

Floating Guavas of *Bhimruli*

Local markets often showcase many unique goodies autochthonously sourced, be it an offbeat landrace of a crop, artifacts, tools or a popular local delicacy that is not available outside. And they offer easy selling point for farmers or craftsmen among a variety of consumers.

Well, now imagine if such things can be found afloat....! You need not to go far; but, let us turn our face to the Orient, in search of floating markets and canals. From waving *shikaras* of *Dal lake* or the well-known Thai delight - the floating market of Bangkok, there are remarkable markets modest in their presence and hidden in the backwaters of Barisal, Bangladesh. Barisal not only stands for *Balam* rice, betel leaf, rivers and canals, the region is also famous for several floating markets. However, the place *Bhimruli*, a village with crisscrossing water tracts located in the Jhalokathi district, is distinct in its repertoire because its produce is dominated by unwavering presence of guavas. Quiet understandably, it is also known as *Bhimruli Peyaarabazar* (*Bhimruli* guava-market).

Every day, *Bhimruli* market sets up during afternoon at the confluence of three canals, and people from nearby villages flock in the market to buy and sell various products. Though many different kinds of items are traded, the market earned its fame mostly for its guava (*Psidium guajava*) which is sold in great numbers in season. During peak hours, small boats laden with ripe and unripe guava is a common scene. And if you are curious and wish to track a collecting boat, you may catch up many such boats wading through smaller water channels which, like labyrinth, moves through guava gardens. Boatman and collector used to engage in picking guavas from the trees and dump in the boat. Apart from Guava, the market is also known for hog plum or *Spondias mombin* (*Amra* in Bengali). And many others, rice, vegetables, fruits are also sold fresh from the field.



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