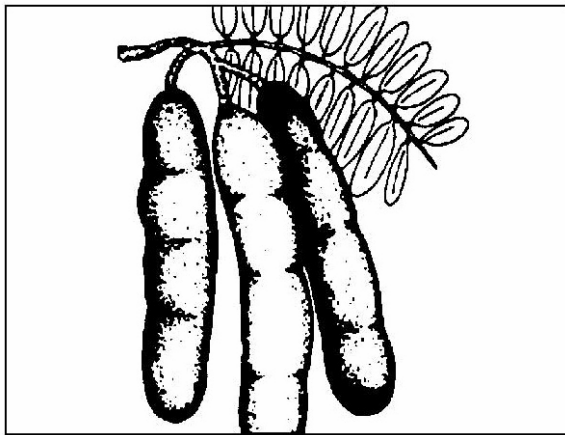


## South Florida Tropicals: Tamarind<sup>1</sup>

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### Background

The tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), also called the tamarindo, is indigenous to tropical Africa. Marco Polo first introduced the fruit to Europe in 1298, and much later Spanish and Portuguese explorers brought the tamarind to the

New World. A handsome, short-trunked tree with a spreading frame of branches, the tamarind tree has a great dome-shaped crown of airy, graceful leaves. The tamarind tree is long-lived, sometimes still productive after 200 years. This tropical tree is drought-resistant and flourishes in sandy, rocky, and poor-quality soils. The tree's strong, supple branches are little affected by high winds. Clusters of pale yellow veined blossoms turn into long, flat rust-colored pods that are usually slightly curved. The pods are usually 3 to 8 inches in length, and may contain as many as 12 seeds. Mature trees are capable of producing up to 350 pounds of fruit a year.

### Availability

Tamarinds are available fresh from April to July. And many Asian markets carry tamarind paste and frozen concentrate year round.

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## Selection

During the ripening process, tamarind fruit becomes dehydrated and brittle. It is easily cracked open to expose dark brown, pasty pulp that encloses hard, shiny brown seeds. The pulp has a pleasing flavor, tasting strongly of apricots, dates, and lemons, and is high in both acid and sugar.

## Storage

Tamarind pods can be stored at room temperature for several weeks, if tightly packaged. Tamarind pulp can be frozen for up to a year, or refrigerated for approximately 6 months.

## Uses

Tamarinds may be eaten either at the green immature stage or when the shell pod has become brittle and the interior pulp has turned brown. In the American tropics, tamarind pulp is commonly used with sugar and water to prepare a cool, refreshing beverage. In Asia, grated green tamarinds are often mixed with hot peppers and salt and eaten as a salad. When separated from the shell and seeds, the mature, brown sticky pulp can be prepared to season meats and chutney. Tamarind paste is one of the essential ingredients in the popular Worcestershire sauce. And in some countries it is used as a mild laxative.

## Nutritive Value

One fruit contains:

5 calories  
 1 gram carbohydrate  
 trace fat  
 trace protein  
 2 mg phosphorous  
 2 mg potassium  
 1 mg calcium 2 mg magnesium  
 1 mg sodium

**Source:** USDA NDB Number: 09322

## Yield

One-half pound tamarind plus 3 cups hot water equals 3 cups concentrate.

## Basic Preparation

- Crack open the brittle shells and peel back from the seeds and pulp. Peel off the long strings or fibers and cut the pulp away from the seeds.
- The best way to enjoy the pulp is to make a flavorful concentrate. Discard the seeds from the pulp. Soak the pulp in very hot water and cover for several hours or overnight. With a slotted spoon, scoop the pulp out of the water. Using a fine strainer, press out all the juice from the pulp. Use the strained pulp in recipes calling for **tamarind extract or paste**.
- For concentrate, just save the soaking water and add it back into the strained pulp.

## Food Safety During Preparation

Following these steps will help reduce your risk of foodborne illness.

- Wash your hands with hot soapy water before and after:
  - ◆ handling fresh produce
  - ◆ handling raw meat, poultry, or seafood
  - ◆ using the bathroom
  - ◆ changing diapers
  - ◆ handling pets
- Wash fresh tamarinds with cool tap water just before preparing or eating. **Don't use soap or detergents.**

- Cut away bruised or damaged areas before preparing or eating.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops often. Use hot soapy water and rinse well. **Sanitize** them after contact with fresh produce or raw meat, poultry, or seafood.

To Sanitize
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mix one teaspoon of unscented chlorine bleach in one quart of water.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Pour the mixture onto the surface and let sit at least one minute.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Rinse well with hot running water.</li> </ul>

- Don't cross contaminate. Use clean cutting boards and utensils for fresh produce. If you can, use a separate cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Do not consume ice that has come in contact with fresh produce or other raw products.
- Use a cooler with ice or gel packs when taking perishable food outdoors. This includes cut, fresh fruits and vegetables.

### Using Tamarinds

*Tropicals may vary in natural pectin, acid and sugar content from one season to another due to the variations of the climate.*

#### Tamarind Ade

- ½ pound tamarinds
- 3 quarts water
- Honey to taste

Remove tamarinds from their brittle shells. Rinse tamarinds in water. Place in a pot, covering them with 3 quarts water and allow the pods to soak overnight. Reserve soaking water. Remove seeds from pulp and strain pulp and skins as instructed in the "Basic Preparation" section.

Mix the strained mixture with the soaking water and sweeten with honey to taste. Chill and serve very cold, with ice cubes and a sprig of fresh mint.

Tamarind ade is a very refreshing drink on a hot day! Enjoy an icy dessert of frozen tamarind ade.

#### Tamarind Rice Pudding\*

- 2 ½ cups cooked rice
- 1 cup low-fat milk
- 3 tablespoons tamarind extract
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger root
- 1 egg, slightly beaten, or egg substitute
- 1 orange, peeled, seeded and chopped

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Place in a greased baking dish and bake for 40 minutes at 350°F.

#### Tamarind Piccadillo\*

- 1 lb lean ground beef
- 1 large onion, coarsely-diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ¾ cup stuffed green olives, whole or sliced
- 1 sweet red bell pepper, coarsely-diced
- 2 bay leaves
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- Dash tabasco sauce, or more to taste
- ½ teaspoon salt, if desired, to taste
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 2 tablesspons tamarind pulp
- Cooked rice

Brown beef in a heavy skillet. Drain and discard the fat. Blend 1½ teaspoons water into the tamarind pulp. Set aside. Saute onions until slightly soft. Add beef and remaining ingredients (including tamarind pulp), cooking over medium heat until vegetables are soft. Remove bay leaves and discard. Serve over rice. Serves 4.

Serve with rice. Makes 4 servings. Preparation time: 20 minutes.

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### **Tamarind Chicken with Mangos\*\***

6 tamarinds, shelled  
 (or 3 Tbsp prepared pulp)  
 2 tablespoons hot tap water  
 ½ cup chicken broth  
 Dash hot pepper sauce  
 1 teaspoon cornstarch  
 ¼ cup peanut oil or vegetable oil  
 4 chicken breasts, skinned, boned, and cut into bite-sized strips  
 1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger root  
 1 clove garlic, finely chopped  
 1 cup mango or 2 fresh peaches or nectarines peeled, pitted, and thinly sliced  
 3 green onions, sliced  
 Dash hot-pepper sauce  
 Hot cooked rice

\*\*Reprinted from: *International Produce Cookbook and Guide*, by Marlene Brown, © 1989, with permission from Price Stern Sloan, Inc., Los Angeles.

Remove strings from tamarind pulp. Place the pulp in hot water for 15 minutes. With the back of a spoon, mash pulp in liquid to release juices and loosen pulp. Discard skin and seeds. Place chicken pieces in a shallow dish. Spoon tamarind extract over chicken. Cover and chill in refrigerator for 1 to 24 hours.

Stir together broth, hot pepper sauce and cornstarch. Set aside. In wok or large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of oil. Stir-fry chicken pieces with ginger root and garlic approximately 3 minutes or until plump. Remove from wok. Add a little more oil, if necessary. Stir-fry mangos with green onions for 2 minutes. Remove from skillet. Stir broth mixture, and pour into center of wok. Cook and stir until mixture bubbles. Add chicken and mangos back to pan, and toss to coat with sauce. Cover and heat 1 minute more.