OBSESSIONS

IN SEASON

Durian Devotees This spiky South Asian fruit sparks a following like no other.





To Follow a Fruit A conversation with Lindsay Gasik, who chases durian season around the globe

DRY SEASON NEVER COMES for Lindsay Gasik and her husband, Richard Koiyusalo, For the past decade, they have been leading duriancentric tours across the planet and documenting their travels on Instagram (@durianwriter). The couple travels around the world according to monsoon seasons, the rainy periods that allow durians to ripen. They land in a country as the season comes to an end, just in time to taste the enormous, spiky fruit at its peak. Sometimes their destination is a well-known durian-growing area, like Thailand or the Philippines-other times, Zanzibar or Hawaii. To learn more or to book a durian tour, visit yearofthedurian.com. -NAOMI TOMKY

NT: How does the durian focus change how you travel?

Lindsay Gasik: People are overwhelmingly friendly because you're interested in their life. There's always someone like, "Oh, my uncle has a durian farm: get on the back of my motorbike, let's go." It's instantly like we've been buddies for 10 years.

NT: What keeps durian LG: The clues. We're

detectives and there are different stories that we're

on the hunt for. Durians all have a story behind them: where they came from, which tree was where. The trees can live for hundreds of years, so there's been lots of empire shifting: colonial powers, different kings and sultans—all this political drama going onwhile in the background, the trees were just chilling. It helps you understand how a place developed. I'm a history nerd, so I do all this research and dig through archives. I found records on a tree from 1890 and wondered what

Indonesia, people allow the

purposefully wait 24 hours

or more for it to ferment

is sweet, but it also can

have acidic flavors like

strong aftertaste. I've

heard people say that

durian tastes like onion.

when what they're expe-

riencing is a spicy note-

hard for some people to

iterations of durian there

are, but think about apples:

You have everything from

fancy pink dessert apples.

among durians, and when

they taste the right one,

Granny Smith to those

There's a big variation

understand how many

something with a bite. It's

into a yogurty texture that

pineapple or berry, with a

durian to fall but then

THE DURIAN DOSSIER

By Naomi Tomky and Amelia Schwartz

Varieties to Know

THERE ARE OVER 500 DURIAN VARIETIES—WE ASKED CHEFS AROUND THE WORLD TO SHARE THEIR FAVORITES.

MUSANG KING

"This durian is prized for its buttery flesh that has a special combination of sweet and bitter flavors," says pastry chef Michelle Goh of Mia in Bangkok. Although it's most commonly grown in Malaysia, Musang King is the world's most popular variety.

MONTHONG DURIAN

Translating to "golden pillow," Monthong is the most popular Thai durian. They're generally large with an ovular shape and a milder smell compared to other varieties. Its flesh is thick. creamy, and sweet, with notes of caramel.

KAN YAO

This variety is exclusively grown in the Nonthaburi region of Thailand, making it one of the most expensive durians in the world. It has a custardlike flesh, which chef Parkorn Kosiyabong of The G.O.A.T in Bangkok uses to thicken cream or coconut bases.

SUA LU LIAN

Grown in the jungles of Malaysia, this wild durian is small enough to fit in your palm. "Its flesh comes in many different colors, from yellow to orange to bright red," says Goh. The fruit is creamy but slightly drier and milder than other varieties.

PUYAT

Puyat is one of the most accessible varieties grown in the Philippines. "[The flesh] is sweet but has a little bit of bitterness," says Jordy Navarra, chef and owner of Toyo Eatery in Manila. It's known for having a large pear shape and thick brown spikes.

Durian, **Delivered**

FREEZE-PACKED

Explore the dreaminess of durian varieties like pink-fleshed Red Prawn and peanut-buttery Bottle Gourd with Year of the Durian (from \$60, yearof thedurian.com). In addition to vacuum-sealed durian meat, you can get the whole fruit (shipped frozen) from Miami Fruit (from \$97, miamifruit.com).

ICE CREAM

Morgenstern's Finest Ice Cream mellows durian's strong flavor with banana, resulting in these delicious, well-balanced pints. (\$104 for four pints, morgensternsnyc.com)

FREEZE-DRIED

Freeze-drying durian transforms the texture into a crunchy treat. Dong Ming Bridge sells freeze-dried Monthong, a sweet, yellow-fleshed durian that Gasik recommends dipping in chocolate. (\$9, sayweee.com)

мосні

Durian mochi makes for an easy, sweet treat—look for something made from real durian, not essence, such as Royal Family. (\$3, justasianfood.com)



Three Ways to Cook with Durian



FERMENT IT Goh's family ferments

make tempoyak, a funky condiment used to boost the flavor of dips and curries. But usually they'll transform the tempovak into a spicy dip by stir-frying it with dried shrimp, shallots. chiles, and sugar



FRY IT

At Toyo, Navarra has leftover durian to served durian cheese balls-fried dough filled with a mixture of fresh cheese and durian, topped with more grated cheese.

3 ICE IT

Durianism Café in Bangkok is a "rest stop for durian lovers." Their version of bingsu, or Korean shaved ice, shown above, is durianflavored and topped with crispy bread, ice cream, coconut sticky rice, and fresh durian.

The Durian Breakdown



1. Put on a pair of plastic gloves to protect your hands from the spikes.



2. Check if the durian is ripe by pressing in between the spikes. If the fruit yields to the pressure, it's ready



3. Make a couple of slits along the durian's base, following its natural seams.



4. Following the slits, slice the durian into wedges



5. Pull out the flesh using your hands, separating it from its shell and pits. Eat chilled or at room temperature

FOOD&WINE AUGUST 2023 photography by JASON DONNELLY illustrations by TARN SUSUMPOW AUGUST 2023 FOOD&WINE



with tiny spoons and crusty baguettes in hand, our editors dipped, swirled, and sampled the best flavored olive oils on the market. Each and every bottle we tasted starts with an excellent base—an olive oil we'd happily use for cooking, baking, and drizzling on its own—that's infused with fresh aromatics to quickly punch up the flavor of dressings, marinades, or baked goods. Our three favorites take as much care in sourcing the best ingredients for the infusion as they do with their olives, resulting in oils with fresh flavor and a delicious balance of buttery, vegetal, and piquant olive notes.

THE DIPPER

KOSTERINA GREEK HERB & LEMON OLIVE OIL

This infused oil is the perfect dunking medium for a good, crusty loaf of bread. Made with oils of oregano, lemon, and onion (which adds a savory depth to the infusion), it tastes like a delicate homemade blend of tender herbs brightened with fresh lemon zest. As delicious as it is on its own, this flavor-packed oil would make a great base for a marinade, too. (\$25, kosterina.com)

THE FINISHER

CALIFORNIA OLIVE RANCH GARLIC INFUSED OIL

Infused with roasted garlic, this California Olive Ranch olive oil is balanced enough to top a bowl of salty popcorn and robust enough to cook with. Our editors loved its gentle spice and smooth finish, as well as its rounded, sweet-but-still-pungent garlic flavor. Drizzle this one boldly on everything from salads and pastas to grilled meat. (\$14, californiaoliveranch.com)

THE BAKER

ENZO ORGANIC CLEMENTINE CRUSH OLIVE OIL AND ORGANIC EUREKA LEMON CRUSH OLIVE OIL

Enzo mills its olives with local aromatics to create unfiltered Crush blends. The clementine and Eureka lemon flavors taste particularly vibrant and fresh. Try using the lemon oil in poppy seed muffins, or bake up a batch of brownies laced with clementine oil for a decadent chocolate-orange twist. (\$20, enzostable.com)

FOOD&WINE AUGUST 2023 photography by JASON DONNELLY



BEST FOR THE BAR

HAY SIP COCKTAIL STRAWS

Some cocktails are best enjoyed from a straw. These 6-inch glass straws fit neatly into a lowball or a rocks glass, making cocktail hour a little more special. (\$30 for six straws, us.hay.com)

BEST BENT

MOMA TWO-TONE BOROSILICATE GLASS STRAWS

Made of delicate borosilicate glass, these playful straws perfectly marry fun and function. (\$28 for six straws and one cleaning brush, store.moma.org)

BEST PORTABLE

GIR TRAVELER STRAWS

These silicone straws fold into a protective carrying case equipped with a flexible cleaning squeegee. They are also dishwasher safe. (\$9 for two straws, one case, and one cleaning squeegee, gir.co)

BEST STATEMENT STRAW

MOCIUN SUCK IT UP STRAW

Misha Kahn's hand-painted glass straws are colorful and uniquely shaped, toeing the line between straw and sculpture. They'll be the main character of any drink. (\$35, mociun.com)

BEST UTILITY

W&P PORTER STRAWS

At 10 inches long, these durable, stainless steel straws by kitchen design firm W&P are perfect for a tall glass of chilly iced tea or a bottle of water. (\$12 for four straws and one cleaning brush, wandp.com)

FOOD&WINE AUGUST 2023 photography by JASON DONNELLY

CHEFS' RECS

Take It Outside The ultimate chefrecommended starter pack for any outdoor gathering

SUMMER IS THE TIME TO DINE ALFRESCO, whether it be beneath a shady tree in a park, on a warm, sandy beach, or on top of a mountain. And no matter the location, outdoor gatherings are completely customizablealmost intimidatingly so. What will you sit on? How will you keep your drinks icy cold? What cured meat goes with what cheese? To help you narrow down your options (so your afternoon in the sun doesn't become a logistical nightmare), we asked professional chefs to help select the essentials. –AMELIA SCHWARTZ

Drinks

VENTURA SPIRITS ANGELENO SPRITZ

One of the best spritz cocktails I've ever tasted is the Angeleno Spritz with amaro and grapefruit I pair it with blood orange." -Suzanne Tracht, Jar, Los Angeles (\$20 for a 6-pack, venturaspirits.com)

EMPIRICAL SPIRITS CAN 01 AND CAN 02

I love Can 01, which has oolong tea, toasted birch, and gooseberry, and Can 02's sweet and tart sour cherry flavor is great." -Kevin Fink, Emmer & Rye, Austin (\$36 for a 4-pack, us.empirical.co)

2019 ALBET I NOYA PETIT ALBET

This Cava sparkling rosé's bubbles are luxurious in nature, and the crisp acidity makes it easy to enjoy on a hot summer's day." -Chris Curren, The Graceful Ordinary, St. Charles,

Equipment

PICNIC TIME VISTA **OUTDOOR PICNIC BLANKET AND TOTE**

'I am always packing my Picnic Time blanket because it folds and zips up and can be stored tightly and nicely!" -Edy Massih, Edy's Grocer, Brooklyn (\$33, picnictime.com)

BRIUT ESSENTIALS

"I love these bamboo utensils-especially the chopsticks. They are perfect to use for grilling." -Melissa Miranda, Musang, Seattle (\$11, briutessentials.com)

NOMAD GRILL & SMOKER

"If you want to cook something a little bit more substantial to eat, go with a portable grill. This miniature one will get the job done." —Matt Horn, Horn Barbecue, Oakland, California (\$649, nomadgrills.com)

YETI ROADIE 48 WHEELED COOLER

won't warp." -Katie epicureanusa.com

Snacks

MUMGRY PISTACHIO **CHOCOLATE ALMOND BUTTER**

'I love a PB&J sandwich. Mumgry makes amazing natural peanut butter, and their Pistachio Chocolate Almond Butter is fantastic." - Rob Rubba, Oyster Oyster, Washington, D.C. (\$20, mumgry.com)

POINT REYES **TOMARASHI**

'TomaRashi is a firm cowmilk cheese with shichimi togarashi. It tastes great at room temperature and can withstand the summer heat." —Gaby Maeda, State Bird Provisions, San Francisco (\$40 for three 6-ounce wedges, pointreyescheese.com)

EPI BAGUETTE

'I always bring a nice loaf of bread that is easy to tear apart and share, versus having to slice it like an epi baguette or ciabatta." - Melissa Perello, Octavia, San Francisco

CAJUN CAVIAR

'If I'm feeling fancy, I'll bring some Cajun Caviar and Zapp's potato chips. Louisiana Caviar Company produces the porchpounders of the caviar world." - Nina Compton, Compère Lapin, New Orleans (From \$55, cajun caviar.com)

OLYMPIA PROVISIONS FINOCCHIONA AND **CHORIZO ANDALUCIA**

'When put together, Portland, Oregon-based Olympia Provisions' finocchiona and chorizo Andalucia iust hit all the senses." —Nick Zocco, Urban Hill, Salt Lake City (\$15 each, olympiaprovisions.com)

CUBED MORTADELLA

"Cubed mortadella is especially nice on a summer day-it warms slightly and becomes softer, a result of the emulsified pork fat melting." —Chris and Pam Willis, Pammy's, Cambridge, Massachusetts

BAMBOO SILVERWARE SET

"I'm obsessed with my Yeti cooler on wheels. It holds so much, is easy to transport, and doubles as a handy snack and drink tabletop." - Caroline Schiff, Gage & Tollner, Brooklyn (\$450, yeti.com)

EPICUREAN KITCHEN SERIES BOARD

"Epicurean cutting boards are relatively lightweight but are also super durable. You can throw them in the dishwasher and they Button, Cúrate, Asheville, North Carolina (From \$16,

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THE OBSESSIVE

Shrimply the Best Why seafood lovers are pining for Santa Barbara spot prawns

By Jean Trinh

WHEN CHEF DOMINIQUE CRISP OPENED his first restaurant in Pasadena, California, he did it with the intention of running spot prawns, especially from Santa Barbara, on his menu as much as he possibly could.

"I love the flavor, freshness, and lore involved with them," Crisp explains. "They're very rare."

Despite its name, the elusive spot prawn, which glimmers translucently under an orange-reddish shell, is actually shrimp. Sweet and briny, with meat as firm and succulent as lobster, these prized crustaceans can be found up and down the North American West Coast. But due to the warm waters around the Santa Barbara Channel, they grow to massive sizes there, averaging six to eight inches (and up to 10 at times), almost double the length of those found in Washington or Oregon.

Part of their appeal is that they're hard to get. Spot prawns are possibly the most expensive fishery on the West Coast. The very few permits allowed in Santa Barbara can go for over a million dollars each, according to Billy Gerard, who helms Santa Barbara Stone Crab Company and supplies area restaurants with spot prawns.

It's not an easy feat to catch these creatures. Gerard has crews out on 45-foot-long boats, dropping traps anywhere from 600

to 1,500 feet underwater. Regulations limit the number of traps that can be used. While he knows where they're likely to be gathering, it's not always a given.

"There are studies, but they don't know exactly how and where they migrate," says Gerard. "It's a guessing game, and they're very hard to see to begin with because of the depth in which they live."

Crisp, who is now the executive chef at The Lonely Oyster in Los Angeles, likes to join Gerard on the docks when his team hauls in the spot prawns. They're pulled out of holding tanks and then put directly into trucks with tanks to keep them alive. The chef calls spot prawns "unicorns because of the massive horn on their heads" and says people could get cut by them if they reached into the tanks.

With all these factors, it makes sense why they fetch such a high price tag. Gerard has seen spot prawns go for as low as \$20 a pound on the pier, to as high as \$80 at retail stores. The months of June to September are your best bet for getting Santa Barbara spot prawns for a reasonable price.

These shellfish have a short life span once they're out of live tanks. Whenever Crisp gets a shipment, he'll serve them in a variety of ways as quickly as he can while they're still fresh and





delicious. He has offered them up raw, confited in oil, and in fisherman stews. One of his favorite ways to serve them is grilled in a sizzling skillet with olive oil, garlic, rosemary, lemon, and spicy Spanish paprika. It's his rendition of a shrimp scampi, with the light and herbaceous oil permeating the meat without overpowering the "true essence of the spot prawn," he says.

As hard as it is to normally procure spot prawns, it was especially trying during the pandemic. "Inflation and staffing, even on a boat, there are all these things that fall apart, when we're in the middle of a situation like this, that have nothing to do with just getting beautiful spot prawns out of the ocean," Crisp says. Gerard, too, had to be nimble, constantly reevaluating how to distribute his seafood as restaurants had to close or adjust their menus between being short-staffed or having customers cancel their reservations.

Crisp's relationships with fishermen are the backbone of his cooking. Going out to the docks and seeing Gerard's team hard at work brings him closer to the seafood he cooks.

"That is the true connection between yourself and reaching into the ocean and getting something so fresh and understanding that it takes hard work, it takes skill," Crisp says. "It's a special and beautiful experience."

WHERE TO GET SANTA BARBARA SPOT PRAWNS SHIPPED NATIONWIDE

Santa Barbara Stone Crab Company, while known for its stone crab claws, also ships spot prawns fresh in the warmer months at market price. (sbstonecrab.com)

Fish Market ships fresh spot prawns from February to October (when available), all priced between \$15 and \$38 per pound. (sbfish.com)

Santa Barbara

Garlic Ganbak (Skillet Spot Prawns with Garlic and Spanish Paprika)

ACTIVE 20 MIN; TOTAL 30 MIN; SERVES 4

Freshly harvested head-on Santa Barbara spot prawns, with sweet, lobsterlike meat, are simply seasoned with aromatics and pimentón (Spanish paprika) and quickly roasted in a hot oven, allowing the succulent seafood to shine. Serve the prawns with crusty sourdough bread for sopping up the juices that form in the bottom of the skillet.

- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 12 garlic cloves, minced (about 1 Tbsp.)
- 2 Tbsp. fresh rosemary leaves
- 1 Tbsp. hot Spanish paprika (such as Chiquilín Pimentón Picante) (see Note)
- 3/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 12 live, head-on 3- to 4-inch spot prawns (about 1 lb.) (see Note)
- 2 lemons, cut into 3 wedges each, seeded, and divided Finely chopped fresh herbs, such as parsley, chives, and dill Crusty sourdough bread, toasted, for serving
- 1. Preheat oven to 500°F. Heat a 10-inch cast-iron skillet over low for 3 to 5 minutes; add oil, garlic, rosemary, paprika, and salt, and stir to combine. Cook, stirring constantly, until warmed and aromatic, 1 to 2 minutes. Place prawns in a single layer in skillet. (Arrange prawns facing in the same direction to make flipping them during roasting quick and easy.) Squeeze 3 lemon wedges over prawns; nestle juiced lemon wedges into skillet.
- 2. Transfer skillet to preheated oven, and roast 3 minutes. Remove skillet from oven, and flip prawns; return skillet to oven. Cook until prawns are bright red and flesh is opaque, about 3 minutes. (Begin checking prawns for doneness at 2 minutes.)
- **3.** Remove skillet from oven, and garnish prawns with fresh herbs. Serve with toasted sourdough bread and remaining 3 lemon wedges. —DOMINIQUE CRISP

WINE Vibrant, citrusy Sauvignon Blanc: 2021 Joel Gott California

NOTE Pimentón picante is a spicy version of Spanish paprika. Find it at specialty grocery stores or online at amigofoods.com. Prized for their sweet flavor and firm texture, spot prawns are exclusive to the Pacific Ocean and can be harvested February through October. See sourcing sidebar at left for fresh spot prawn retailers.

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