

MEYER LEMON

The Meyer lemon was discovered in China by famed fruit explorer Frank Meyer and introduced into California in 1908. With its neat habit, colorful fruit and non-stop flowers, it quickly became a popular garden tree. Unfortunately, it was later found to be infected with a virus disease that threatened commercial citrus groves. Most trees growing in citrus areas were destroyed. In 1970, the University of California released a virus-free Improved Meyer Lemon, which is now planted commercially and in gardens.

Meyer lemons are quite unlike standard supermarket lemons. Recently, the University of California determined through genetic testing, that Meyers are actually a hybrid between a sweet orange and a lemon. The fruit has a unique floral aroma and flavor that is especially prized by dessert chefs. Said Maria Helm, then chef at San Francisco' PlumpJack Café, "I love Meyer lemons. They're so fragrant – you simply scratch the skin with your fingernail and it's incredible."

Meyer lemons are surprisingly juicy with a thin, bright orange-yellow rind. The juice is brightly colored and has a higher sugar content than regular lemons. Both juice and rind are prized for making sorbets, vinaigrettes, tarts, pies, soufflés, and cookies. They are also used to in sauces for roasts, seafood, and fowl.