

Some Chinatown Fruits



Chinese date (fresh) = jujube (fresh) Notes: These are usually dried, but you can sometimes find fresh dates in late summer and fall. When you get them home, let them ripen on the counter for awhile until they become soft and sweet.



durian = stinky fruit Notes: The weird and smelly durian has attracted a cult-like following. It's called the King of Fruits by aficionados in Southeast Asia, but Westerners usually don't care much for its mild oniony flavor. Once cut open, the durian gives off such a strong and foul odor that it's banned on Singaporean subways. The boiled seeds of the durian are called **betons**.



jackfruit = jakfruit = jak = nangka Notes: This is the largest tree-borne fruit in the world—it weighs up to 100 pounds. It's hard to find fresh in the United States, but Asian markets sometimes stock canned jackfruit. The yellowish pulp tastes a bit like banana. The seeds can be boiled and eaten. Watch out for the sap—it can stain your clothes.



litchi = lychee = lichee = lichi = leechee = laichee Notes: This popular Chinese fruit is about the size of a walnut, with a bumpy red shell encasing white translucent pulp that's similar in texture to a grape. The flavor is sweet, exotic, and very juicy. Don't eat the shell or the seed. Fresh litchis are available from May to July. If you can't find them, canned litchis are a good substitute. Don't confuse fresh litchis with [litchi nuts](#), which are sun-dried litchis that have a much different texture.



longan = lungan = dragon's eyes Notes: Longans are very similar to lychees and rambutans. You can buy them fresh (in the summer), dried or canned. (larger and juicier, but not as sweet) OR rambutans



passionfruit = Notes: This aromatic fruit has a tart, tropical flavor. They're ripe when their skins are wrinkled. The seeds are small and edible, so leave them in if you like.



plantain = cooking banana = Shopping hints: These look just like large green bananas, and they're usually cooked before eating. Hispanic and Caribbean use them like potatoes, either frying them or boiling them in stews. Different recipes may call for plantains in varying stages of ripeness, with their skins either green, yellow, or black. A green plantain will first turn yellow and then black if allowed to ripen at room temperature. As it ripens, the pulp becomes sweeter and less starchy.



prickly pear = Indian fig = Indian pear = barbary fig = tuna = cactus pear Notes: The pulp of these cactus fruits is a brilliant red or, occasionally, a yellowish green, and it tastes a bit like watered-down watermelon. Cooks exploit the color by adding slices of the pulp to fruit salads, or by puréeing it and straining out the seeds. They're quite popular in Hispanic countries and around the Mediterranean.



rambutan Notes: These are similar to litchies and longans, but they're covered with soft spines.



green papaya = cooking papaya Notes: Southeast Asian cooks like to shred these into salads.



star fruit = starfruit = carambola = five-angled fruit = five corners = Chinese star fruit = tree melon Notes: Star fruit have a clean, crisp texture, and they make terrific star-shaped garnishes when sliced. They're also easy to use, since they don't need to be peeled or seeded, and they're slow to discolor. Some varieties are sweet, some are sour. Try to avoid ones that have brown spots or streaks.