

Miditer
NATURALLY YOURS

RAMBUTAN







INTRODUCTION TO RAMBUTAN

Origin, Growth, and Distribution

Rambutan (*Nephelium lappaceum*) is a tropical treat from the Sapindaceae (Soapberry) family. Often nicknamed the “hairy litchi” due to its resemblance and fuzzy exterior (rambutan means “hair” in Malay), it boasts a unique appearance and delightful taste.

Similar to lychee and longan fruits, rambutan hides a translucent white flesh beneath its spiky red shell. This sweet and creamy flesh surrounds a single seed in the center.

While native to Southeast Asia (Malaysia and Indonesia), rambutan has found a happy home in Sri Lanka, joining other tropical fruits cultivated there. Across the island, you’ll find rambutan trees thriving, with some areas like Malwana are known for breeding, especially large and delicious varieties.

Unlike wild varieties, which are smaller and tarter, cultivated rambutan offers a delightful balance of sweetness and creaminess.

THE RAMBUTAN TREE

The rambutan tree is an evergreen, reaching an impressive height of 10 to 12 meters (35 - 40 feet). These tall trees boast low-hanging branches and a rustic charm with their textured stems. Even more impressive, a single rambutan tree can be incredibly productive, bearing up to 6,000 fruits in a season! That's roughly 70 kilograms (154 pounds) of delicious rambutan!



RAMBUTAN FLOWERS

Rambutan trees typically flower once a year, putting on a lovely display for several months. These flowers, a delicate greenish color, bloom in clusters on the ends of branches (terminal panicles) or in the joints where leaves meet stems (axillary panicles). Interestingly, there are two types of rambutan flowers: male and hermaphrodite. While both contribute to the fruit production process, they grow on separate trees. It takes rambutan trees 3-5 years after planting to start showing off their flowers and producing fruit, but the wait is well worth the reward!



PROPAGATION

Rambutan relies on cross-pollination. This means pollen from one tree needs to reach the flowers of another for fruit production. This natural process has led to a wide variety of rambutans in the wild, with differences in features like spiky hair length, fruit colour, scent, vitamin C content, and even the delicious flesh inside!



LEAVES

Rambutan trees boast beautiful leaves that complement their spiky fruit. These leaves are pinnately compound, meaning they have several leaflets arranged along a central stalk. Unlike the Soursop, they lack a leaflet at the very tip. Each leaflet is a healthy green and measures 10-30 centimeters long by 5-15 centimeters wide. While the underside has some tiny bumps, the overall impression is one of lush greenery that adds to the tree's charm.



EXTERNAL APPEARANCE:

Unlike the soursop, rambutans are small, rounded ovals, about the size of a large kiwi. They're covered in soft, hair-like spikes that can be greenish-yellow, yellow, or red. When ripe, the whole fruit, spikes and all, often turns a brighter red, though some stay yellow or orange.



INTERNAL APPEARANCE & SEED

Crack open that spiky shell and you'll find a juicy surprise inside! Rambutans have an oval single, brown seed, but the real treat is the white, translucent flesh around it. This juicy aril (say "AIR-il") is the part you eat, and it can be sweet or slightly tart depending on the variety. It's like a little flavor packet waiting to burst in your mouth!



MATURITY SIGNS AND HARVESTING

You won't need to guess when rambutans are ripe, their spiky shells turn from green to a bright red (or yellow or orange for some kinds) as they get juicy and delicious. They're usually ready to be picked sometime between May and August, but it depends on the variety and where they're growing. To get the freshest flavor, farmers harvest them early in the morning.



USES OF RAMBUTAN

Rambutan's a truly versatile fruit! Of course, it's delicious fresh, but it also shines in desserts and drinks. The juicy flesh can add sweetness to all sorts of recipes, from salads and curries to creamy puddings and cool ice creams. But rambutan's uses go beyond the yummy stuff. In some places, the seeds are roasted and eaten, and the leaves are used to make dyes! The roots and bark are said to have medicinal properties too.



HEALTH BENEFITS

Rambutans aren't just tasty, they're tiny powerhouses of good stuff for your body! They're packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that can help with all sorts of things. Rambutans might help keep your heart healthy, aid digestion, and even boost your immune system to fight off infection. Some studies suggest they may help with weight loss, lower cancer risk, and keep your blood sugar in check.

NUTRIENT COMPOSITION

Rambutan: Nature's tiny treasure trove! This little fruit packs a big punch of vitamins and minerals. It's a good source of vitamin C, which helps your body fight infection and keeps you healthy. Rambutans are also loaded with potassium, which is important for your heart and muscles. On top of that, they have iron for healthy blood and magnesium to help keep you energized. So next time you're looking for a nutritious snack, grab a rambutan and discover the magic of this tropical superfood!









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