



MANGOS' PLACE IN LATIN AMERICAN CUISINE

Mangos are one of the most popular fruits in the world and are eaten throughout Latino communities, in both the United States and abroad.

Latino cultures are incredibly diverse, with varied dietary patterns, cultural preferences, traditions and influences. This is because Latin America has a varied population that includes descendants from many indigenous civilizations, including the Maya, Mexica, Inca and Olmec, dating back to 1600 BC. Additionally, beginning in the 1400s, migration, colonization and slavery brought people from countries such as Africa, Spain, Portugal, the Philippines, Japan and China to the Caribbean and mainland of Mexico, Central and South America. The traditions from these many varied regions have had a strong influence on the various foodways throughout Latin America, and dietary traditions, like individual palates, cannot be generalized.

KNOW YOUR NOMENCLATURE

'Hispanic' refers to any country whose primary language is Spanish or a person whose ancestry is from a Spanish-speaking country.

'Latino' and its variations refer specifically to people, denoting origins from anywhere in Latin America (Mexico, South and Central America) and the Caribbean.

“A culturally sensitive approach to discussing foods with patients or clients is to start by asking what foods they enjoy,” says Sabrina Falquier, MD, CCMS, DipABLM, Founder and CEO of Sensations Salud, LLC. “From there, have them consider incorporating nutritionally dense, minimally processed foods with delicious flavors and textures into dishes that are in line with what they already love.”



Honoring Tropical Fruits in Latino Culture

Tropical fruits have an important role across Latin America, where many fruit species grow natively. Honoring and celebrating mangos by including them as part of your recommendations when relevant is a wonderful way to pay respect to a person's heritage and build rapport.

The sugars in any fruit can be a concern for individuals with diabetes and other health ailments. Tropical fruits such as mangos are sometimes pinpointed as particularly troublesome for blood sugar management because of higher sugar content. However, because mangos are a nutritionally dense, whole food source of dietary fibers and vitamins, the spike in blood sugar is mitigated. Fruits such as mangos are abundant in vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals that should be incorporated into all diets.

THE RESEARCH

A study conducted by Rosas et al in 2022 looked at the effects of an isocaloric cookie versus mango in overweight and obese adults over 12 weeks. **The mango group showed no significant change** in body weight, body fat percentage, blood pressure, insulin levels or lipid profile numbers, compared to the cookie group, which showed increased body weight, increased insulin levels, CRP and triglycerides¹. Foods in their whole form fit into any eating pattern.



1. Rosas M Jr, Pinneo S, O'Mealy C, Tsang M, Liu C, Kern M, Hooshmand S, Hong MY. Effects of fresh mango consumption on cardiometabolic risk factors in overweight and obese adults. *Nutr Metab Cardiovasc Dis*. 2022 Feb;32(2):494-503. doi: 10.1016/j.numecd.2021.11.001. Epub 2021 Nov 12. PMID: 34953634.



Eating with the Principles of Culinary Medicine in Mind.

Culinary Medicine is the blending of evidence-based nutritional information and the culinary arts. Culinary Medicine fits beautifully in the conversation of diverse eating patterns. A great visual to keep front and center: Fill 1/2 the plate with fruits and vegetables, 1/4 of the plate with complex carbohydrates and 1/4 of the plate with well thought-out protein. For hydration, focus on water, unsweetened tea or coffee.

“A wonderful example of a Latino-centric balanced dish includes a simple mango, cucumber and fish ceviche served with tostadas, which are crispy tortillas,” says Falquier. **“This dish incorporates fresh mango, cucumber and fish, which is high in protein and omega-3 fatty acids, with spices and acidity, and the corn tortillas bring us a whole grain. To balance this dish using the plate method, half of the ceviche should focus on the mangos and cucumber, a quarter on the fish, and a quarter on the corn tortillas.”**

The spices and herbs used in a fish ceviche, like other foods, can vary greatly across Latino cultures. The flavor profile of a ceviche can depend on the individual, the region of Latin America that they are from, or the ingredients that most influence them.

Ceviche can have coastal Mexican influences with jalapeños and limes or Asian influences (especially in countries like Peru and Brazil, which have long had sizeable Japanese populations) with soy sauce, fresh ginger, sesame oil and orange juice.

Culinary Medicine principles should honor the diversity of Latino foodways and do not offer a one-size-fits-all approach. In the case of the mango, though it is a widespread food across so many Latino cultures, it is traditionally enjoyed in very different ways, just like foods and cooking styles vary from state to state in the U.S. People from Jamaica may enjoy a mango curry while those in El Salvador enjoy green mango with agualshte, a condiment made from ground pumpkin seed. Many Latino cultures incorporate mangos into beverages or simply enjoy it for the sweet and tangy treat that it is, eating it by itself or topped with chili and lime. Asking questions of your clients or patients and researching their specific cultural eating patterns can help to make appropriate recommendations that offer them a balanced-plate approach.

Download our full Mango Nutrition Toolkit for Health Professionals on Mango.org and follow us on social media for more mango inspiration.

