

VOGUE

living

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TASTE

JANUARY WITH A CHANCE OF JAGGERY

As farmers' markets bloom and seasonal menus take over restaurants, chef **NARENDRA SHARMA** of Ananda In The Himalayas, known for its Ayurveda-driven menu, takes it a notch higher by breaking down ingredients by month (because your dinner plate should be on-trend too). By PRACHI JOSHI

'Eat what's in season' might sound like advice straight from your grandmother, but it is also echoed by Narendra Sharma, executive chef at Ananda In The Himalayas, the celebrated spa resort in Uttarakhand. The spa's 'reju-

venation cuisine' uses Ayurveda's classification of vata, pitta and kapha doshas to design a diet that is customised to your body type. But the wellness programme at Ananda is less about detoxing and more about revital-

ising your body by eating fresh, seasonal ingredients. Chef Sharma shares his guide on the best foods for each month of the year. >

Chef
Narendra
Sharma



Sugarcane has a low glycemic index

JANUARY

This is the best time for sugarcane; sugarcane juice is tridosha according to Ayurveda, which means it is good for all three doshas. It has a low glycemic index and does not cause fluctuations in blood sugar levels. Another ingredient that is perfect for January is sesame. Combined with jaggery, sesame is available in the form of gajak, laddoo and chikki during Sankranti across India, and there's reason for that—bitter foods like sesame destroy excessive kapha (see box on dosha types) and sweet flavours like jaggery calm the pitta. The natural heat of sesame also protects from the cold and improves immunity.



Garnish winter salads with citrus wedges

FEBRUARY

Citrus fruits such as orange and lemon are beneficial this month, especially for people with the kapha body type, for whom astringent flavourings are particularly helpful. Tamarind is another ingredient that is perfect for February. Try making tamarind chutney or simply add it to your curry or lentil preparations. Tamarind helps in digestion and counters acid reflux.

Sorghum flour rotis complement rustic Indian curries



MARCH

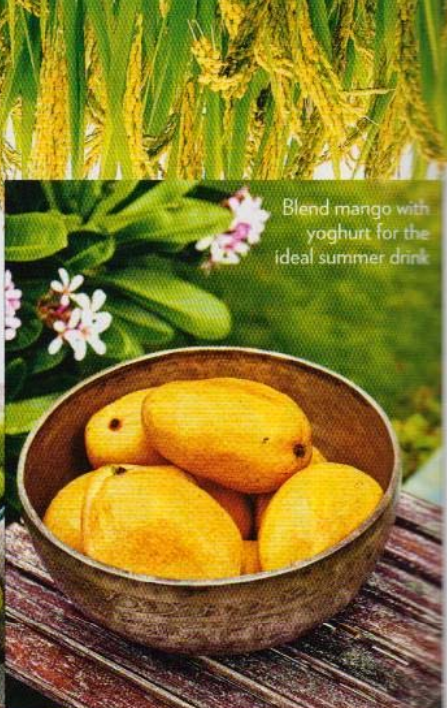
March is springtime, or Phagun, the month of Holi. This is when popped sorghum or jowar is used in many rituals. Sorghum is a whole grain that is packed with nutrients and antioxidants. Plus, it's gluten-free. Making sorghum pops is quite simple—just heat a heavy-bottomed pan till it's very hot and then dry-roast sorghum seeds. Once the seeds start popping, lower the heat and cover the pan with a tight-fitting lid. Shake the pot regularly till all the seeds have popped. Season with salt, chilli powder and cumin powder to make a healthy snack.



Blend amla into an icy green smoothie

APRIL

This month signifies the start of summer and few ingredients counter the heat as well as neem. Neem is antibacterial and antifungal, so it helps keep diseases and skin conditions at bay. Due to its bitter taste, it is an excellent pitta pacifier and helps in cooling the body. This is the reason many Indian festivals in the month of Chaitra (such as Gudi Padva and Ugadi) involve an intake of neem in some form, usually as juice or a paste. Amla (Indian gooseberry) is another ingredient that is beneficial this time of the year. Apart from juicing and having it raw or pickled, you can go for the more palatable amla jelly or candy.



Blend mango with yoghurt for the ideal summer drink

MAY

At the peak of summer, consume plenty of cooling foods such as yoghurt and buttermilk. It is also time for the king of fruits—mango! Contrary to popular belief, having mangoes this time of the year is actually good for you because of its high vitamin, antioxidant and dietary fibre content. Always soak them in water for at least a couple of hours before consumption. Summer brings another fruit—the sweet and sour phalsa. These reddish purple berries can be eaten as is or you can make a cooling summer sherbet by mixing the fruit pulp with sugar (or jaggery) and water.



Get creative with jamun juice

JUNE

June is for jamun! The deep purple, extremely tart Indian blackberry is in season from late May to June. It's packed with nutrients and is often used to counter stomach ailments. Ayurveda practitioners use the seeds to control diabetes as well. You can use jamun to make a chilled soup—mix jamun juice with yoghurt or buttermilk, add a bit of salt and pepper and refrigerate for a very healthy drink. If you want to indulge, try making a jamun mousse, macaron or cheesecake.



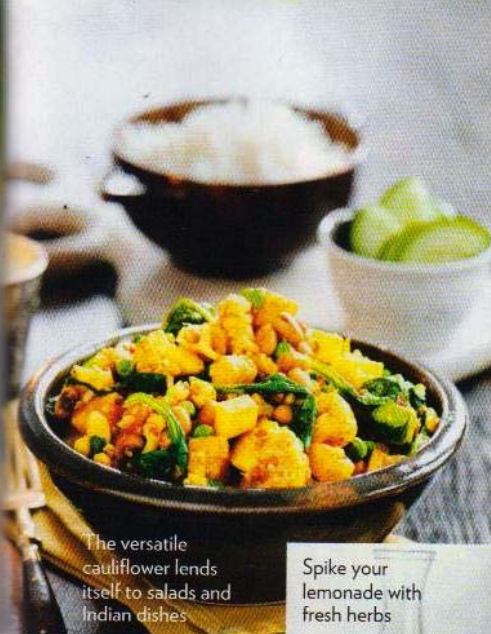
SESAME SEED AND JAGGERY GAJAK (10 servings)

Ingredients

500gm unsalted butter, 1.25kg fresh jaggery, 1kg white oats, 400gm coconut powder, 300gm sesame seeds, 50gm sunflower seeds

Method

1. In a pan, melt butter and add fresh jaggery to it.
2. Mix all the other ingredients separately and fold into the melted butter mixture.
3. Spread this on a baking tray, bake at 100 degree celsius for 15 minutes.
4. Cut and serve.



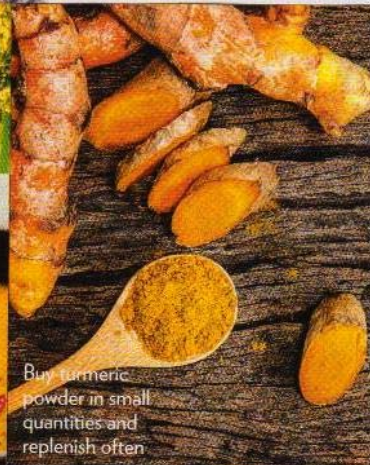
The versatile cauliflower lends itself to salads and Indian dishes



Chilled kheer will calm pitta and is an excellent source of calcium



Serve a morning glory stir-fry with vermicelli



Buy turmeric powder in small quantities and replenish often

JULY

July brings the rains as a welcome relief from the scorching Indian summer. Any vegetable that grows in rainwater is an excellent choice this month. Cauliflower, which is rich in vitamins and folates, is one of the healthiest foods available. Make a steaming cup of cauliflower cappuccino using roasted cauliflower, and flavour it with fresh herbs like parsley. Or make a simple roasted cauliflower salad by seasoning it with salt, pepper, mustard and olive oil. Avoid fried food and chillies this time of the year.



Spike your lemonade with fresh herbs

AUGUST

Lemons are at their best in August. Apart from drinking tons of lemonade, try making a carrot and lemon soup, or indulge a bit with a baked lemon cheesecake. A warm tonic of ginger, lemon and honey is a good, natural antidote for colds that are common this month. Also, a mix of dry ginger and jaggery eaten everyday is good for digestion. Avoid raw ingredients this time of the year.

SEPTEMBER

This is a good time for milk and dairy products. September is also when the summer rice, or Rabi rice, hits the market. Get the best of both worlds with a combination of the two ingredients in rice porridge or kheer. You can serve it hot as a traditional kheer, or thicken and refrigerate it to make a Spanish rice pudding, garnished with cinnamon powder. Another superfood (and pitta pacifier) to have this month is yam, which can be roasted or mashed to serve as a side dish instead of potatoes.

OCTOBER

Try morning glory or water spinach this month. This leafy vegetable has tender shoots and leaves, and is used extensively in South East Asian cooking. You can simply blanch the leaves, purée them and make a healthy soup. Or rustle up a stir-fried preparation with morning glory and broccoli, adding chilli, garlic and ginger. Add some shrimp paste to give it a Thai touch. Or try the Malayalee preparation of thoran, where morning glory leaves are chopped and mixed with grated coconut, mustard seeds, curry leaves and turmeric. Another beneficial leafy green at this time of the year is fenugreek (methi).

NOVEMBER

Carrots are at their freshest and most flavourful now, so it's a good time to consume them. And look beyond gajar ka halwa! Carrots are choc-a-bloc with vitamins A, C and K, as well as beta-carotene, which is beneficial for the eyes. Carrot soup is perfect for the weather and it's also very easy to make. Roasting the carrots beforehand imparts a delicious earthiness and depth to the soup. If you have a sweet tooth, bake a carrot cake, but go easy on the frosting.

DECEMBER

Turmeric root is the best ingredient at this time of the year. It's an anti-inflammatory agent and is widely used in Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine. With its peppery, slightly bitter flavour, turmeric root is a superfood that is very helpful for pitta body types. Sliced turmeric root, simply dressed with some lemon juice, ginger and honey, makes a healthy salad, especially when combined with cooked spinach leaves. Add turmeric root to soups, stews and stir fries for a rich colour and complex taste.

CAULIFLOWER CAPPUCCINO (serves 1)

Ingredients

100gm cauliflower florets, 100ml milk, 50gm salt, 5ml cream, 20ml stock, 2ml truffle oil

Method

1. Blanch cauliflower in milk. Strain the florets and blend into a fine purée.
3. In a pan, heat vegetable stock and tip in the cauliflower purée and adjust seasoning.
4. Add cream to finish the dish.
5. Dust with paprika and a few drops of truffle oil. Serve hot.



WHAT'S YOUR DOSHA?

Vata = Space + Air
Pitta = Fire + Water
Kapha = Earth + Water

ORGANIC CARROT AND GINGER SOUP (serves 5)

Ingredients

300gm carrot (roasted and roughly cut), 20gm onion (roughly chopped), 30gm ginger, 10gm leek, 100ml orange juice, 10gm fennel powder, 2 peppercorns (crushed), 5ml oil, 2gm celery

Method

1. In a pan, heat oil and sauté onions in it.
2. Add leek, celery, peppercorn and sauté further.
3. Add roasted carrot, fennel and vegetable stock. Cook for 10-15 minutes on slow fire.
4. Cool and purée this mixture. Strain and adjust seasoning.
6. In another pan, reduce orange juice until thick. Drizzle the emulsion on your soup. ■