Description: When cut crosswise, this showy fruit has a striking star shape, which is why it’s also called star fruit. It favors tropical climates and thrives in the Caribbean countries, Hawaii, Central and South America and parts of China. It also grows well in south Florida, including Sarasota County. The carambola was introduced to Florida more than 100 years ago and varieties have since been developed especially for Florida.

The carambola is easy to identify by the five definitive ribs that traverse its length of 3-5 inches. The skin is a glossy golden yellow when ripe, its matching flesh beautifully translucent and dotted occasionally with a dark seed. When ripe, the carambola is exceedingly juicy and fragrant. Its flavor, depending on the variety, can range from exotically sweet to refreshingly tart. In general, the broader set the ribs, the sweeter the fruit.

Availability: In Florida the carambolas begin to ripen in September, and continue to produce and ripen through March.

Selection and Care: Tree ripened carambolas have superior flavor. When most of the tinges of green are gone and the fruit takes on a glowing gold appearance, it is ready for use. Those with greening ribs may be ripened at room temperature. Use ripe carambolas within a few days or store, wrapped tightly in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to a week.

Nutritional Value: Carambolas are a good source of potassium, moderate source of vitamin C, and contribute small amounts of other minerals and vitamins.
needed daily. One cup of raw carambola contains: 91% water, 43 calories, 10.72 gm carbohydrates, 29 mg vitamin C, 207 mg potassium, and a trace of protein and fat.

**Use & Preparation:** Carambolas are best used fresh. They are also good when crosscut and dried. Although they may be frozen, pickled, dehydrated or preserved, the delicate flavor is not enhanced by any of these preserving methods.

The skin of the fruit is tender and eaten – no need to peel, although sometime the outer edge of the ribs may be removed if they have become bruised. When preparing the fruit for fresh use it is usually crosscut and the small seeds removed. It can also be cut vertically with the ribs, removing the seeds and intermembrane, then cut into chunks for adding to salads and other fruit mixes. The crosscut slices look great floating in a punch bowl.

**Recipes:**

**Carambola Fruit Salad**

1 sliced, seeded carambola, with brown edges removed
1 orange, peeled and sliced
1 banana, sliced
Juice of 1 lime

Lightly mix fruit with lime juice. Serve cold over lettuce leaves or as fruit cups.

**Sweet Carambola Relish**

8 cups thinly sliced carambolas
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 cups cider vinegar
4 cups sugar
1/2 teaspoon whole cloves
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg, optional but good*

Wash and thinly slice carambolas, taking care to remove seeds. Cover with cider vinegar and allow to stand overnight. Drain off vinegar. Combine carambolas with sugar and salt. Add cloves (which have been placed in a cheesecloth bag and lightly pounded). Cook gently to the consistency of preserves. Allow to stand overnight. Remove spice bag and reheat mixture to boiling. Pack into hot pint jars. Wipe jar mouths and adjust lids. Process in boiling water bath canner for 10 minutes. Yield: about 5 pints.

*Note: when making for long term storage it is probably best to omit the nutmeg if you do not want a dark relish, although it certainly adds to the flavor.
**Tomato Carambola and Mango Salad**

- 2 tomatoes, sliced
- 1 medium carambola, sliced
- 1/2 mango, diced
- 4 oz. semi-soft goat cheese, cut into 1/4 inch-thick rounds

**Vinaigrette**

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, minced
- Pepper to taste

Vinaigrette: Combine all ingredients in a jar, cover tightly and shake vigorously.

Arrange tomatoes on platter. Top with fruit and then add goat cheese. Sprinkle with vinaigrette. Serves 4.

**Carambola Walnut Bread**

- 2 cups flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 2 eggs
- 3/4 cup orange juice
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 cup carambola, seeds removed, diced

Combine flour, baking powder, baking soda and set aside. Cream together sugar, oil, eggs and orange juice. Add to dry ingredients, a little at a time. Fold in nuts and carambola. Bake in a well greased pan at 350°F oven for 45 to 50 minutes.