

## INVITING IDEAS

## Gather fruits, veggies for 'exotic evening'

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Considered exotic in the 1960s — Kiwi fruit, with its odd fuzzy-brown skin and bright green flesh, hit the food trend circuit with a bang! Today, the ubiquitous kiwi sits among kiwano, feijoa, tomatillos, plantains, ugli fruit, pitaya, persimmons, asopote, cherimoyas, passion fruit and carambolas (star fruit).

What do these strange fruits and vegetables taste like? And what should you do with them? Chefs and gourmet cooks enjoy the challenge, but most people pass them by in the grocery store, intimidated by their appearance and questionable pronunciations.

Make discovering these exotic fruits and vegetables a summertime event. Plan a scavenger hunt for "Some Exotic Evening" at home with friends and family.

Mail each person or couple, a picture of a specific exotic fruit or vegetable.

**■ Make discovering exotic fruits and vegetables a summertime event. Plan a scavenger hunt for "Some Exotic Evening" at home with friends and family.**

Your local library, produce market, and bigger grocery stores are great sources. Or just write the name of the fruit or vegetable on a card.

Tell each person to bring the fruit or vegetable to the party, along with some information about it. Prepare some unusual dishes using exotic fruits and vegetables for your guests. Be sure to label them so guests know what they are eating.

Collect all the designated fruits and vegetables and prepare table-side salads. Top the fruit salad with custard style low-fat lemon yogurt and serve as a dessert.

Encourage guests to share information about their "found" fruits and vegetables. Much of the evening's conversation will be filled with historical

background, descriptions, and suggestions for using these newly discovered unusual foods.

For the menu consider pan-fried plantains, an avocado, feijoa and ugli fruit salad, grilled shrimp with passion fruit sauce on a bed of herbed rice, and an exotic fruit salad with lemon yogurt dressing.

Here's a brief introduction to some of these intriguing edibles.

■ **Plantains** — (Adam's Fig) — look like large green bananas and can be used in any stago (ripe or not), green, yellow or black, but are never eaten raw. When cooked, plantains taste like winter squash, and are often used like a potato. Ripe plantains are delicious peeled and halved lengthwise, then pan-fried until golden brown in very hot vegetable oil and drained well before serving. Green plantains, peeled, cut into thin wheels, then deep fried, make tasty chips. Plantains are commonly used in Latin American and Caribbean cuisine.

■ **Passion Fruit** — also called Grana-dilla — is a Brazilian native, but is currently grown in New Zealand, California, Hawaii and Australia. This egg-shaped fruit with a brittle outer skin, which is wrinkled when ripe, is usually purple. Other varieties include those that are orange or yellow. The fruit is aromatic and used for flavoring. The seeds are edible, but often removed when used as a puree in mousse, drinks or sorbets.

■ **Feijoas** — (Pineapple Guava) indigenous to South America, is widely grown in New Zealand, California, and other warm temperate zones. This oval shaped, thin green skinned fruit has a tangy pineapple flavor with a hint of spearmint. Some say it tastes like a combination of pineapple, pear and banana. Its texture is similar to a juicy pear, and is delicious served as a fresh fruit, in salads, sorbets, and preserves.

■ **Ugli Fruit** — Is a cross between a grapefruit, orange and tangerine. Citrus in appearance with a rather bumpy thick skin, Ugli Fruit is usually the size of a grapefruit, and grown in Jamaica. It's usually eaten like an orange, is sweeter than grapefruit, and wonderful in sorbets, fruit salads, and made into marmalade.

## GRILLED SHRIMP WITH PASSION FRUIT SAUCE

2 passion fruits, halved, discard skin  
1 cup sugar  
1 cup water  
1 stick butter, melted  
4½ pounds large shrimp, peeled, cleaned and deveined

Prepare an outside grill — spray grill with no-stick cooking spray. Light your fire.

Combine passion fruit, sugar and water



TAMARA GRAY/ITALY ARTIST

**Exotic: Gather exotic fruits and vegetables for a special evening.**

In a saucepan. Over medium heat, bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce heat and continue to simmer until the passion fruit pulp is soft (approximately 12-15 minutes).

Press the mixture through a sieve and discard the remaining pulp. Add the melted butter and mix thoroughly.

Brush the shrimp generously with the passion fruit sauce and grill shrimp — 3 to 4 minutes on each side. Do not over cook, basting as necessary. Serve the shrimp on a bed of herbed rice. Serves 8-10.

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