

So Much Mango!

Brenda Davis, RD

'Tis the season for mangoes! Often referred to as the "king of fruits", mangoes are among the most popular fruits in the world. Almost half the mangoes produced globally hail from India, and the varieties in that part of the world far exceed what we find in local supermarkets. Beyond its delectable taste, the mango holds significant cultural importance and offers numerous nutritional benefits, making it a staple in many diets and traditions. If you are mad for mangoes, you will enjoy learning more about them in this article. Check out recipes for 3 of my favorite mango recipes at the end of this piece – enjoy!



Types of Mangoes

Mangoes are tropical stone fruits that have diversified into nearly 300 varieties, with about 30 being commonly consumed globally. Mangoes come in various shapes and sizes, each with unique flavors and culinary uses. The six most popular varieties are:

1. **Tommy Atkins:** This is the most common mango variety. It is grown mainly in the United States and South America and is known for its long shelf life and firm texture. Its flavor is mildly sweet, and its texture is firm and fibrous.
2. **Ataulfo (Honey or Champagne):** Small and golden-yellow, Ataulfo mangoes are smooth, creamy, and very sweet. They have a buttery texture and are not very fibrous. Grown primarily in Mexico, they are widely available and extremely popular.
3. **Kent:** Another popular variety from Florida, Kent mangoes are large, with a greenish-yellow skin that often has a red blush. They are juicy, with a sweet and slightly tangy flavor, and are less fibrous than Tommy Atkins mangoes.
4. **Alphonso (Hapus):** Known as the "King of Mangoes," Alphonso is celebrated for its rich, creamy texture and sweet flavor with a slight tartness. It is predominantly grown in the western Indian state of Maharashtra.
5. **Haden:** Originating from Florida, Haden mangoes are known for their vibrant red and yellow skin and rich, aromatic taste. They are a great all-purpose mango and keep their shape well in salads and salsas.
6. **Keitt:** This variety is available late in the season and is also grown in Florida. It is known for its large size and green skin, even when ripe. Keitt mangoes are sweet, juicy, and often used in Asian dishes such as chutneys.



Selecting a Perfect Mango

When selecting mangoes, smell them first. Mangoes should be fragrant with a sweet smell. They should not smell bitter. Mangoes will ripen after you purchase them, but if you need a ripe mango, it will have some give but not be soft or mushy. The skin should be firm and not wrinkled.



Mango Nutrition

Mangoes are not only delicious, but they are packed with nutrients that contribute to overall health and well-being.

One cup of fresh mango provides 99 calories and about one and a half grams of protein. It has less than 0.6 grams of fat and almost 3 grams of fiber. Key nutrients in mangos providing at least 10% of the Daily Value (DV) are vitamins A, B6, C, and E, folate, and copper. A cup of fresh mango supplies about 67% of the DV for vitamin C.

Mango is also rich in protective phytochemicals such as mangiferin, catechins, anthocyanins, gallic acid, kaempferol, and rhamnetin. Although mangiferin is not a widely recognized phytochemical, it is sometimes called a “super antioxidant” as it is particularly powerful. Some studies suggest that it may counter the free radical damage linked to cancer and other chronic diseases. Other protective compounds found in mangoes are lutein and zeaxanthin. These are phytonutrients that are concentrated in the retina of the eye. Inside the retina, they act as a natural sunblock protecting the eyes from harmful blue light.

Several compounds in mango boost digestive health. Mango contains digestive enzymes such as amylases, which break down complex carbohydrates into simpler sugars. These enzymes are more concentrated in ripe mango. Additionally, their high fiber content aids in digestion and prevents constipation.

Cultural Uses of Mango

Mango holds a special place in many cultural and culinary traditions. For example:

1. **India:** Mango is the national fruit of India. It is a symbol of love and is used in various cultural rituals and festivals. The fruit is often offered to gods and goddesses in religious ceremonies. Mango leaves are used to decorate entrances during festivals and weddings, symbolizing prosperity and happiness. The mango is also the national fruit of India.
2. **Thailand:** Mangoes are integral to Thai cuisine, with mango sticky rice (Khao Niew Mamuang) being a famous dessert. This dish combines ripe mango slices with sweetened sticky rice and coconut milk, creating a delightful balance of flavors.
3. **Mexico:** In Mexico, mango is enjoyed fresh, often with chili powder and lime juice. It is also used in salsas, juices, and many traditional dishes.
4. **Philippines:** The Philippines is known for its sweet Carabao mango, which is the country's national fruit. Mango is eaten fresh, dried, or processed into juices, jams, and other products.

5. **Africa:** In many African countries, mango is a staple fruit, enjoyed fresh or in beverages. It is also used in savory dishes, combined with spices to create rich, flavorful meals.

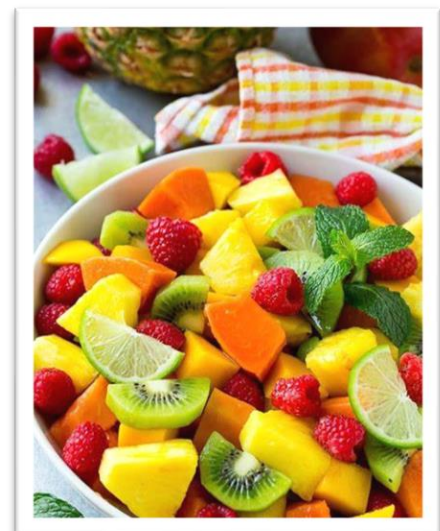
Adding Mango to Your Menu

Mango can be enjoyed at breakfast, lunch, or dinner, or as a snack. One fun way of eating mango as a snack is to cut the mango (with skin on), and slice it in half (as well as you can while eliminating the pit. Cut the flesh on each of the sides into a grid-like pattern without cutting through the skin. Then you can scoop the cut flesh out of the skin easily or just eat it as is.



Here are some favorite ways to enjoy mango:

- Add to your breakfast bowl.
- Add to smoothies.
- Freeze to make “ice cream” (as you would make frozen banana ice cream).
Use alone or with frozen bananas.
- Toss on a green salad.
- Add to a full meal salad such as a quinoa salad or black bean corn salad,
- Add it to homemade salad dressing.
- Add to non-dairy yogurt.
- Grill for dessert or to add to a veggie burger.
- Chop it into a fruit salad.
- Serve it as part of a fruit tray.
- Make it into a pie.



RECIPES: Fiesta Mango Black Bean Salad

This salad is bright, beautiful, and bursting with flavor. If you like, top with avocado cubes just before serving.

2 small or 1 large mango, chopped
1 ½ cups frozen organic corn kernels
1 19 oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed
1 orange pepper, chopped or sliced into ¾ inch pieces
½ cup cilantro or parsley, chopped
½ cup mint, chopped (optional)
2 cups cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
3 green onions

Directions

1. Place mango, corn kernels, black beans, orange peppers, cilantro or parsley, mint, tomatoes, and green onions in a pretty bowl.
2. Pour the mango lime dressing over the salad and toss gently to distribute the dressing evenly.
3. Refrigerate until serving.



Mango Lime Dressing

This is a sweet and tangy dressing. The cashews are a nice touch but can be omitted if you prefer. The cashews can be soaked for a couple of hours before blending, although if you have a high-speed blender, you can just rinse them.

1/3 cup raw cashews, soaked and drained or rinsed (optional)

1/3 cup water

¼ cup fresh lime juice (juice from about 3 limes)

1 tablespoon white balsamic vinegar

1 medium-sized mango

¼ teaspoon salt

1 small hot pepper, seeded and minced (optional)

1. Place all ingredients in a blender and process until smooth and creamy.



Miracle Mango Pie

The recipe is adapted from Becoming Raw (Brenda Davis and Vesanto Melina). It is a bit of a miracle that just 2 simple ingredients make a pie filling with such a delightful consistency (firm enough to slice!). If you like, you can use this filling to make a pudding or parfait.

Coconut Crust

1½ cups dried unsweetened coconut

1½ cups walnuts or pecans

¼ teaspoon salt

2/3 cup pitted Medjool or regular dates (steam to soften, if hard), tightly packed

Zest and juice of one lime

Mango Filling

3 cups fresh mango (about 2 large or 3 medium mangos), coarsely chopped

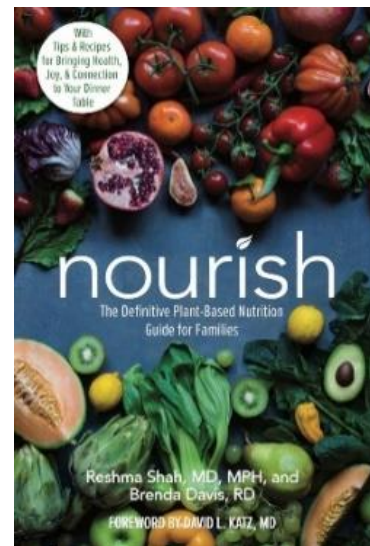
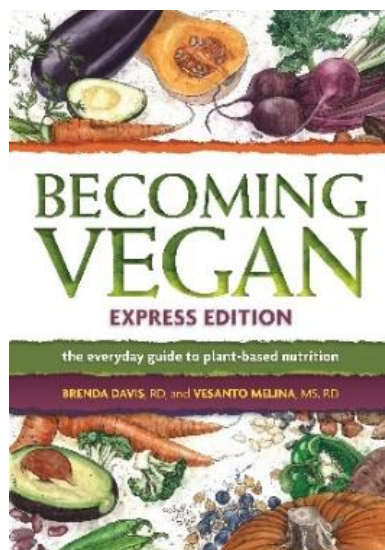
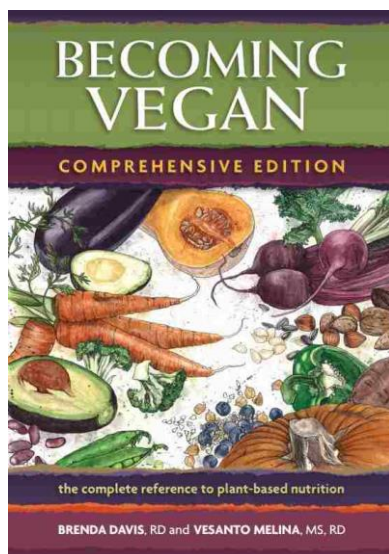
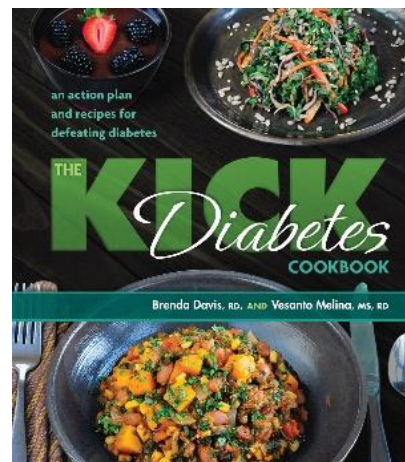
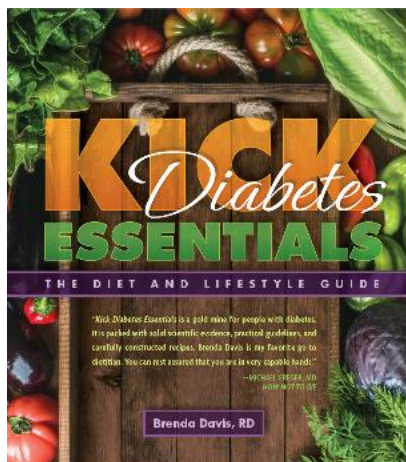
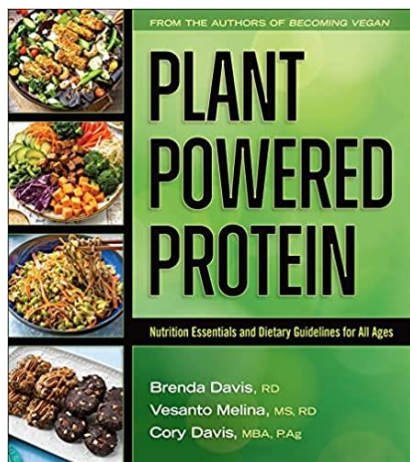
1 cup dried mango, packed and soaked 10 minutes - drain well (or steam mango)

Slice strawberries or other fruit, flower petals, coconut, and/or fresh mint for garnish.

1. Prepare the crust.
 - a. Place the coconut, walnuts, and salt in a food processor fitted with the S-blade and process until coarsely ground.
 - b. Add the dates and process until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
 - c. Add the lime zest and lime juice and pulse until well combined.
 - d. Scoop the mixture into a 9-inch pie shell. With your palm and fingers, distribute the crumbs evenly along the bottom and up the sides of the pan. After the crumbs are evenly distributed, press the crust down on the bottom of the pan. Then press the crust against the pan's sides, shaping it so that the edges are flush with the rim.

- e. Place the crust in the refrigerator or freezer while preparing the filling.
- 2. Prepare the filling.
 - a. Place the fresh and dried mango in a blender and process on high speed until very smooth.
- 3. Assemble the pie.
 - a. Remove the crust from the refrigerator or freezer and spread the mango filling evenly in the pie shell.
 - b. Arrange sliced fruit (strawberries work especially well) around the edge of the pie. Add mint leaves or other decorations, as desired. Chill for at least 2-3 hours before serving.
 - c. This pie keeps covered in the refrigerator for about 3 days, but chances are it will disappear more quickly!





This article was originally written for So Many Cooks in the Kitchen. Brenda Davis, RD is a plant-based pioneer and author/co-author of 13 books on plantbased diets. She is co-Author of Nourish: the definitive plant-based nutrition guide for families, Becoming Vegan: Comprehensive and Express Editions and Kick Diabetes Essentials. www.brendadavisrd.com