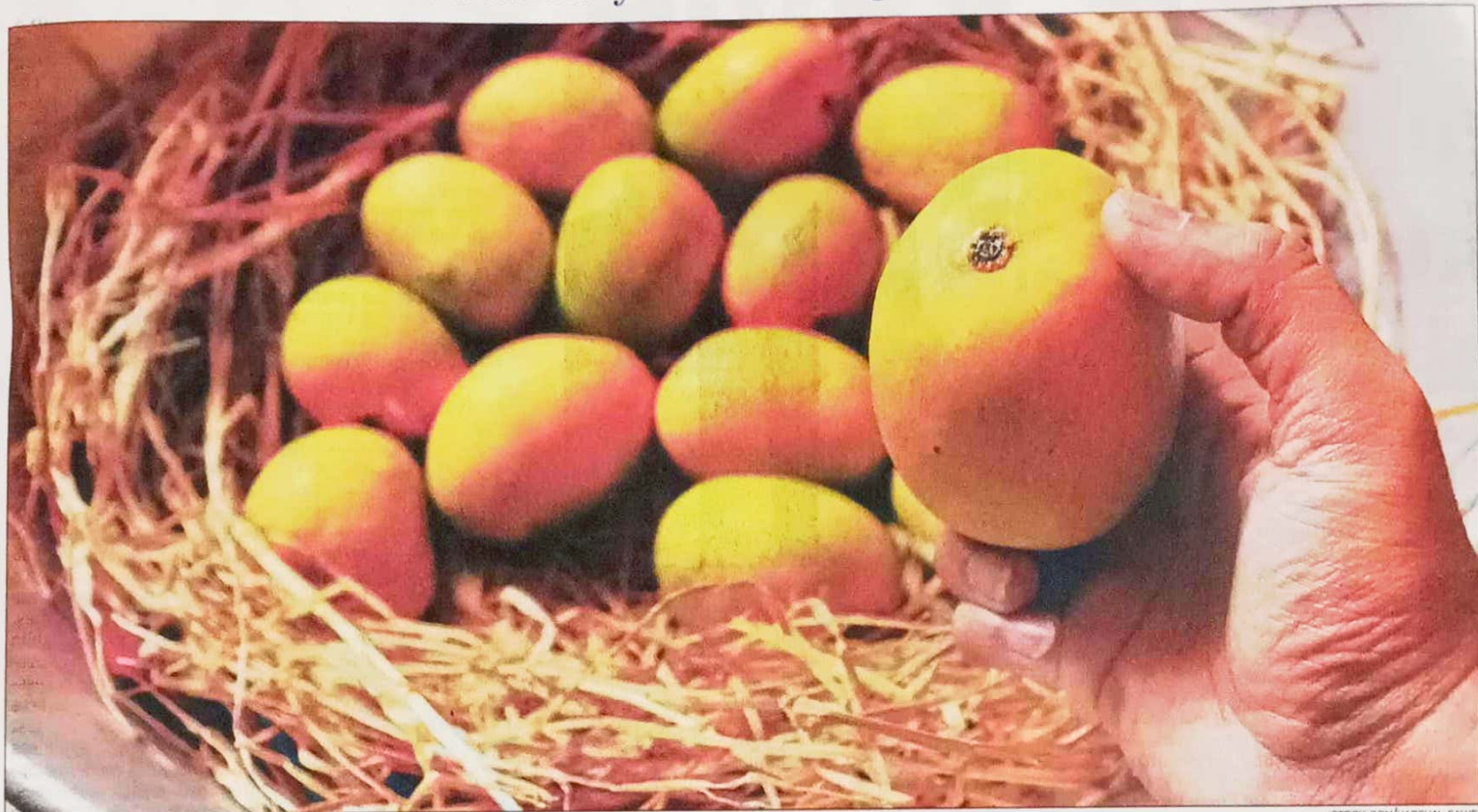


A for Mango

Rich in Vitamin C with its fair share of potassium and fibre, **Caroline Hopkins Legaspi** lists the many virtues of the golden fruit



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In India, the mango is known as the “king of fruits”. The fruit, and its tree and leaves, are symbols of prosperity, good luck and love.

There’s a lot to love nutritionally, too. Mangoes are rich in Vitamin C and potassium. And they freeze well, making them a year-round smoothie staple.

Here’s what to know about their health attributes.

Sugar high

They’re high in sugar — but it’s not like eating a cookie. One-half of a peeled mango contains about 23 grams of sugar, which is more than twice what you get in a typical store-bought chocolate chip cookie.

But the natural sugar in mangoes doesn’t spike your blood glucose the way the added sugar in cookies does, said Jessica Higgins, a dietitian in the Life-

style Medicine programme at NYC Health + Hospitals Woodhull in the US. That’s because your body has to break down the beneficial fibre in a mango to access the fruit’s sugar. This takes time, which gives your body a chance to gradually process the glucose. In a cookie, she said, the refined sugar is immediately available, which is why it can cause a spike.

One-half of a mango, has around 10 per cent of your daily fibre needs, said Stephanie Rogus, an assistant professor and extension nutrition specialist at Texas A&M University, US. Mangoes aren’t quite as high in fibre as fruits like apples or pears — in part because we typically don’t eat the fibrous mango skin — but they still cross the “good source of fibre” threshold, Rogus said.

Beyond slowing down your digestion, the fibre in mangoes

can help keep your blood cholesterol in check and support the good bacteria in your gut, said Maya Vadiveloo, a dietitian and associate professor of nutrition at the University of Rhode Island, US.

Vitamin boost

The mango’s Vitamin C level is up there with citrus fruits.

Half a mango contains 61 milligrams of Vitamin C — similar to what you’d get from one half of a navel orange or a grapefruit.

Beyond Vitamin C’s well-known immune-boosting properties, it can also help your body absorb iron from plant-based foods, Vadiveloo said.

The iron in foods like leafy greens and beans isn’t as easily accessible as the iron you get from eating animal products, she said. Pairing these foods with Vitamin C-rich foods like

mango can help convert the iron into a more usable form.

Potassium power

The potassium in mangoes could help lower your blood pressure. Bananas may be the most famous potassium-rich tropical fruit, but mangoes aren’t that far behind. Half a mango contains 282 milligrams; a medium banana has 422.

Potassium can counteract the heart disease risk that comes with consuming too much sodium. Excess sodium can cause your body to retain fluid, which can raise your blood pressure. Over time, high blood pressure can increase your risk for heart attacks and strokes. Potassium helps balance fluid levels.

Eat it right

What’s the best way to eat mango? Try it frozen. If a ripe mango is nowhere to be found

— which is unlikely in India — Vadiveloo recommended buying frozen chunks. As long as the frozen kind doesn’t contain added sugar, it’s just as nutritious as fresh mango, she said.

Don’t, however, overdo it on the dried mango. Half a cup of dried mango contains 255 calories and 53 grams of sugar — far more than the 50 calories and 11 grams of sugar you’d get from the same amount of fresh fruit.

“When we take all the water out, we’re concentrating the sugars and the calorie-containing macronutrients,” Higgins said. “That’s a pretty big difference.”

To judge ripeness, use your thumb. Higgins recommends using what she calls the “press method” to select a perfectly ripe mango. When you gently press your thumb into the fruit, you should feel just a slight give.

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