

## Pucker Up for Lemons and Limes: Tart, Refreshing and Healthful

**The Folklore.** Lemons and limes have Asian origins. Christopher Columbus brought them to the Americas, and by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, lemon and lime groves grew in what is now Florida. British sailors earned the nickname "limeys" during the 1600s and 1700s because the British Navy discovered that limes (and lemons) would prevent scurvy, a vitamin C deficiency disease that was fatal on long voyages that lacked fresh fruits and vegetables.

**The Facts.** Lemons and limes are rarely eaten alone, owing to their pucker power, yet they can enhance the flavor of foods and beverages. Limes are a staple in the cuisines of Southeast Asia, India, Africa, the West Indies and Latin America, while fresh lemons are a popular seasoning for vegetables, salads and seafood in Mediterranean countries.

Sweet yet tart *Key limes*, a variety brought to the Americas by Spaniards and cultivated in Central America, the West Indies and the Florida Keys are much smaller than the more common *Persian limes*. Key limes are yellowish-green in color, juicier and the favored ingredient in a true Key lime pie. *Meyer lemons*, named after Frank N. Meyer, who is thought to have crossed a lemon with a mandarin to come up with this hybrid in 1908, are much sweeter—and pricier—than regular lemons.

Lemons contain nearly twice the vitamin C of limes, though you'd have to eat a whole lemon to get even half the Daily Value of vitamin C. Both of these citrus cousins also contain potassium, as well as cancer-preventing antioxidants and bioflavonoids.

**The Findings.** Grated lemon peel, known as the zest, contains the phytonutrient d-limonene. Researchers at the University of Arizona in Tucson have found that people who ate as little as one tablespoon of grated citrus peel (lemon or orange) a week were 30% less likely to develop skin cancer. D-limonene is found only in the oil of the peel and not in the flesh or juice of lemons.

**The Finer Points.** Find ways to use zest in your recipes—it perks up the flavor and might boost your health as well. When juicing a lemon or lime, roll it on

the counter a few times before squeezing to maximize its juiciness. If you're trying to cut back on salt, try serving wedges of fresh lemon or lime on the table in place of the salt shaker. A healthy squeeze of lime or lemon juice perks up salads, chicken, seafood and beverages. Lime works wonders as a flavor-enhancing meat tenderizer. Squeeze lime or lemon juice onto avocado, apples, pears, bananas or peaches to prevent them from getting brown (by retarding oxidation, proof of their antioxidant powers). In the summer, fill ice cube trays with water, then squeeze in a twist of lime or lemon—add some zest too. The cubes will add refreshing flavor to water or club soda.

—Anastasia Schepers, M.S., R.D.

### Notable Nutrients

(one medium lemon)

Vitamin C:	31 milligrams	(52% DV)
Potassium:	80 milligrams	(2% DV)
Fiber:	1.6 grams	(7% DV)

DV = Daily Value

### Minty Citrus Party Cooler

3½ cups pineapple juice  
3 cups freshly squeezed orange juice  
1½ cups freshly squeezed lemon juice  
⅓ cup freshly squeezed lime juice  
1½ cups sugar  
20 mint leaves

1 liter bottle ginger ale, chilled  
1 liter bottle club soda or seltzer, chilled

1. In a large container, combine all the juices, sugar and mint leaves. Stir until sugar dissolves.
2. Cover and chill four hours or overnight. Discard mint leaves.
3. To serve, pour into large punch bowl; add remaining ingredients. Garnish with slices of oranges, lemons and limes and additional mint leaves, if desired.

Makes 22 six-ounce servings.

#### Nutrition Information Per Serving:

110 calories, 28 grams carbohydrates, 30 milligrams vitamin C, 75 milligrams potassium.

Recipe adapted with permission from SunKist Growers, Inc.; [www.sunkist.com](http://www.sunkist.com).

- **People who eat more white meat and less red and processed meat live longer.** A study of half a million people age 50 to 71 years at baseline and followed for 10 years found that those who ate the most red meat (beef and pork) and processed meat (bacon, sausage, cold cuts) had the highest risks for overall mortality.

Archives of Internal Medicine, February 23, 2009.

- **Antioxidant content in green tea and olive oil fades during storage.** Research findings suggest that antioxidant-rich foods, touted for their protective effects against cancer, cognitive decline, and other diseases, should be consumed in a timely manner to reap the full health benefits. Researchers found that antioxidant levels in eight types of green tea fell by an average of 32 percent after six months. Likewise, researchers who analyzed several varieties of extra-virgin olive oil found that antioxidants remained stable during the first three months of storage, but that the oils lost close to 40 percent of their antioxidants after six months.

Journal of Food Science, March 2009.

- **Focus on fewer liquid calories for weight loss.** Researchers who examined the relationship between beverage consumption and weight loss found that liquid calorie intake had a bigger impact on weight than solid calorie intake. Among the 810 adult study participants, sugar-sweetened beverages (regular soft drinks, fruit drinks, and other beverages containing sugar) were the leading source of liquid calories, comprising 37 percent of all beverages consumed. People who cut back on sugary beverages lost the most weight over a period of 18 months. Other beverage categories included diet drinks, milk, 100-percent juice, coffee and tea with sugar.

The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, April 2009.

## In Coming Issues

- **Grow Your Own.** The advantages of growing food in an edible garden.
- **Pine Nuts.** Cardio-protective, and they help lower diabetes risk.
- **Prostate Health.** Lycopene, selenium and other nutritional issues.

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