

Italy: Exotic fruit demand expected to increase

The demand for exotic fruit is expected to increase in December, especially towards Christmas. We are talking about products such as papayas, avocados and mangoes, "the demand for which has continued to increase over the past few years," explains a wholesaler from Bologna. He also stresses, though, that it is still a niche market.

"To have high-quality papayas, for example, you have to look at the produce imported by air from Brazil, where it is grown 12 months a year." This of course has an effect on the prices, which are at least three times higher than those for local fruit - we are talking about "€4/kg for papayas imported by air, which remains constant throughout the year, as the price is high due to transport costs. We can say that the thing that costs least in a crate of papayas is the actual fruit."

Of course papayas can be found at a lower price, even €2-2.50/kg, but we are talking about fruit imported by sea from Ecuador and Central African countries such as the Ivory Coast. Most of all, though, we are talking about an entirely different quality, as the fruit has spent weeks in a container. "Most of the papayas sold on the traditional market are imported by sea."

The consumption of avocados and mangoes is also increasing. "In addition, consumers are requesting more prestigious varieties like Hass." At the moment, the produce is imported by sea from Israel and Spain. A month ago, avocados came from South Africa.

For what concerns mangoes, while consumption is increasing in general, it somewhat stalled in Europe last year, mainly because of the Paris terrorist attacks. "This year, quantities are 30-40% lower than usual due to the drought in Peru."

Despite this growth in consumption, the exotic fruit market is still a niche one, especially in Italy. "Countries like France, Spain, Germany, UK and Portugal are far ahead of us, especially since they have a long-standing immigration tradition and most used to be colonial countries."

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