

A Taste of the Tropics

Bartenders are going wild for these lesser-known, rainforest-grown fruits



1 Rambutan

The Rambutan Margarita at El Big Bad
HOUSTON

At this Houston “gastro-cantina,” margaritas can be ordered with a variety of tequilas infused with seasonal ingredients such as pistachio, persimmon, hominy, and hops. One of the most obscure items on offer is rambutan, a fuzzy fruit related to the lychee, found in Southeast Asia (*rambut* is Malay for “hair”). El Big Bad co-owner Steve Sharma sources fresh rambutan from a local farmers market for a tequila infusion that he mixes with citrus juice and agave.

2 Bilimbi

Luke’s Bilimbi Sour at My New Joint
CUDJOE KEY, FLORIDA

The cucumber-shaped bilimbi fruit, a mouth-puckering cousin of the starfruit, can be found growing on trees in the jungles of Southeast Asia and, oddly

enough, Florida—meaning that Lynn Bell, chef and owner of the Cudjoe Key cocktail lounge My New Joint, doesn’t have to travel far to acquire it. “We source it from a local fruit farm,” she says. “Bilimbi is really sour, so it’s great for a cocktail.” For her take on a whiskey sour, Bell blends the fruit with rye whiskey, lime, and simple syrup.

3 Caja

The Cajarita at Carmo
NEW ORLEANS

In a city known for its cocktail culture, it can be difficult for bars to stand out, but Café Carmo owner Dana Honn has the perfect formula. His tropical café serves a variety of fresh juices from exotic fruits, such as açerola cherries, *cupuaçu*, and even the pulp surrounding cacao beans. For the Cajarita cocktail, Honn mixes lime, tequila blanco, and the juice of the *caja*, a

2-inch-long Amazonian fruit similar in taste and appearance to a mango.

4 Guanabana

The Striptease at Cosme
NEW YORK CITY

Finding guanabana in America is no easy task—just ask Yana Volfson, beverage director at Cosme, the celebrated Manhattan restaurant from Mexico City chef Enrique Olvera. Also known as soursop, this spiky-skinned fruit with creamy white flesh that tastes of pineapple and strawberry grows in the Caribbean and Central America, but “they don’t travel well,” Volfson says. “The only way to work with guanabana in New York City is with a puree or juice.” For her smoky yet sweet Striptease cocktail, she mixes guanabana pulp with Vida Mezcal, Dolin Blanc vermouth, lime juice, and agave, topping it off with an absinthe-salt rim.



SRIPTEASE

1 oz. Vida Mezcal • 3/4 oz. Dolin Blanc • 3/4 oz. lime juice • 3/4 oz. guanabana nectar • 1/2 oz. agave nectar • absinthe salt

Rim a glass with absinthe salt. Shake the other ingredients in an ice-filled cocktail shaker and strain into a glass.