

Passionfruit

Explore the versatility of this trending tropical ingredient

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With its highly aromatic, sweet yet tart flavor profile, along with a bold, distinct appearance, passionfruit is exotic and familiar at the same time. This tropical fruit combines the tastes of citrus, pineapple and mango with hints of guava in a gelatinous pulp with small edible seeds. It's a prized ingredient by chefs around the world who want to provide culinary adventure to all types of foods and beverages. It's also poised to be the next callout fruit on packaged goods throughout the supermarket, joining the ranks of acai, blueberry and pomegranate.

Interest in passionfruit has been growing in the U.S. since the turn-of-the-century, when it could only be found in a few specialty products, mostly beverages and fruity spreads. Almost 20 years later, Whole Foods Mar-



READY-TO-DRINK BEVERAGES



Consumers today expect more than simply hydration from their beverages. Sometimes they want energy while other times its satiety. More often than not they want enjoyment. Delicious flavor is paramount in everything from iced tea to yogurt smoothies. Passionfruit helps ready-to-drink beverage manufacturers differentiate their product line with the addition of this exotic flavor.

“Passionfruit pairs well with other fruit juices to make tasty beverage blends,” says Don Giampetro, vice-president of innovation and quality at iTi Tropicals. “Mango is a very common pairing, as the two tropical fruits complement each other in taste and color. But that’s not to say that other colored fruit juices are off the table. Blueberry and passionfruit make a great-tasting, eye-appealing smoothie.”

Passionfruit’s nutritional profile complements coconut water,

and when combined, yields a super-charged, electrolyte-balanced hydration drink. The same is true when blended with banana puree. A passionfruit-banana combination works well in a dairy or plant-based milk. The more juice, the lighter the viscosity and the more refreshing. If a satiating meal replacement is the goal, use less juice.

Passionfruit puree can be used to naturally add sweetness to otherwise tart or bitter beverages. This includes lemonade and iced tea, where the intense orange color also brightens up the yellow and brown.

“Try blending passionfruit juice, alone or with another tropical fruit juice, with sparkling water to create an effervescent spritzer with a passionate edge,” says Mr. Giam-

petro. “And while passionfruit’s flavor appeals to all ages, its exotic character is especially appealing to adults, which is why we see it being used in more artisanal spirits, craft beers and the new-generation of lower-calorie, single-serve alcoholic drinks.”

There’s a growing group of consumers who, for personal or medical reasons, don’t drink alcohol. In fact, data suggests that nearly one third of U.S. adults are non-drinkers. Abstaining does not mean foregoing satisfaction. That’s where mocktails enter the picture.

“Passionfruit adds a layer of decadence to help cocktail-inspired ready-to-drink beverages achieve premium status,” says Mr. Giampetro. ■



PASSIONFRUIT: THE CURE FOR BORED TONGUE SYNDROME



ket, Austin, Texas, identified Pacific Rim flavors, which includes passionfruit, as one of the top-10 food trends of 2019. These flavors are fueling innovation in beverages, condiments and all types of desserts.

“Today, passionfruit is becoming more and more prevalent throughout a manufacturer’s product portfolio,” says Gert van Manen, president, iTi Tropicals, Lawrenceville, N.J. “Passionfruit is included in everything from juice blends, yogurts, ice creams and dressings to craft beer and dessert toppings. With its growing popularity, this fruit ingredient has the potential to become a fresh new flavor in the American market.”

Passionfruit, a member of the plant family Passifloraceae, is spherical in shape and contains pulp with small black edible seeds. There are several varieties of passionfruit but the two most popular commercial types are the purple passionfruit (*Passiflora edulis* f. *edulis*) and yellow passionfruit (*Passiflora edulis* f. *flavicarpa*).

Passionfruit is grown and harvested in tropical regions around the world and is known by a variety of different names, with the most common being maracuya in South America. In Puerto Rico and Venezuela it’s known as parcha or parchita. Hawaiians call it lilikoi while chinola is its alias in the Dominican Republic.

The yellow variety is grown along the equator in South America and is favored among consumers, as it has a more intense color, a stronger aroma and a more tropical taste. The purple variety is grown in small quantities, primarily in Southeast Asia, and is typically consumed fresh. Therefore, most ingredient production is of the yellow variety.

iTi Tropicals works with Ecuador-based Quicornac, a leading exporter of passionfruit juice concentrates and purees, to provide food and beverage manufacturers with consistent, quality passionfruit ingredients. Quicornac started exporting passionfruit sourced exclusively from Ecuador and Peru in 1989.

DESSERTS: BAKED, REFRIGERATED AND FROZEN



Passionfruit's luxuriously tropical flavor and color elevates desserts—baked, refrigerated and frozen—to gourmet status. There are many varied approaches to incorporating this versatile fruit.

Juices can replace liquids in cakes, muffins and quick breads, possibly allowing for a reduction in added sugar as they add a natural sweetness. After baking, a passionfruit icing or frosting may be applied.

Purees can be blended into pastry and pie fillings and cheesecake layers, as well as baked in a soufflé or custard. Again, a passionfruit topping adds an additional layer of exotic indulgence.

“Since day one, Quicornac has led its business with the values of sustainability and community engagement,” says Mr. van Manen. “The business is 100% reliant on thousands of local farmers, whose farms vary in size from small to large. Quicornac works closely with the local growers to produce and export the highest quality tropical fruits.

“In an effort to support sustainability in local businesses, Quicornac employees visit the farms that the company sources fruit from and offers advice, supplies and more to the farmers,” he says. “The company is also involved in the communities where it does business.”

After the farmers harvest the fruit it is delivered in truckloads to the Quicornac facilities, where the fresh whole passionfruit is screened, inspected and washed. Once cleaned, the fruit is passed to a final selection table where it is inspected and cleared for the extraction process.

“Specially designed extractors break down the fruit to prepare it for processing and concentration,” says Don Giampetro, vice-president of innovation and quality at iTi Tropicals. “After the seed fragments, peel and other solids are separated, the remaining juice and pulp provide an enticing and robust flavor.”

The juice is centrifuged, de-aerated and pasteurized in a sterilized circuit. If the resulting product meets all quality standards, it is concentrated to the desired Brix level. In the concentration step, water is removed from the juice in a low-temperature process. The aroma is recovered by a state-of-the-art system that homogenizes the captured aroma with the concentrated juice and restores the signature passionfruit sensory profile.

“Ready for packing, the pasteurized concentrate is piped to the filling room where it is filled into bags/liners

Refrigerated desserts, including puddings and parfaits, as well as the growing category of indulgent yogurts, benefit from a layer or two of passionfruit puree, possibly with other ingredients, such as shaved coconut, crushed pineapple or dark chocolate bits. Aerated dairy products, such as mousse and whipped



yogurt, can be blended with passionfruit juice for a tropical burst.

Passionfruit pairs very well with dark chocolate and all types of nuts, as its sweet, tart flavor complements bitter notes. Think passionfruit ice



cream on a stick enrobed with Peruvian dark chocolate and dipped in chopped macadamia nuts.

Passionfruit ice cream and sorbet are also delicious on their own. Oftentimes seeds are added for visual appeal and some texture. When served in a bowl, top the scoop with passionfruit sauce, dark chocolate shavings and a caramel drizzle. It's an elegant way to end a fine meal. ■



in drums and pails," says Mr. Giampetro. "The drums and pails are sealed, labeled and moved to freezers where they are quick-frozen to preserve passionfruit's great flavor and nutrition."

Passionfruit provides more than great flavor and color to foods and beverages. It is loaded with antioxidant vitamins C and E and is a good source of potassium and fiber. Consumption has been shown to boost the immune system.

Passionfruit ingredients blend well with other fruit ingredients and have application in sweet and savory foods. It is an extremely versatile fruit ingredient that can elevate a product to premium and specialty status. It's an attention-grabber at the grocery store and helps mainstream brands attract the adventurous consumer who is looking for flavor excitement in familiar foods and beverages.

iTi Tropicals supplies frozen passionfruit concentrate, frozen passionfruit single-strength juice (sometimes also called passionfruit puree), frozen passionfruit essence and frozen passionfruit clarified concentrate in various degrees Brix. The products are 100% natural and GMO free. They do not contain any artificial colors, flavors or preservatives, and are processed in FDA-registered facilities, which are HACCP and kosher-certified.



MARINADES AND DRESSINGS



Passionfruit is a versatile ingredient that can be incorporated into savory applications. Its hearty, rich flavor complements meat, poultry and seafood, while its pleasant, aromatic notes add another dimension to condiments. Passionfruit's flavor profile provides an ideal canvas for a layering of flavors, including various levels of heat.

"It adds a sweet, yet tart note to salsas or spicy sauces," says Don Giampetro, vice-president of innovation and quality at iTi Tropicals.

"Passionfruit works well in marinades, dressings and vinaigrettes by contributing tart acidity. Consider combining passionfruit juice, aged balsamic vinegar, extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper to create a passion-filled salad dressing and meat marinade."

Tropical and citrus fruits complement many seafood dishes. Passionfruit is no exception. Puree can be mixed into shrimp tartare and adorned with whole pink peppercorns. Add a little capsaicin and

soy sauce to a smooth passionfruit dipping sauce and serve with sushi. A simple sauce, maybe with some lemon notes, can glaze baked salmon or add a tropical layer of flavor to braised raw tuna.

Passionfruit puree blends well with maple syrup for a poultry or pork tenderloin marinade and glaze. It can also get spiced up with shaved ginger root or minced garlic. Substitute some of the pineapple juice in sweet and sour sauce with passionfruit for a unique spin on this Asian classic. ■

ABOUT ITI TROPICALS INC.

iTi Tropicals., Lawrenceville, N.J., is one of the world's leading suppliers of exotic tropical fruit purees and concentrates. Since 1988, its sole business has been importing high-quality ingredients from manufacturers worldwide that meet its quality standards. In addition to passionfruit, iTi products include açai, acerola, banana, coconut cream, coconut water, dragon fruit, guava, mango, mango-steen, and papaya. For the sourcing

of passionfruit, iTi Tropicals works with Quicornac S.A., a multinational Swiss-Ecuadorian company dedicated to the production and marketing of juices, purees and concentrates of locally grown tropical fruits to national and international markets. iTi Tropicals maintains an inventory of frozen and aseptic fruit ingredients in pack sizes ranging from 5-gallon pails to 55- and 220-gallon drums, which are suitable for use in all processed food products.



For more information,
visit ititropicals.com.