

FOOD \$ENSE



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Limes

Food \$ense Guide to Eating Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

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Availability: Limes are available year round in most supermarkets, with peak season between June and August.

Eating: Limes can be used in a variety of foods. Like many citrus fruits both the juice and zest of the fruit can be used. Limes are also great in many baking or grilling dishes. The taste of a lime is refreshing especially during a hot summer day.

Selecting: There are two types of limes. Tahitian limes are greenish yellow when fully mature. Key limes are smaller and have a higher acid content. A good juicy lime will be more squishy than hard. Select limes that are glossy and light to deep green in color. Limes should have a thin, smooth skin and be heavy for their size. Small brown areas on the skin should not affect flavor, but large blemishes or soft spots indicate a damaged lime. Avoid limes that have a yellowish skin or are too small. A hard, shriveled skin is a sign of dryness, as is a coarse thick skin. Avoid those that are browning or hard to the touch.

Cleaning and Preparing: Gently rinse limes with water before cutting or peeling, even if you are just using the juice.

Storing: To yield more juice, store limes at room temperature and out of the sun for up to 1 week. Storing in direct sunlight will cause limes to shrivel and discolor. Limes may also be stored in the refrigerator for up to 4 weeks. Limes store better if placed in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Cooking: Limes, like lemons, can be used in a variety of dishes as a flavoring. Freshly squeezed lime juice is great in fresh salsas, in marinades for meat and vegetables, in salads and drinks and in many more foods. Limes are usually used raw, but may be included in baked or grilled dishes. Many recipes call for fresh lime juice. To juice by hand, roll the lime on a firm surface before squeezing out the juice.

Garnish: Simply slice the lime in half and slice into several sections. Limes can be a salt substitute and will add a tangy flavor.

Beverage: Take four medium-sized limes and freshly squeeze them. Add 1 cup of sugar and 2 quarts of water. Try combining lime juice with other juices. Lime blends well with other flavors, such as strawberry, raspberry, orange and even cucumber. Flavors are best when juice sits for a few hours or overnight before drinking.

Lime zest: The zest of lime can be used to intensify the flavor of your dish. When getting the zest from any citrus fruit, be careful not to get part of the white pith beneath, as the pith is bitter.

Nutrition Highlights: Limes have large amounts of vitamin C, flavonoids, folic acid, vitamin B6 and potassium. Vitamin C helps with growth and healing of tissue, heals cuts and wounds and keeps gums healthy. Flavonoids may help reduce risk of some forms of cancer and heart disease. Folic acid helps form red blood cells, which is especially

important for pregnant women. Vitamin B6 helps with metabolism, and potassium helps maintain healthy blood pressure.

Preserving Limes: Limes can be frozen to extend usage. To freeze limes, wash, peel and divide fruit into sections, removing membranes and seeds. In a saucepan, combine 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups sugar and 4 cups water, mix until solution is clear, and bring to a boil. Cool the syrup and pour over limes. Place limes and syrup in covered airtight containers or heavy-duty freezer bags. Whole limes can also be frozen in freezer bags, but will be mushy when thawed. They can, however, be successfully used for juice. Limes can be stored in the freezer for up to 4 months.

References

1. Center for Disease Control, Fruit of Month: Lime. <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov>
2. Betty Crocker, <http://www.bettycrocker.com>
3. Gourmet Sleuth, <http://www.gourmetsleuth.com>
4. United States Department of Agriculture, My Pyramid Dietary Guidelines, <http://www.mypyramid.gov>

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Lime Smoothie

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sliced limes
1 cup lime sherbet
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raspberries
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup low-fat milk
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plain or vanilla or lime flavored non-fat yogurt
ice (optional)

Combine all the ingredients in blender. You can also add a little ice, for a different consistency. Blend until smooth.

Key Lime Pie

Crust

16 graham crackers, crushed
3 tablespoons sugar
1 cube ($\frac{1}{4}$ lb) margarine or butter

Pie

4 large or extra large egg yolks
1 14 ounce can sweetened condensed milk
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh key lime juice (approximately 12 key limes)
2 teaspoons grated lime peel, green portion only

Whipping Cream for Garnish (Optional)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup whipping cream
2 teaspoons granulated sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon vanilla

Crust:

Mix the ingredients and press into a 9 inch pie plate. Bake in a preheated 350 F oven for 10 to 12 minutes until lightly browned. Place on a rack to cool.

Pie Filling

Use an electric mixer and beat the egg yolks until they are thick and turn to a light yellow; don't over mix. Turn the mixer off and add the sweetened condensed milk. Turn speed to low and mix in half of the lime juice. Once the juice is incorporated add the other half of the juice and the zest, continue to mix until blended (just a few seconds). Pour the mixture into the pie shell and bake at 350 F for 12 minutes to set the yolks and kill any salmonella in the eggs.