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Mangosteens Arrive, but Be Prepared to Pay

By DAVID KARP

DON'T be surprised if you see a round purple fruit in a locked jewel case at the grocery. Small shipments of fresh mangosteen, a Southeast Asian fruit legendary for its exquisite flavor but long unavailable legally on the United States mainland, started coming in last week from Puerto Rico.

Concerns about pests on foreign mangosteens kept them from being imported. But now the first commercial crop in Puerto Rico is ready for shipment.

About 80 pounds are scheduled to arrive by FedEx in New York and Los Angeles this morning, said the grower, Ian Crown, and the season should last for a few more weeks.

They will go to luxury hotels and markets, said Erwan Landivinec of Baldor, the East Coast distributor. Mitchell Spitz, the owner of the Orchard, a high-end produce store in Brooklyn, said he paid \$30 a pound wholesale and was selling the fruit for \$45 a pound (about \$10 each).

Louis Balducci, a partner in the Agata & Valentina store and restaurant on the Upper East Side, said he would offer a fresh mangosteen as a dessert special at the restaurant. "How could I sell it in the store at these prices?" he said. "Next to the caviar?"

Bearing Fruit

Mangosteens can be bought at these shops and restaurants:

AGATA & VALENTINA RISTORANTE 1513 First Avenue (79th Street); (212) 452-0691. \$11 each.

THE ORCHARD 1367 Coney Island Avenue (Avenue J), Brooklyn; (718) 377-1799. \$45 a pound.

SCHMIDT'S MARKET 120 North Sea Road, Southampton, N.Y.; (631) 283-5777. \$60 a pound.