

Florida Food Fare

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Calamondin

Description: Calamondin is an acid fruit originating in China, which was introduced to Florida as an "acid orange" about 1900. It is often considered an ornamental citrus tree and a small branch of calamondins is often put in shipped citrus packages for contrast and ornamentation. But indeed, the fruit is edible. The fruit is small and orange, about 1" in diameter, and resembles a small tangerine. The peel is thin and smooth, yellow to yellow-orange and easily separable. There are 5 to 9 segments around a small semi-hollow axis. The flesh is orange, juicy and acid. Calamondins are widely grown as an ornamental tree in California and Florida. Calamondins can be grown as a dooryard tree throughout the citrus belt and will do very well as a tub or container plant in colder locations in North Florida if protected from the cold.

Availability: The calamondin fruit takes nearly a year to ripen. Mature fruit can be produced year round but are most abundant from November to June. Calamondins are not sold in most grocery stores, but some oriental markets, produce stores and citrus stores carry it.

Nutritional Value: One calamondin is about 12 calories, with a very small trace of fat. It contains approximately 1.2 g fiber, 37 mg potassium, 7.3 mg vitamin C, 57.4 mg IU vitamin A, 8.4 mg calcium, 15.5 g water and 3.1 g carbohydrates.

Selection and Care: Calamondins are thin skinned and do not keep long. Choose firm, yellow to yellow-orange fruit. Avoid fruit that is soft and over ripe. If you are picking the fruit yourself, it is best to use clippers or scissors to get them off of the tree, rather than pulling them. This will keep the stem end of the fruit from tearing, which promotes deterioration. Calamondins are kept best in the refrigerator and should be used within a week.

Use & Preparation: The juice of the calamondin can be used like lemon or lime to make refreshing beverages, to flavor fish, to make cakes, marmalades, pies, preserves, sauces and to use in soups and teas. Thin slices can be used to garnish punch bowls, noodle dishes, meat and fish. In Asia, calamondins are even used in hand washing bowls. The juice can be frozen in containers or in ice cube trays, then storing the frozen cubes in plastic freezer bags. Use a few cubes at a time to make calamondinade. The juice of the calamondin also makes an excellent hair conditioner. Pour 1 liter of boiling water over thinly sliced fruit. Let it steep. When water is cool, pour through the hair as a final rinse.

Recipes:

Calamondin Pie

1 cup sugar	1/2 cup calamondin juice (add 1 more
1 cup boiling water	tablespoon if more tartness is desired)
1 tablespoon margarine	3 egg yolks, slightly beaten
4 tablespoons cornstarch (slightly rounded)	9-inch prebaked pie shell

Combine sugar, cornstarch and boiling water, stirring constantly over medium heat until clear and thickened. Add margarine. Remove from heat and add egg yolks and calamondin juice, which have been combined. Continue cooking over low heat, stirring until quite thick. Cool before putting into prepared 9-inch pie shell.

Calamondin Cake

1 box yellow cake mix	1/3 cup low fat milk
4 eggs	1 tablespoon lemon extract
1 small package lemon or lime gelatin	1/3 cup calamondin puree (recipe below)
1/2 cup canola oil	

Combine ingredients, adding eggs one at a time. Beat 4 minutes at medium speed. Pour into greased and floured bundt pan or 9x12" pan or 2 bread loaf pans. Bake 30-45 minutes in 350 Degree F. oven, or until done. Cool, prick top and pour glaze over.

Calamondin Puree:

Wash 14-16 calamondins. Do not peel fruit. Quarter fruit, remove seeds and center rib. Puree or put through a food processor. Set aside 1/2 cup for glaze.

Glaze:

2 cups sifted powdered sugar

1/4 cup butter or margarine
1/2 cup calamondin puree

1/8 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons lemon extract

Mix ingredients well and pour over top and sides of cake.

Calamondin Preserves

2 pounds whole calamondins
1 tablespoon soda
Boiling water

4 cups sugar
4 cups water

Wash whole fruit thoroughly. Sprinkle fruit with soda. Cover with boiling water. Let stand 10 minutes. Drain off soda water. Rinse well in cold water. Drain well. Puncture each calamondin with a sharp skewer, making two holes almost through the fruit. Or slit a small cross in stem end of fruit. This prevents fruit from splitting while cooking and allows syrup to penetrate. Drop into boiling water to cover. Cook until tender. Drain. Boil sugar and water together 10 minutes. Add calamondins. Cook until fruit is transparent in appearance. Cover tightly. Let stand in syrup 24 hours to plump fruit. Reheat to boiling. Pack in sterilized jars and seal.

Note: This recipe also does well with a mixture of calamondins and kumquats.

Calamondin-Cranberry Sauce

18 calamondins
1 cup water

3 cups sugar
1 pound cranberries

Wash calamondins thoroughly. Slice thin, removing seeds. Put in saucepan with sugar and water. Bring to a boil. Cook slowly 10 minutes. Add cranberries. Cook about 10 minutes longer, until cranberry skins pop. Chill. Sauce will keep several weeks stored in a covered container in