

Celebrating Indian mangoes' arrival in the Big Apple

Presentations on the 'king of fruits' and a dinner featuring mango delicacies was how the Indian consulate in Manhattan celebrated the arrival of Indian mangoes - banned by the US for 18 years.

Inaugurating the event Thursday, Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi told Indians among the invited audience, 'We should increase the demand for the Indian fruit by creating an impact with it as the last dish at dinners we host for our American friends.'

The US allowed the import of Indian mangoes in April, ending a ban over quarantine concerns, following an agreement between US President George Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in [New Delhi](#) a year ago.

Minister of State for Industries Ashwini Kumar said: 'Mango is such a temptation that even diabetics cannot resist it.'

He pointed out that it took nine years of trade negotiations to get the US to import Indian mangoes. While India is the second largest producer of vegetables and fruits, exports were still lagging behind, Kumar said.

He called for Indian mangoes to be branded in such a way that their demand exceeds that of other mango varieties in the US.

K.S. Money, chairman of the Agricultural and amp; Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), who had conceived the mango promotion event in the Big Apple, lauded the entry of the world's largest mango producer into the largest import market for the fruit.

This move would boost Indian agriculture, he said, provided quality is maintained and consumers' concerns are addressed at every step of the supply chain.

APEDA, a body of India's commerce ministry, has emerged as a conduit for mango exports. A film by APEDA on the Indian mango was screened at the event and showed how the body helps mango producers and exporters with infrastructure upgradation and technology inputs, packaging and maintaining hygiene standards. The film also highlighted the dietary richness of the Indian mango.

The biggest draw at the event, however, was culinary expert Madhur Jaffrey's paeon to the luscious fruit. She said that mangoes in exchange for nuclear fuel was a fair deal!

When introducing mangoes to the uninitiated, she said: 'I don't compare it to another fruit - that would be an insult.'

Jaffrey cited historical references to say that the mango originated in India. For the westerners, she compared the rich variety of mangoes produced in different parts of India to the wide varieties of cheese.

According to her, both come in different flavours, have different life cycles and need to be treated in a certain way. For example, you cannot ill-treat Alphonsoes by keeping them in a knapsack for three days. The best mango according to her is 'soft but firm and satin smooth'.

'Now we give this gift to the US,' Jaffrey concluded.

Last month, the US-India Business Council had also welcomed the entry of Indian mangoes to the US with a 'Mango Celebration' in Washington, where Indian Ambassador Ronen Sen presented baskets of Alphonso mangoes to US Trade Representative Susan Schwab and US Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns.

The hype over Indian mangoes reaching US shores and stores has, however, created a demand for the golden fruit that seems to be outstripping supply. Patel Brothers, a big Indian grocery store in Jackson Heights, New York, has barely been able to keep mangoes in stock - they seem to fly off the shelves!

India is the world's largest producer of mangoes - 12 million tonnes harvested each year - but accounts for less than one percent of the global mango trade.

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