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BANGALORE, April 23, 2014

Consumers, beware of artificially ripened mangoes

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TIPS FOR CONSUMER

ARTIFICIALLY RIPENED mangoes, unlike naturally ripened ones, will not have a good aroma

ARTIFICIALLY RIPENED mangoes will have yellow outer skin, but the tissue/flesh inside will not be ripe

THEY WILL BE DRY and less juicy compared to a naturally ripened ones, which would have sucked enough water from the tree

FRUITS THAT HAVE A UNIFORM COLOUR are more likely to have been artificially ripened

WASH THE FRUITS thoroughly before consuming. Keep them under running water for a few

minutes, so that the chemicals are washed away.

DO NOT BUY FRUITS sold during off season, as they are more likely to be artificially ripened

WHILE EATING MANGOES, always remove the peel before cutting the fruits into pieces

THE BEST WAY to avoid artificially ripened mangoes is not to buy mangoes till the end of April, which is when the actual mango season kicks in

TIPS SOURCED FROM Association of Food Scientists and Technologists, Bangalore

Considered the “king of fruits”, mangoes are occupying prime places on shelves in markets across the State. But, amid concerns over the use of harmful chemicals for ripening mangoes, teams of Food Safety Officers (FAOs) are gearing up to fan out into markets across the State to collect samples of the fruit suspected to have been chemically ripened and send them to the laboratory for tests.

Deputy Director of Health Department, Jayakumar, who heads the Food Safety Wing in the Department of Health and Family Welfare in Karnataka, told *The Hindu* the seizure of samples suspected to be ripened with chemicals like calcium carbide will be intensified during the ensuing mango season in the wake of recent guidelines issued under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

“FAOs across the State will collect the mangoes and send them to accredited laboratories for testing.

If harmful chemicals like calcium carbide are found to have been used for artificial ripening, those guilty will be liable for punishment under the provisions of the Act.”

“Not only will the FAOs go around collecting samples routinely, we will also act immediately if complaints are received in this regard,” he said.

The use of calcium carbide for ripening fruits is banned and the offence carries a prison term ranging from six-months to life and a fine ranging from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 10 lakh. The jurisdictional police can also arrest the offenders

Retired Additional Director of Horticulture (Fruits) S.V. Hittalamani told *The Hindu* the “age-old practice” of using calcium carbide to ripen mangoes is resorted to for mangoes harvested earlier in the season.

“About 60 per cent of the mangoes harvested early in the season are treated with calcium carbide,” he said adding that the use of the chemical declines as the season progresses.

Sources in Horticulture Department said farmers and traders resort to early harvesting to avoid a glut, which leads to a decline in prices.

Instead, Mr. Hittalamani said farmers have been advised by the department to use ethylene gas, which is safe for ripening the fruit.

Mr. Jayakumar suggested that the government provide farmers and traders the facility for post-harvest management like cold storage with ethylene ripening facilities .

The Association of Food Scientists and Technologists, Bangalore, has sought to caution the people that harmful chemicals are being used to ripen a large quantity of mangoes. President of the Association’s Bangalore Chapter, G. Manjunath, said the calcium carbide treatment, which gives the fruit a “misleading ripe, healthy look”, is extremely hazardous because it contains traces of arsenic and phosphorus. Consumption of

such artificially ripened mangoes can caused mouth ulcers, gastric problems, diarrhoea and skin rashes, he said.
