

FARMER IN THE FIELD

Meyer Lemons are Winters Sunshine

by Bonnie Swank
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Nothing brightens up the flavor of a dish like fresh squeezed lemon juice, and the best lemons I have ever had are Meyer lemons off of my mother-in-law's tree. She doesn't give it any special care and it produces fruit like a lemon tree on steroids, at least that is what my imagination has led me to believe. I'm sure there are many of you who think of lemon as more a garnish on the rim of a glass or the edge of a plate but give that wedge a squeeze and see what a difference it makes.

The Meyer lemon is less acidic and has a much sweeter flavor than those varieties you'll find in the grocery store or in your ice tea. How can you tell the difference? Look for a round fruit with deep yellow fragrant skin. The skins are thin and the fruit is juicy so you won't have to worry about being short changed. How often have we cut into a lemon from the store with a thick rind and only a couple of drops of juice? Or maybe you put your lemons in the microwave to eek out every possible

drop, not with a Meyer lemon.

Frank Nicholas Meyer, an agricultural explorer who worked for the United States Department of Agriculture, brought the Meyer lemon to the U.S. from China in 1908. The fruit is widely grown in California and although trees produce fruit all year round the majority of the fruit comes on in the winter.

So what can you do with these beautiful golden globes? Plenty! Cooked vegetables and salads sing with a squeeze. Make a lemon butter sauce with capers and pour over chicken or fish. Stuff your poultry with lemons and herbs or roast lemons in the oven for a sweet intense flavor. I make a lemon

pasta dish that is so simple and delicious, as long as you use Meyer lemons and fresh sweet basil. The next time you boil potatoes for dinner throw a sprig of rosemary and the juice of a lemon in the water and see how the flavor changes.

Want really juicy flavorful grilled skinless chicken? Place the chicken in a gallon ziploc bag, add the juice of one Meyer lemon, drizzle with olive oil, salt and pepper, herbs optional, marinate for 20-30 minutes and grill. If you find yourself with an excess of fruit, juice the lemons and freeze in ice cube trays and remember, when life gives you Meyer lemons, be thankful.

If you have a favorite recipe using Meyer lemons send it to me at bonnie@swankfarms.com and I'll share it on Facebook.

~ Bonnie and her husband Dick Swank are owners of Swank Farms in Hollister. To learn more visit SwankFarms.com or contact them at: 851-637-4704.



MEYER LEMON PUDDING CAKE

Recipe courtesy of Bob Batz Jr., Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

This recipe, from the Meyer lemon marketers, is quite easy and results in lemony lusciousness that is more pudding than cake.

Ingredients

- 3 Meyer lemons
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons salt
- 3 large eggs separated
- 1 cup whole milk, at room temperature
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted and cooled

Directions

Preheat oven to 300 degrees with rack in center of oven. Butter 8-by-8-inch baking pan or 1 1/2-quart shallow casserole. Finely grate 2 teaspoons zest and then squeeze 1/3 cup juice from lemons; set aside.

In large bowl, combine sugar, flour and salt. In small bowl, whisk together yolks, milk, butter, lemon zest and juice; add to flour mixture; whisk to combine.

In large bowl, with electric mixer, beat egg whites until soft peaks form. Stir about one-third of egg whites into batter to lighten; gently fold in remaining whites (batter will be thin). Pour into prepared baking dish; bake until puffed and golden, about 35 to 40 minutes; cool. Serve warm or at room temperature.
Make 6 servings



LEMON PASTA

From the kitchen of Bonnie & Dick Swank, Hollister CA

Ingredients

- 1 lb. Angel hair pasta
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh squeezed Meyer lemon juice
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup olive oil
- 1 cup Parmesan cheese, grated (not canned)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Fresh torn basil
- Sea salt
- Fresh ground pepper
- Lemon zest

Directions

Bring a pot of salted water to boil and cook pasta according to the package directions.

While the pasta is cooking combine the lemon juice, oil, cheese salt and pepper. Whisk together and set aside.



When the pasta is done, remove it from the water onto a deep serving platter. Don't drain your pasta because at this point you actually need to add some of the pasta water to the dish. This will help to create a nice creamy sauce, two to three small ladles full equaling $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cups. You can always add more if needed.

Add the lemon mixture, basil, salt, pepper and toss. Grate a generous amount of lemon zest over the top along with whole basil leaves and serve.

