

Durian Fruit:  
Delicious or Disgusting?



The durian, a fruit native to **Southeast Asia**, has been known to the Western world for about 600 years. The name of this fruit has derived from the **Malay** word for 'spike', a reference to the spiky **husk** encasing its yellow (or red) **kernel**. There are 30 recognized Durio species, at least 9 of which produce edible fruit, but **Durio zibethinus** is the only species available on the international market, all other species being sold only in their local regions.

The durian is distinctive for its large size, **strong smell**, and formidable spike-covered husk. The fruit can grow as large as 30 centimeters long and 15 centimeters in diameter, and it typically weighs one to three kilograms.

In Asia some people regard the durian as having a pleasantly sweet fragrance; others find its smell utterly unpleasant. The smell evokes reactions from deep appreciation to intense disgust, and has been described variously as turpentine, rotten onions and open sewers. The **persistence of its odor**, which may linger for several days, has led to the **fruit's banishment** from certain hotels and public transportation in Southeast Asia.

In Europe this fruit's taste has been described in more appreciative terms; for instance, 19<sup>th</sup>-century British naturalist **Alfred Russel Wallace** described the texture of its kernel as 'a rich custard highly flavored with almonds.' The flesh can be consumed at various stages of ripeness, and it is used to flavor a wide variety of **savory and sweet edibles** in Southeast Asian cuisines.

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