

Fresh Mango, Multiple Ways in a Single Dessert



For many New Yorkers, the mango dessert being served this summer at India Accent, the chef Manish Mehrotra's restaurant in Midtown, is likely to come as a revelation. Think of it as a study in mango, a series of poetic variations that pay tribute to the fruit's versatility.

To put it together, Mr. Mehrotra and his team arrange slices of ripe orange fruit in a bowl. The chef is using prime Kesar mangoes, meltingly sweet and soft. The slices rise like a ridged island out of a saffron-hued puddle of mango purée. They're surrounded by tiny boats of contrasting texture: air-dried light-as-meringue puffs and gummy cubes.

Astride the mango atoll stands a creamy scoop of shrikhand, a thick strained yogurt mixed with sugar, almond powder and a pinch of cardamom.

Mr. Mehrotra said the shrikhand is a nod to Gujarat, in western India, and so is the puréed mango part of the dessert: A popular treat there is aamras, a simple treat of pure mango pulp served with dunking bread.

"Usually these are two different things from the same region," Mr. Mehrotra said in a phone call from Kerala, in southern India. "I have combined them to make one dessert."

But by tossing in the chewy cubes, he is also winking at a third sweet that's familiar to children in India: aam papad, a candylike fruit leather made by drying sheets of mango in the sunshine.

For customers with roots in India, the complete dish is meant to act as a gentle array of nostalgic reminders. "These things are very much part of our tradition," Mr. Mehrotra said. "Everyone misses their childhood."

And for anyone who tries it, the dessert is intended to serve as a light, simple, fruit-and-candy counterpoint to the complexity of modern dining — and life.

"I think we are becoming too modern, and we are forgetting these things," the chef went on. "I really want to revive all these things."