Frootrition

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Café Guide

Coffee & Tea with Indian Fruit



A practical menu guide for Indian cafés, chai counters and HoReCa kitchens.

By the Frootrition Team · November 2026

Concepts only — flavour, fruit, serving style and what to watch for. No recipes.

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THE IDEA

Why fruit belongs with coffee and tea

India already drinks tea at every corner, and coffee in more cafés every year. Both drinks have started taking fruit. The next step is to let **Indian fruit lead the cup**: a chikoo latte that tastes of caramel, a nashpati chai that smells of saunf, a jewel-dark jamun iced tea, a kinnow espresso tonic when winter citrus arrives.

Tea and coffee are familiar, affordable and available everywhere. Fruit is what makes a cup look and taste new. A fruit-led drink also gives a café a seasonal story without rebuilding the menu: the tea, the coffee, the milk and the equipment stay the same, and only the fruit layer changes. In summer, fruit iced teas and cold brew sit naturally on the board. In winter, menus lean toward warm comfort drinks — and a fruit chai or a hot santra cup fills a gap that chai, coffee and hot chocolate alone do not.

THE ONE RULE

Think of every fruit-tea or fruit-coffee drink as two decisions: **milky or black**, and **hot or iced**. Matching the fruit to the base matters more than any single recipe.

MILKY · HOT OR ICED

Chai, latte, cappuccino, iced latte. These suit fruit that is **mellow, low in acid and naturally sweet or malty** — chikoo, ripe nashpati, banana, mango. Hot milk is unforgiving: acid plus heat can make it look split or taste flat.

BLACK OR ICED

Iced tea, cold brew, espresso tonic, black tea. These suit fruit that is **bright, tart, tannic or juicy** — pineapple, kinnow, orange, kokum, jamun, pomegranate. The clear base lets the fruit's colour show, and cold service keeps the acidity crisp.

FRUIT CHARACTER	EXAMPLES	BEST BASE	WATCH OUT FOR
Mellow, malty, low-acid	Chikoo, ripe nashpati, banana, mango	Milky chai or latte	Delicate aroma fades with long boiling
Bright, acidic, juicy	Pineapple, kinnow, orange, kokum	Cold brew, iced tea, tonic	Can split hot milk
Tannic, deep-coloured	Jamun, pomegranate	Iced black tea or a sparkling cup	Turns milky drinks grey-purple
Spice-friendly, aromatic	Pear, apple, orange peel	Hot chai with saunf, elaichi, cinnamon	Too much spice hides the fruit

Name the drink honestly. A fruit tea or fruit coffee made fresh at the counter is a café beverage — "jamun iced tea" or "chikoo latte" is enough. Use an origin name such as Darjeeling, Assam, Nilgiri, Coorg, Chikmagalur or Araku only when the tea or coffee genuinely comes from that origin, and say "blend" when it is a blend. Keep menu language to taste, colour and refreshment — not energy, detox or health.

FOR DRINKS, NOT A HARVEST DIARY

A seasonal fruit calendar for the bar

Treat the calendar as a direction, not a schedule. Arrival dates shift with the monsoon, heat and pest pressure, and the same fruit arrives weeks apart in different states. Confirm with your supplier or mandi two weeks before launch, and have a second fruit ready for the same concept.



SUMMER INTO EARLY MONSOON

Kokum, jamun, mango, pineapple

- **Kokum** · April–June · iced tea, coffee tonic
- **Jamun** · June–July · iced tea
- **Mango** · the main summer season; gone by October
- **Pineapple** · variety and region dependent · cold brew

LATE MONSOON INTO AUTUMN

Nashpati, apple, early chikoo

- **Nashpati** · late July–August · masala chai
- **Apple** · August–December harvest, then stored through winter
- **Chikoo** · also around September–October, and again into the warmer months

OCTOBER–FEBRUARY, THE CAFÉ WINTER

Citrus, guava, chikoo, anar, amla

- **Amla** · October–February · tonic-style cups
- **Guava** · October–February; the winter crop is usually the most aromatic
- **Chikoo** · often still in winter markets · latte
- **Orange / santra** · November–February
- **Kinnow** · plan in November; peak December–January in Haryana, January–February in Punjab
- **Mosambi** · two flushes; one runs late monsoon into winter
- **Pomegranate** · much of the year, strong in winter · iced tea, colour in a tonic
- **Strawberry** · some regions, often a February teaser

WHEN THE FRESH WINDOW CLOSES

A prepared base keeps the drink on the board

- Kokum after June, jamun after July, mango after summer — frozen pulp or a café fruit base
- Pomegranate is available much of the year
- A good base keeps flavour, colour and texture consistent from one cup to the next

HOT · MILKY OR LIGHTLY SPICED

Kulhad masala chai twists

The kulhad already feels like home. Fruit should make the cup softer, brighter or more fragrant — not louder than the chai. These are concepts only: ingredient directions, not recipes.



Nashpati chai

FLAVOUR IDEA

A soft, gently spiced cup — floral pear, saunf and elaichi — rather than a loud fruit drink. It suits winter boards and rusk-dunking regulars.

SERVING STYLE

Hot, in a kulhad or a cup, with rusk on the side. Saunf and green cardamom bring out the fragrance already in a chai pot.

THE FRUIT

Nashpati, the crisp Indian pear. Patharnakh is described as green, gritty, crisp and juicy, maturing in the last week of July; other Punjab types follow in early August.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Pear holds up to warmth better than chikoo, but a long rolling boil still dulls it. Cooked or poached pear notes work well; raw pear juice boiled hard in milk does not.

Apple cinnamon chai

FLAVOUR IDEA

A cosy winter cup: apple warmth with cinnamon, and clove if you want more spice. The fruit should still be readable after the masala.

SERVING STYLE

Hot, in a kulhad or a glass mug. A simple snack pairing — rusk or a mild biscuit — is enough.

THE FRUIT

Indian apple from the Kashmir and Himachal harvest, then from store through winter. Firm, tart apples hold structure; softer, sweeter ones give body to a drink.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Too much spice hides the fruit. Crispness, a firm feel and a fresh stem are better buying guides than shine.

Orange, cinnamon and clove

FLAVOUR IDEA

A zesty hot brew: bright citrus, warm spice, a peel note in the steam. This is a winter café special, not a second masala chai.

SERVING STYLE

Hot, in a glass mug, with a peel twist as garnish rather than a long-boiled peel.

THE FRUIT

Indian orange or Nagpur santra. Zest and peel oils carry most of the aroma. The peel may stay green or patchy even when the fruit inside is ripe.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Citrus can turn bitter after heating and standing, especially if membranes and seeds are boiled. Warm close to service, and do not let spice take over the fruit.

ICED · CLEAR AND BRIGHT

Fruit iced teas

Fruit iced tea is a simple café build: strong brewed tea, chilled, poured over ice and finished with a fruit base. India already understands the tea; the fruit is what makes the glass look like a special. Brew the tea with body, chill it promptly, and add the fruit last. Concepts only.



Peach iced tea

FLAVOUR IDEA

Mellow, juicy and familiar — the easiest first fruit iced tea for most menus.

THE FRUIT

Peach, as a strained or clear fruit base when a bright glass matters.

SERVING STYLE

Tall glass, over ice. Black tea (Assam or a CTC blend) gives body and holds up to peach.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Tea chilled slowly can turn cloudy. Pulpy fruit adds haze. A fragrant tea should not be so heavy that it hides the fruit.

Kokum iced tea

FLAVOUR IDEA

Sharp, sour and deep red — the Konkan fruit on a café board, either sweet like a sherbet or with a savoury edge.

THE FRUIT

Kokum (Garcinia indica). It fruits from April to June, so cafés usually work from a syrup or concentrate.

SERVING STYLE

Clear glass, over ice, with black tea. A pinch of kala namak or a chilli-salt rim can be offered as an option.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Decide sweet or salted before you trial — customers may expect either style. Keep kokum as a flavour, not a health line on the menu.

Pink guava iced tea

FLAVOUR IDEA

Soft, floral and aromatic, with a natural pink colour from the flesh.

THE FRUIT

Pink guava (amrud). The winter crop is usually sweeter and more aromatic than the rainy-season one. Seeds are hard, so the base is typically sieved.

SERVING STYLE

Tall glass, over ice. Green tea or a lighter Darjeeling-style tea lets the fruit show; a heavy tea can hide it. Use a genuine origin name only when it is true.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Fibre-rich pulp clouds a glass and can settle. Choose a strained puree when clarity matters.

Jamun or pomegranate iced tea

FLAVOUR IDEA

Jamun: tart, jewel-dark and crisp, with a pinch of kala namak. Pomegranate: a ruby winter sip, with arils in the glass.

THE FRUIT

Jamun ripens only in June–July and is highly perishable, so a November cup needs frozen pulp or a processed base. Pomegranate is available much of the year and is strong in winter.

SERVING STYLE

Clear glass, over ice. A fragrant, bright tea lets pomegranate show; a malty tea is better kept for hot milk chai. Jamun belongs with black tea.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Keep both fruits out of hot milk, where colour and tartness turn the cup dull or grey-purple. Pomegranate can also lose brightness if it is heated, so prefer it cold.

COFFEE · MILKY OR ICED AND BLACK

Cold coffee, and a chikoo latte

Café coffee in India now goes well beyond a standard iced latte. Fruit can sit in a milky cup when it is mellow, or in cold brew when it is bright. The pairing rule still holds: keep sharp fruit out of hot milk.



Chikoo latte

FLAVOUR IDEA

Malty, caramel and mellow — ripe chikoo tastes close to brown sugar or gur, and meets espresso and steamed milk halfway.

THE FRUIT

Chikoo (sapota). Smoother, mellow-fleshed types such as Kalipatti are easier in a latte than gritty ones such as Cricket Ball.

SERVING STYLE

Hot in a cup, with a crumble of khari or a light dusting of cocoa. It can also be offered iced and milky.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Do not boil chikoo with milk. Heat changes the pulp's flavour and colour, so add the chikoo element off the heat, or use a stable chikoo base. Fresh chikoo is highly perishable and sensitive to cold storage — plan small batches.

Pineapple cold brew

FLAVOUR IDEA

Bright, bold and tangy. Juicy acidity and tropical aroma are exactly what a smooth, low-bitterness cold brew can carry, and the contrast of golden fruit and dark coffee looks striking in a tall glass.

THE FRUIT

Pineapple. A juicy Kew-type pulp suits a poured cold brew; Queen's aroma suits a garnish or a fragrant base. Tripura Queen pineapple is a registered geographical indication — use the name only when it is genuine.

SERVING STYLE

Iced, in a tall glass, with lime and mint for lift, and a light savoury snack or toast on the side.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Pineapple is a black-coffee fruit. The same acidity that brightens cold brew can split a hot latte. Pulpy fruit also makes sparkling drinks foam and go flat faster, so strain if you add soda.

Other coffee directions that stay on-concept. Orange or mosambi with an espresso tonic; kokum with a cold-brew soda; mango and coconut with nitro cold brew as a summer special; pomegranate with an espresso tonic for colour. Nitro starts as cold brew and is infused with nitrogen for a creamy texture without milk, served from a tap. A "coffee refresher" is a different drink again: its caffeine comes from green coffee extract, and it does not taste like roasted coffee. Whatever you pour, keep the menu language about taste and refreshment.

SPARKLING · CITRUS AND COFFEE

Fruit espresso tonic

An espresso tonic puts espresso over tonic in a clear glass. Fruit turns it into a signature: a kinnow float in winter, or orange, mosambi or pomegranate when those fruits lead. Pre-chill the glass and the tonic, add espresso last, and serve immediately.



Kinnow espresso tonic

FLAVOUR IDEA

Layers of orange, tonic and coffee: a bright winter mandarin in a drink many boards already know as citrus-and-espresso. Keep the citrus bright, not bitter.

SERVING STYLE

A clear tall glass. A kinnow float or base under tonic, espresso poured on top. Serve at once, while the layers and the fizz are still alive.

THE FRUIT

Kinnow, north India's winter mandarin: a medium, somewhat oblate, glossy yellowish-orange fruit with very juicy, somewhat acidic pulp. "Kinnow" is the honest menu name; "orange" alone describes the colour, not the fruit.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Fresh kinnow juice can taste fine at the counter and turn bitter a few hours later. Press to order, keep peel and seeds out of the press, and do not batch fresh juice for the day. Acid plus coffee can also read harsh if the fruit has already turned.

Orange or mosambi tonic

FLAVOUR IDEA

The same sparkling coffee idea, with a familiar citrus. Mosambi is milder and lower in acid than a mandarin.

THE FRUIT

Orange or mosambi (sweet lime). Mosambi is also prone to delayed bitterness after juicing.

SERVING STYLE

Clear glass, espresso last, served immediately.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Serve fresh juice quickly and avoid squeezing peel and pith hard. Do not call a syrup-based cup "fresh juice" on the menu.

Pomegranate espresso tonic

FLAVOUR IDEA

Colour first: a ruby note in a clear sparkling coffee, useful when you want the glass to catch the eye.

THE FRUIT

Pomegranate (anar), strong in the Indian winter and available much of the year.

SERVING STYLE

Clear glass, perhaps with a few arils. Espresso last.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Acidity stacks with coffee. Pulpy fruit makes sparkling drinks foam and go flat faster, so a clearer pomegranate element behaves better under tonic.

Service notes that apply to every sparkling coffee. Acidity stacks, so very sharp fruit may need a softer coffee or a touch of sweetness — that balance is your own development work. The popular layered look depends on density: a sweeter, denser fruit component sinks and holds; a thin juice mixes at once. Taste the drink again after it has sat on the counter; that is how the guest often drinks it.

WARM · FRUIT-LED WINTER CUPS

Winter fruit hot teas and steamers

When iced refreshers slow down, guests still want something fruity. A warm fruit drink is the winter version of the café refresher: a fruit base heated with warm spices and served in a glass mug or kulhad, alongside chai and hot chocolate. It also gives a caffeine-free option. Watery, delicate fruits such as watermelon or strawberry lose their fresh character quickly when heated; the four below hold up better.



Hot apple

FLAVOUR IDEA

A clear amber cup with round body and gentle sweetness — the familiar “hot cider” style, built from Indian apple.

THE FRUIT

Apple (seb), from the autumn harvest and from store through winter. A strained apple base carries cinnamon, clove, star anise or ginger without tasting thin.

SERVING STYLE

Hot, in a glass mug.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Long simmering drives off fresh aroma, so the drink tastes cooked rather than fresh. Warm close to service. Warm drinks also taste sweeter than the same drink served cold.

Spiced santra

FLAVOUR IDEA

Bright orange colour, a tangy lift, and an aromatic peel twist — winter citrus in a warm glass.

THE FRUIT

Nagpur mandarin (santra). The ambia crop is harvested through November and, as far as possible, finished by the first week of December.

SERVING STYLE

Hot, in a glass mug, with a peel twist. Clove, cinnamon, ginger or gur are natural partners.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Citrus can turn bitter after heating and standing. Warm a strained base per order, and use peel as an aroma garnish rather than boiling it for a long time. A santra cup can taste thin unless the base has enough body.

Chilli-salt guava

FLAVOUR IDEA

The most aromatic of the warm cups: thick, pink and very fragrant, with the classic guava-chilli-salt pairing.

THE FRUIT

Pink guava (amrud). Winter guava is usually the crop to wait for. Sieve out the hard seeds.

SERVING STYLE

Hot, in a kulhad, with a chilli-salt or black-salt rim. Ginger sits well beside it.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Fibre-rich pulp thickens when hot and settles when it stands, so stir, or brief a finer, sieved base. Pink guava keeps its colour well; that is part of the appeal of the cup.

Pear and cardamom steamer

FLAVOUR IDEA

Pale gold, soft and mellow — a quiet carrier for cardamom, nutmeg or a hint of saffron, rather than a loud fruit drink.

THE FRUIT

Pear (nashpati). Fresh Indian pears peak in late July and August; a prepared pear base keeps the idea on a winter board.

SERVING STYLE

Hot, as a frothed steamer, in a glass mug or a cup.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Pulp can thicken and settle. A long boil dulls the fruit. Trial the spice level so elaichi does not hide the pear.

FROM A CONCEPT TO A BOARD

Menu-building tips

A fruit-led drinks list does not need to be long. It needs a clear rule, honest names, and a cup that tastes the same at the end of service as it did at the start.

1 **Decide milky or black first**
Pick the base, then pick the fruit from the character table. Soft, sweet fruit loves a milky hot cup. Bright, sour or tannic fruit stays iced and clear.

2 **Keep sharp fruit out of hot milk**
Pineapple, jamun, kokum and citrus carry enough acid that, with heat, milk can look curdled or taste flat. Save milky drinks for mellow fruit.

3 **Add delicate fruit off the heat**
Chikoo pulp loses flavour and colour when it is boiled. Warm fruit drinks in general keep more character when they are warmed briefly, close to service, rather than simmered for a long stretch.

4 **Follow the season, then choose a format**
Fresh fruit at the counter gives theatre. Frozen pulp covers the off-season. A café fruit base keeps taste, colour and texture consistent — usually the easiest path for more than one outlet.

5 **Write three taste words and one pairing**
Give each drink three taste words and one snack pairing on the board — "caramel, mellow, malty, with khari" tells a guest more than a long description.

6 **Name the drink honestly**
Use the fruit's real name. Do not call a syrup-based cup "fresh juice". Use an origin name only when the tea or coffee is genuinely from that origin, and say "blend" when it is a blend. Make no health claims.

7 **Trial with your own water, milk and service**
The same fruit behaves differently in hot milk, iced tea and cold brew. Trial the pairing with the water, milk and serving style you actually use.

8 **Have a second fruit ready**
Seasons move, and a lot can disappoint. Confirm supply two weeks before a launch, and keep a backup fruit that can do the same job on the board.

9 **Taste the cup as the guest will**
A refresher that is perfect at the bar can change after it has sat on the counter. Taste it again the way a guest drinks it, and serve sparkling coffees immediately.

10 **Keep Tuesday's cup like Saturday's**
Fresh fruit varies from week to week. If the drink must taste the same across a service — or across outlets — brief a fruit partner on format, flavour, colour, storage and the name that will appear on the menu.

If you later bottle a fruit tea or a ready-to-drink coffee, that is a packaged food, and the current labelling and product standards apply. A drink made and served at the counter is a café beverage. This guide is general information, not legal advice. Check the current standards for your category before you name a packaged product.

BEFORE IT REACHES THE BAR

A buying and ripeness checklist

Prices and quality move week to week with weather and mandi arrivals. Winter can be a good-value season for several fruits, but it is local and changeable. Track your own market, wash and inspect fruit before use, and ask how it was ripened. Controlled ethylene is the permitted route; calcium carbide is not.



Kinnow

Look for a medium, glossy, yellowish-orange mandarin with juicy, somewhat acidic pulp. Quality does not improve in storage. Clip, do not pull, when you can influence the harvest. Once juiced, bitterness can build within a few hours, so press to order and keep peel and seeds out of the press.

Orange and mosambi

Indian oranges often stay green or patchy when they are already ripe, because many growing areas are too warm for the peel to colour fully. Do not reject fruit only for a green skin; taste it. Zest carries most of the aroma. Mosambi is mild and low in acid; juice that tasted fine can turn bitter if it stands, so serve it quickly and avoid squeezing peel and pith hard.

Guava

The winter crop is usually sweeter and more aromatic. Pink flesh gives a natural colour in iced tea and in a hot cup. Seeds are hard, so plan to sieve. Fibre-rich pulp will thicken and settle when heated.

Chikoo

Ripe chikoo tastes malty and caramel-like. It browns quickly once cut, and the grainy texture needs fine processing for a smooth latte. It is highly perishable and sensitive to cold storage, so buy for prompt use or work from a prepared base. Smoother, mellow-fleshed lots are easier than very gritty ones.

Apple and nashpati

For apples, crispness, a firm feel and a fresh stem are better guides than shine. Firm, tart fruit holds structure; softer, sweeter fruit is better when you want body. Nashpati should be crisp and juicy; the late-July and early-August types are the Indian fresh window.

Jamun, kokum and pomegranate

Fully ripe jamun is deep purple to black, and the season is short — June and July — so off-season drinks need frozen pulp or a base. Kokum's fresh window is April to June; after that, brief a syrup or concentrate and agree a colour and a sweet or salted style. Pomegranate should show bright arils; it is happier in a cold glass than in a long-heated cup.

A short brief for any fruit base

Say whether the base is for iced tea, a latte, a tonic, a cold brew or a hot cup. Choose a format — syrup, puree, concentrate, or a preparation with pieces. Agree whether the glass should be clear or whether haze is acceptable, and agree a colour reference. Decide how sweet the base should be, and how it will be stored once opened. Then trial it in the actual drink.

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Ask about a custom fruit base for chai, iced tea, cold brew or a winter cup. Tell us the format, your process and your storage. No formulations are published here.

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- Kinnow café refreshers, including espresso tonic — **frootrition.com/kinnow-cafe-refreshers-soda-cooler-espresso-tonic-granita/**
- Warm fruit drinks for winter menus — **frootrition.com/warm-fruit-drinks-winter-cafe-menu-hot-apple-spiced-orange-guava-pear/**
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