

South Florida Tropicals: Lime¹

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Background

The lime is a citrus fruit that grows in South Florida and other tropical areas. There are two major types: Mexican or Key limes (*Citrus aurantifolia*), and Persian or Tahiti limes (*Citrus x "Tahiti"*). The Key lime is small and round, about 1 to 2 inches in diameter. The fruit has a thin, smooth, leathery rind, and is green when immature and more yellow in color at maturity. The flesh is greenish-yellow, juicy, seedy, and more acidic than Tahiti limes.

Tahiti limes are larger than Key limes and oval shaped. The fruit is dark green when mature, gradually becoming yellow when over mature. The flesh is light green, juicy, slightly acidic, and generally seedless.

Availability

Limes are available all year long, but summer is the peak season.



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Selection

Look for limes that are firm, have smooth, shiny skins; are free from decay, broken, bruised or hard, dry skins; and are deep green (Tahiti) or yellow (Key lime) in color.

Storage

Refrigerated limes will stay fresh 6 to 8 weeks. Bright lights will "age" a lime and cause the skin to turn yellow. They will still be juicy, but not as pretty, so use them as soon as possible. Whole limes, like all citrus, do not freeze well.

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To freeze lime juice, squeeze and freeze in ice cube trays. When frozen, remove the cubes from the trays and store in re-sealable freezer bags in the freezer. Grated lime peel may be frozen (2 to 3 weeks) in an airtight container for use later in desserts. Because the peel has many essential oils, its flavor can change quickly. Check the flavor before using.

Uses

Enjoy limes fresh or frozen. Limes may substitute for lemons. Use 2/3 to 3/4 cup of lime juice for 1 cup lemon juice due to the higher acidity of limes. For most recipes, either of the limes can be used. Fresh limes frequently garnish desserts, meats, and drinks. Juice is used in marinades, desserts, and drinks. Use lime juice to cover sliced avocados, bananas, peaches, pears, or apples to prevent darkening. Use juice to keep cauliflower white while cooking.



Credits: rez-art/istockphoto.com

Nutritive Value

Fresh limes are an excellent food seasoning choice—they are virtually fat-free, high in vitamin C, and contain almost no sodium.

One-half cup of fresh lime juice contains:

90% water
33 calories
0.5 gram protein
trace of fat
12 grams carbohydrate
36 milligrams vitamin C

Yield

A 2-inch lime yields approximately ¼ cup of juice and pulp.

Basic Preparation

To get the most juice from limes, keep at room temperature for 1 hour before squeezing. Florida limes are always heavy

with juice. To get those juices flowing, roll a lime between the palm of your hand and the kitchen counter, applying gentle pressure. Then cut the lime in wedges and watch the fresh juice burst forth!

Food Safety during Preparation

Following these steps will help reduce your risk of food-borne illness.

- Wash your hands with hot soapy water before and after:
 - handling fresh produce
 - handling raw meat, poultry, or seafood
 - using the bathroom
 - changing diapers
 - handling pets
- Wash fresh limes with cool tap water just before preparing or eating. **Do not use soap or detergents.**
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops often. Use hot soapy water and rinse well. **Sanitize** them after contact with fresh produce, or raw meat, poultry, or seafood.

To Sanitize

Mix one teaspoon of unscented chlorine bleach in one quart of water.

Pour the mixture onto the surface and let sit at least one minute.

Rinse well with hot running water.

- Do not cross contaminate. Use clean cutting boards and utensils for fresh produce. If you can, use a separate cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Do not consume ice that has come in contact with fresh produce or other raw products.
- Use a cooler with ice or gel packs when taking perishable food outdoors. This includes cut, fresh fruits and vegetables.

Using Limes

Tropicals may vary in natural pectin, acid, and sugar content from one season to another due to the variations of the climate.

- Flavor your favorite barbecue sauce with lime juice.
- Enhance the flavor of foods with lime juice rather than high sodium or fat ingredients.
- Squeeze lime juice into water for a refreshing drink.

Low Calorie Dip

1 cup creamed cottage cheese (low fat)
5 tablespoons water
1 teaspoon lime juice
1 teaspoon dry salad dressing mix

Mix all ingredients together. Use as dip for fresh vegetables. (The cottage cheese will be smoother if processed in a blender first).

Spicy Lime Salad Dressing or Marinade*

1 cup fresh lime juice (5-6 limes)
½ cup honey
2 cloves garlic
1 small onion
1 small red pepper pod
4 sprigs fresh parsley

Puree all ingredients except parsley sprigs in a blender. Add parsley and blend just a second. Use as a marinade for chicken, fish or beef, or serve over crisp salad greens. Yield: 1 cup. Store in a covered non-metal container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

*Recipe used with permission from J.R. Brooks and Son, Homestead, FL.

Florida Limeade



Credits: thewet/istockphoto.com

1/3 to 1/2 cup sugar
1 cup water
6 limes
finely crushed ice
carbonated or plain water
mint sprigs

Combine sugar and water in a saucepan. Place over heat and stir until sugar is dissolved. Cool. Cut limes in half; juice. Add juice to sugar syrup. Divide mixture among 6 tall glasses. Fill to top with crushed ice. Pour in carbonated or plain water; stir. Garnish with mint sprigs and lime slice. Yield: 6 servings.

Palm Beach Lime Cheesecake

2 envelopes unflavored gelatin
1¾ cups sugar
1/8 teaspoon salt
2 eggs
1 cup milk
6 tablespoons fresh lime juice
3 cups low fat cottage cheese
1 cup stiffly whipped topping

CRUST

2 tablespoons butter or margarine
½ cup graham cracker crumbs
1 tablespoon sugar

Mix gelatin, sugar, and salt in top of double boiler. Beat eggs well and mix with milk. Add to gelatin mixture. Cook over boiling water for 10 minutes or longer, stirring constantly until gelatin is dissolved (approximately 10 minutes).

Beat cottage cheese and lime juice in the electric mixer or blender at high speed. Blend until creamy. Add gelatin mixture and mix until ingredients are well-blended. Stir in whipped topping. Chill mixture.

Prepare crumb crust by mixing 2 tablespoons margarine, graham cracker crumbs, and sugar. Pat the crumb mixture evenly with the back of a spoon into a lightly greased 8-inch round springform pan. Chill crust well in refrigerator. Pour chilled cheesecake mixture into crust. Decorate with topping and thinly sliced limes. Chill until firm. Yield: 10-12 servings. Store refrigerated.

Key Lime Slush

2 cups crushed ice cubes
3 large key limes
3 tablespoons low calorie sugar substitute

Dissolve sugar in Key lime juice and add water to make about cup. Pour this over crushed ice in blender. Blend all ingredients until slushy and serve.