to prevent sticking. Shape into balls 2 inches in diameter. Place in buttered, round cake pans. Let rise until doubled, 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Brush with cream or milk. Bake 15 to 20 minutes in a preheated 400-degree oven.

## Sipping summery coolers

One of the best and all-time favorite thirst quenchers is fruit lemonade. Slightly tart and served in a frosty pitcher, lemonade is cooling, refreshing and light.

Part of growing up in the south was participating in that old tradition of summertime family reunions, of long outdoor tables grinning with goodies from all the best cooks in the family. And at the end of the table, a large wooden barrel of lemonade.

My father was the family lemonade maker. Reunions were always on Sundays, so around 4 p.m. the day before, my dad would scrub down the barrel, put a 20-pound block of ice in the bottom and begin rolling and squeezing the lemons. He would add lemon juice, water, sugar and some lemon peel, then taste and add some more of one or the other, or all of the ingredients. He would taste again and continue adding ingredients until there was just the right amount of lemonade in the barrel and just the right flavor.

When he was satisfied, he would always say the same thing, "Okay, put the top on it. That will be just right by dinnertime tomorrow." Dinnertime meant the noon meal. The lemonade would sit overnight with a cloth cover, then the wooden top weighted down. He was always right, it would be perfect the next day.



## Byrd's Kitchen

by Vivian Byrd

He never wrote down his recipe or counted lemons or pounds of sugar or gallons of water. He just added whatever it seemed to need until it "tasted right." The method worked for him.

However, for those of us who wish to be a little more precise, below is a recipe for lemonade, with a couple of variations.

### LEMONADE

For each serving:

- 1 cup of water
- 1 1/2 tsp. lemon juice
- 3 to 4 tsp. sugar

It is not necessary to boil the sugar and water but the flavor of the lemonade is improved if you do. Boil the sugar and water for two minutes. Chill the syrup and add the lemon juice. Stir and serve over ice cubes.

### RASPBERRY COOLER

- 7 cups fresh lemonade, or
- 2 1/2 cups lemon concentrate plus
- 6 cans water (6 cans each) 110-ounce package frozen raspberries, thawed

Combine and mix well in the blender. Pour over ice cubes in tall glasses.

### PINEAPPLE LEMONADE

- 2 cups sugar

- 2 cups water
- 1 1/4 cups lemon juice
- 2 cups grated fresh pineapple
- 3 cups water
- Ice cubes
- Fresh mint

Combine sugar and 2 cups water and boil 7 minutes. Cool. Mix with lemon juice and fresh pineapple and chill well. Add 3 cups water. Serve over ice cubes with mint garnish.

### PURPLE PEOPLE EATER

- 1 cup sugar
- 2 cups water
- 2 cups grape juice
- 2 cups orange juice
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- ice cubes

Cook sugar and water together 7 minutes. Cool. Combine with fruit juices. Chill well. Serve over ice cubes in tall glasses.

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