



Home Deity Worship Course

Offerable and unofferable foods



ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry

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• extracted from handbook

Offering food

- Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

As far as the eatables are concerned, all items should be first-class preparations. There should be first-class rice, dāl, fruit, sweet rice, vegetables, and a variety of foods to be sucked, drunk, and chewed. All the eatables offered to the deities should be extraordinarily excellent.

Offerable foods

- The Hari-bhakti-vilāsa lists some of the foods that may be offered: bilva, āmalakī, dates, coconut, jackfruit, grapes, tāla fruit, lotus root, leafy vegetables, cow's milk products, and items made from grains, ghee, and sugar.
- Grains, especially rice, should always be offered with ghee. Rice without ghee is considered asuric. The Lord is pleased when offered items made with ghee, sugar, yogurt, guṛ (jaggery), and honey; chickpea preparations, dāls, soups (wet sabjīs), varieties of cakes, and other items that can be licked, chewed, sucked, or drunk are all pleasing as well.
- One may also offer drinks such as sugarcane juice, yogurt drinks, sweetened lemon water, water flavored with cinnamon, camphor, or cardamom, and fruit drinks of various scents and colors.
- Many passages in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta describe preparations that please Kṛṣṇa. Here is a sample, describing what Lord Caitanya's associates would prepare for Him:

They offered [Him] pungent preparations made with black pepper, sweet-and-sour preparations, ginger, salty preparations, limes, milk,



yogurt, cheese, two or four kinds of spinach, soup made with bitter melon [śukta], eggplant mixed with nimba flowers, and fried paṭola.

- In a letter Śrīla Prabhupāda described foods in the mode of goodness and how to present them to the Lord:
- Foodstuffs in the modes of goodness are wheat, rice, pulses (beans, peas), sugar, honey, butter, and all milk preparations, vegetables, flowers, fruits, grains. So these foods can be offered in any shape, but prepared in various ways by the intelligence of the devotees.
- In his Caitanya- caritāmṛta, Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the best type of rice for deity offerings:

In India śukla-cāval (white rice) is also called ātapa-cāval, or rice that has not been boiled before being threshed. Another kind of rice, called siddha-cāval (brown rice), is boiled before being threshed. Generally, first-class fine white rice is required for offerings to the deity.

- A devotee may offer bona fide foods considered delicacies by the local people or preferred by him or his family. In commenting on a śloka stating that one may offer his own or local favorites, Sanātana Gosvāmī writes that this means that even though people in general may not like a certain food, if a person prefers it he may offer it. But this refers to foods the scriptures approves, not those they forbid. Thus if one is fond of a forbidden food, one cannot offer it to the Lord. And thus one cannot eat it. Also, one should not offer even permissible foods that are tasteless, unpalatable, inedible, impure for any reason, or eaten by insects, animals, or people.
- If nothing else offerable is available, one may offer fruit alone. If even fruit is unavailable, one may offer pure water while meditating on offering elaborate preparations. If even water is unavailable, one should at least mentally make an offering of food.

Forbidden foods



- Common forbidden foods include meat, fish, eggs, onions, mushrooms, garlic, masūr-dāl (red lentils), burned rice, white eggplant, hemp (marijuana), citron, saps from trees (if not boiled first), buffalo- and goat-milk products, and milk with salt in it. Also, one should not offer canned or frozen foods to the deity, and it is best to avoid offering foods containing unhealthy substances such as yeast and white sugar.

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments:

- Frozen means nasty. I never take frozen... All rotten, rather the same vegetable, as we have got in India practice, we dry it and keep it. That is tasteful.
- So far the cucumber pickles: As far as possible we should not offer to the deity things which are prepared by nondevotees. We can accept from them raw fruits, grains, or similar raw things. So far cooking and preparing, that should be strictly limited to the initiated devotees. And aside from this, vinegar is not good; it is tamasic, in the darkness, nasty food.
- Concerning the use of sour cream in the temple, it should be stopped immediately. Nothing should be offered to the Deities which is purchased in the stores. Things produced by the karmīs should not be offered to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Icecream, if you can prepare, is O.K., but not otherwise.
- Unpolished rice which looks like brown can be used... We do not mind polished or unpolished, but doubly-boiled [siddha rice] mustn't be used. Doubly-boiled rice is considered impure. Sunbaked rice (ātapa) is all right.
- Soya beans and lentils are unofferable.
- Regarding purchasing things in the market, these items are considered as purified when we pay the price for them. That is the general instruction. But when we know something is adulterated, we should avoid it. But unknowingly if something is purchased, that is not our fault. Things which are suspicious, however, should be avoided.



- ...no, it is not very good to use yeast in preparing prasādam.
- Since it is offensive to offer anything to Kṛṣṇa that He will not accept, one should be extremely cautious not to offer (or eat) anything questionable.