

FRUIT COCKTAIL: COMBINING TASTE WITH HEALTH BENEFITS

Tropical fruit purees, juices and other products can be used in a wide range of processed foods to provide a powerful combination of flavour and health benefits.

Tropical fruits are friendly to the taste buds, but they don't only appeal to the palate, they can also help safeguard our overall well-being. Recent studies support the role of tropical fruit in a healthy diet.

Chiquita Processed Fruit Ingredients division starts with the freshest, ripest fruit and processes it in a way that maintains the minerals, vitamins and other nutrients so important to good health.

Because the flavours of tropical fruits are naturally intense, the processed fruit is a flavourful and healthy enhancement in many food products. Whether in frozen or aseptically packaged format, the processed fruit ingredients infuse foods with both zest and sustenance, so consumers can get the flavour they crave without compromising on the nutrition that keeps them healthy and energised. Baby foods, beverages, bakery and dairy products, even sports drinks are some of the most practical applications for processed fruits.

Consumers are encouraged to consume five or more daily servings of fruit to guard against the risk of developing some cancers, but meeting this recommendation is a challenge. Consuming food products infused with processed fruits is a good way for consumers to maintain a healthy intake of fruit. For food manufacturers, the use of processed fruits in their products makes good commercial sense.

Let's take a look at the profiles of some tropical fruits and imagine how they can augment food product lines.

Passion fruit. Passion fruit is a true taste of the tropics. The juice of the yellow passion fruit provides more than its exotic, sweet flavour: it also delivers some of the most essential nutrients for good health. For example, yellow passion fruit is an excellent source of antioxidants that can prevent the formation of pre-cancerous cells and plant compounds that can reduce overall cancer risk. Passion fruit is also a good source of potassium which the body loses through exercise and the use of hypertension and cardiovascular medications.

Passion fruit juice is low in calories, but high in taste, so it keeps its intense sweet/sour flavour, even after processing. Although some fruits over-ripen quickly, passion fruit stays fresh, making it one of the more practical fruits for processing. Chiquita® passion fruit is available in concentrate, juice and essence form and applications include beverages and fruit compounds.

Pineapple. Pineapples not only remind us of the sun-soaked tropics but are a vital source of minerals and vitamins, plus the enzyme nutri-

ent bromelain which aids the digestion of proteins. Chiquita pineapple is available in individually quick-frozen (IQF), single-strength juice and crush form to fortify and enhance dairy products, fruit compounds, baby foods, beverages and smoothies.

Banana. Peel away the outer skin of a banana and you will discover one of nature's best energy sources. While most people eat a banana for its great taste, the banana is a nutritious choice after exercise. During strenuous physical activity the body loses important vitamins as well as minerals such as potassium. A banana helps replace these nutrients and is a convenient and healthy food choice: bananas are free of fat, cholesterol and sodium. Easily digested, bananas supply a rich combination of B6 and potassium for proper brain function, and calcium and phosphorous for strong bones. The banana has many therapeutic properties, such as healing intestinal lesions in ulcerative colitis and reducing the risk of stroke.

Mango. Mangoes just may be the perfect comfort food. The delicious fruit contains enzymes thought to bring a feeling of contentment to the consumer and to aid digestion. Mangoes are a rich source of vitamins, minerals, beta-carotene and important antioxidants, and they are the perfect way to replenish the potassium that is lost through physical activity. Mangoes are also low in fat.

Papaya. A tasty tropical fruit, papaya is rich in vitamins A and C, along with bone-enriching calcium and potassium. Recent studies indicate that papayas help break down proteins, fats and carbohydrates.

As the consumer becomes better informed about the benefits of the antioxidants and other compounds found in fruit, food manufacturers must respond with products that deliver health benefits. Chiquita's processed fruit ingredients offer the food industry a range of options for adding a little tropical flavour to healthy food products. ■

Company profile

Chiquita produces fruit ingredients in a variety of forms to enhance dairy products, fruit compounds, baby foods, beverages and smoothies.