

# Tamarind

## Tamarindus indica



Tamarind is a type of tropical fruit used in many dishes around the world. It may even have medicinal properties.

### What is tamarind?

Tamarind is a hardwood tree, known scientifically as *Tamarindus indica*. It's native to Africa but also grows in India, Pakistan, and many other tropical regions.

The tree produces bean-like pods filled with seeds surrounded by a fibrous pulp.

The pulp of the young fruit is green and sour. As it ripens, the juicy pulp becomes paste-like and more sweet-sour.

Interestingly, tamarind is sometimes referred to as the “date of India.”

### How is it used?

This fruit has many uses, including cooking, health, and household purposes.

## Cooking uses

Tamarind pulp is widely used for cooking in South and Southeast Asia, Mexico, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. The seeds and leaves are also edible.

It is used in sauces, marinades, chutneys, drinks, and desserts. It's also one of the ingredients of Worcestershire sauce.

## Medicinal uses

Tamarind has played an important role in traditional medicine.

In beverage form, it was commonly used to treat diarrhea, constipation, fever, and malaria. The bark and leaves were also used to promote wound healing .

Modern researchers are now studying this plant for potential medicinal uses.

The polyphenols in tamarind have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. These can protect against diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes .



## Home uses

Tamarind pulp can also be used as a metal polish. It contains tartaric acid, which helps remove tarnish from copper and bronze.

## It is high in nutrients

Tamarind is high in many nutrients. A single cup (120 grams) of the pulp contains:

Magnesium: 26% of the daily value (DV)

Potassium: 16% of the DV

Iron: 19% of the DV

Calcium: 7% of the DV

Phosphorus: 11% of the DV

Copper: 11% of the DV

Vitamin B1 (thiamin): 43% of the DV

Vitamin B2 (riboflavin): 14% of the DV

Vitamin B3 (niacin): 15% of the DV

It has trace amounts of:

vitamin C

vitamin K

vitamin B6 (pyridoxine)

folate

vitamin B5 (pantothenic acid)

selenium

It also contains 6 grams of fiber, 3 grams of protein, and less than 1 gram of fat. This comes with a total of 287 calories.

These calories almost all come from sugar — but whole fruits do typically contain a lot of natural sugar. Despite its sugar content, tamarind pulp is considered a fruit, not an added sugar.

Added sugar is the kind that's linked to metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes, and it's the kind of sugar that the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that you limit .

It also contains polyphenols, which are naturally occurring plant compounds that have health benefits. Many of them act as antioxidants in the body .



## Different forms of tamarind

Tamarind is available in prepared forms, such as candy and sweetened syrup.

You can also find the pure fruit in three main forms:

**Raw pods.** These pods are the least processed form of tamarind. They're still intact and can be easily opened to remove the pulp.

**Pressed block.** To make these, the shell and seeds are removed and the pulp is compressed into a block. These blocks are one step away from raw tamarind.

**Concentrate.** Tamarind concentrate is pulp that has been boiled down. Preservatives may also be added.

## Its antioxidants may boost heart health

This fruit may boost heart health in several ways.

It contains polyphenols like flavonoids, some of which can help regulate cholesterol levels.

One study in hamsters with high cholesterol found that tamarind fruit extract lowered total cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol, and triglycerides .

Another animal study in vivo found that the antioxidants in this fruit can help reduce oxidative damage to LDL cholesterol, which is a key driver of heart disease.

## It's high in beneficial magnesium

Tamarind is also relatively high in magnesium.

One ounce (30 grams), or a little less than 1/4 cup of pulp, delivers 5% of the DV.

Magnesium has many health benefits and plays a role in more than 600 body functions. It can also help lower blood pressure and has anti-inflammatory and antidiabetic effects.

However, up to 20% of people in the United States do not get enough magnesium

## It may have antifungal, antiviral, and antibacterial effects

Tamarind extract contains natural compounds that have antimicrobial effects.

In fact, studies show that this plant may have antifungal, antiviral, and antibacterial activity .

It has also been used in traditional medicine to treat diseases like malaria .

A compound called lupeol is credited with tamarind's antibacterial effects .

## How to eat tamarind

You can enjoy this fruit in several ways.

One is to simply eat the fruit from the raw pods, as shown in this video.

You can also use tamarind paste in cooking. You can either prepare it from the pods or purchase it as a block.

The paste is often mixed with sugar to make candy. Tamarind can also be used to make condiments like chutney.

Additionally, you can use the frozen, unsweetened pulp or sweetened tamarind syrup for cooking.

You may also use this fruit to add a sour note to savory dishes, instead of lemon.