

Citrus medica var. Sarcodactylis

Buddha's hand



Buddha's hand is a citrus fruit, originating from Asia, either India or China. Its scientific name is *Citrus medica* var. *sarcodactylis*, also referred to as Fo Shou in some parts of Asia.

Buddha's hand is one of the most unique fruits that exist on our planet. Neither round nor rectangular, the fruit actually looks like a hand, with finger-like tentacles. The frightening-looking fruit can reach up to a foot long.

They grow on *Citrus medica* trees of the variety *sarcodactylis* and the family *Rutaceae*. These trees grow best in temperate climates, as they are sensitive to heat and frost.

APPEARANCE AND HOW TO USE IT

The fruits have a lemony yellow color, and they can vary substantially in shape and size. The fruit protrudes off the stem and branches out into segments that resemble gnarled, wild fingers. The Buddha's hand fruit is made up entirely of skin and pith—unlike other citrus fruits, it has no juice, pulp, or seeds.

The rind is oily and fragrant, making it useful for zest and infusions. It is reminiscent of lemon but sweeter and more floral. When ripe, the 'fingers' on Buddha's hand appear to be pointing outwards, as if the hand were open. The color when ripe is a bright yellow or gold, while before ripening it has tinges of green.

The Buddha's hand goes by many names: Fo Shou, Goblin fingers, Fingered citron, Fragrant citron, and Five-fingered mandarins just to name a few nicknames. The fruit is mostly eaten in zest form, used to flavor drinks, foods, and baked goods.

Thanks to its lovely aroma, the Buddha's hand fruit also works as a natural air freshener, making it popular to use in perfumes.

In Asia, in countries such as Japan and China, the fruit actually has symbolic meanings and is given as a good-luck gift. Moreover, it holds an important role in various religious ceremonies and it's quite popular as an ornamental tree for gardening as well.

The fruit itself has a good amount of vitamin C, as one would expect from citrus fruit, and its oil has been used for pain relief traditionally, specifically when unripe, sliced, and dried.

HOW DO YOU EAT BUDDHA'S HAND?

The Buddha's hand fruit has no flesh, just the pith, and the aromatic skin. Despite the lack of juice and the very thick pith, it is not bitter, just sweet, and floral. To "eat" the fruit, you can use a zester, sharp knife, or grater to remove the outer, fragrant rind.



Although it is a fruit with no flesh, the Buddha's hand has quite a few culinary uses. It can be used to fabulous effect wherever citrus is used. It is a great fruit for infusing liquor. The rind can be candied or made into marmalade.

The thin fingers can also be sliced thinly and added to salads or cooked dishes. The zest itself is versatile, perfect for inclusion in marinades, baked goods, drinks, and salad dressings.

WHAT DOES BUDDHA'S HAND TASTE LIKE?

The skin is the edible part of the fruit. The zest from Buddha's hand (*Citrus medica* var. *sarcodactylis*) has an intense aroma, which is both citrusy and floral at the same time. The pith is not bitter, like in lemon, so you can also eat it.

The actual taste of the zest or oil is lemony, but with a unique combination of bitter and sweet hints, reminiscent of a kumquat. There is a definite floral note, as well.



BENEFITS

Buddha's hand isn't the type of fruit you snack on, but it does have some interesting health benefits: For example, it is rich in vitamin C and the organic compounds work as anti-inflammatory pain relievers.

The Buddha's hand fruit has been used in traditional medicine for hundreds of years, especially in Asia. The active compounds are coumarin, bergapten, diosmin, and limonin. According to Medindia, it may boost immunity, benefit the gastrointestinal system, and regulate blood pressure as well.

Thanks to its pleasant and strong fragrance, it also works well as an organic air-freshener without any harmful chemicals.

5 X BUDDHA'S HAND FACTS

In Japan, the fruit is given as a gift on New Year's as a token of good fortune. The number of fingers reflects the amount of good luck one will have!

The Citrus medica tree is often grown in a pot in miniature, as a bonsai. Legend says that Buddha picked a citrus fruit but didn't like its bitter taste. He considered making the tree disappear, but with a Buddhist spirit, he allowed the tree to live with one condition, that it transforms into a more pleasing shape. The tree copied the shape of the hand of Buddha, and the name of the fruit is said to be given after that legend. You can find the Buddha's hand fruit depicted in engraving and art in Buddhist temples. For some, it resembles hands closed in prayer.

The fruit symbolizes long life and happiness in China, which is why it is often incorporated into altars and homes.

buddha's hand fruit as offering

