

Finger Lime Red

Citrus australasica



Finger Lime or caviar lime, scientifically known as *Citrus australasica*, are very small, uniquely-shaped fruits that are classified as microcitrus and belong to the Rutaceae (Rue family), which includes all forms of citrus fruits. According to the Swingle system it is not part of the genus citrus, but in a related genus *Microcitrus*. The plant is native to lowland subtropical rainforest and rainforest in the east coast of Australia, ranging mainly from south east Queensland to north-east New South Wales in tropical to subtropical rainforest communities. Apart from Finger Lime it is also known as **Australian Finger Lime, Finger Lime, Native Finger Lime, Queensland Finger and Sauvage Lime.**

Sometimes it is also known as “citrus caviar” due to the fact that it packs a lot of juice-filled vesicles, resembling caviar. It has edible fruits which are under development as a potential new commercial crop. Popular varieties include the Alstonville variety, which is green and seedless, Judy’s Everbearing, which is a light green to pink-skinned fruit with a pale rose pulp, Pink Ice which has ruby-

brown skin with rose-colored pulp, and the Purple Viola and Jali red, sharing the same ruby pulp and skin.

Plant Description

Finger Lime is a medium to large armed, thorny under storey shrub or small tree that grows about 2–7 m (6 ft. 7 in–23 ft. 0 in) tall with spines up to 25 mm long. The plant is found growing in wide range of soils in tropical and subtropical rain forest communities and in dry and subtropical lowland. The plant prefers deep loamy soils with adequate irrigation. Soil should be nutrient rich, with high levels of organic matter with slightly acidic soil.



Leaves

Leaves are small, glabrous, obovate to elliptic or more or less rhombic, 1–5 cm long by 3–25 mm wide, with notched apex, cuneate base, margins often crenate towards apex, oil glands numerous, aromatic when crushed and borne on 1–3 mm wingless petioles. New growth is purple in color and the one-quarter inch wide.

Flower

Flowers buds are small and pink in color on short peduncles 1–3 mm long. The flowers are bisexual and have 6–9 mm long white oblong petals, short 1.5 mm long, free concave sepals and

numerous stamens (20–25) with white filaments and yellow anthers, stout ovary with 5–7 locules with 8–16 ovules in each locule. Flowers are white and pink during the main flowering season of February to April.

Fruit

Fertile flowers are followed by cylindrical, fusiform, finger-shaped, 4–8 cm (1.6–3.1 in) long and roughly the size of an average person's index finger and sometimes slightly curved. The skin of the finger lime is usually a greenish black to very dark purple and thin, but durable. Once the fruit is cut open the tiny round juice vesicles will slowly seep out of the fruit without squeezing, and resemble what we like to call "citrus caviar". The round vesicles are usually a clear-green, but can be very light pink. The juice is very tart, much like a Mexican lime. Although the tree produces fruit year round, the main fruiting season in California is November-December when the fruit falls off in your hand. Australian finger lime is reported to fetch approximately 40-50 dollars per pound. The fruits are technically edible, but this is not commonly done. Its most common use is as a garnish or flavor component in culinary creations. Since it is very sour and is probably best used for cooking, jams, garnishes, sauces and drinks.

Health benefits of Finger Lime

Without further argument, let's take a look at some of the benefits that finger lime offers:

1. Increased Immunity to Infections

One of the most abundant nutrients found in finger lime is vitamin C. Everybody is well-aware that this nutrient helps make the immune system strong, therefore making the body less prone to attacking bacteria and viruses. Particularly when it's the season of the flu or any other upper respiratory tract infection, eating finger limes can be beneficial.

2. Delayed Aging of the Skin

Vitamin C found abundantly in finger Lime is very good at is keeping your skin looking young and beautiful. That's because it zaps free radicals that damage skin cells, causing the acceleration of skin aging. Vitamin C also encourages the production of collagen, a type of protein that helps keep at bay the formation of wrinkles by making your skin elastic.

3. Healthy Teeth and Gums

Scurvy is a health condition caused by vitamin C deficiency. It is characterized by gums that are swollen and bleeding. Since it is your gums that support and nourish your pearly whites, keeping them healthy is vital. If one of your best assets is your smile, always consume finger limes and other food sources of scurvy-fighting vitamin C.

4. Boosted Eye Health and Vision

Finger Lime also consists of wonderful amount of vitamin A. As you may already know, vitamin A is essential for keeping the eyes as well as your vision in optimum shape. Being a powerful antioxidant, vitamin A safeguards your peepers from those damaging free radicals that can cause eye diseases and loss of vision.

5. Defense against Age-Related Diseases

Vitamin E can also be found in finger lime. Just like vitamins A and C, this nutrient has outstanding antioxidant properties. Several researches have shown that it is something that is very good at preventing an assortment of health problems that are related with aging. Some of them include diseases of the joints, brain, nerves and heart.

6. Lowered Blood Pressure

Finger lime consists of good amount of potassium, too. Medical experts say that this mineral helps lower blood pressure as it encourages the blood vessels to become wider. Keeping the blood

pressure within the normal range can help in lowering heart disease risk, so consider including potassium-containing foods like finger limes in your diet regularly.



7. Reduced Risk of Iron-Deficiency Anemia

You can get decent amounts of iron in every serving of finger lime. The said mineral is essential for the production of RBCs — short for red blood cells. RBCs are the ones that enable the blood to carry oxygen throughout your body. Consuming finger limes and other iron-containing foods can help lower your risk of iron-deficiency anemia.

Culinary uses of Finger Lime

- The globular juice vesicles have been likened to “lime caviar”, which can be used as a garnish or added to various recipes.
- Fresh vesicles have the effect of a burst of gassy tangy flavor as they are chewed.
- Fruit juice is acidic and similar to that of a lime.
- Marmalade and pickles are also made from finger lime.

- Finger lime peel can be dried and used as a flavoring spice.
- Finger Lime can also be used in dressings, jams and sauces, cordials and cocktails.
- It can substitute for ordinary [lemon](#) or [lime](#), wherever they are used.
- Freeze Dried Finger Lime is also an interesting addition to dukkah.
- Pulp can be gently squeezed from the skin and garnished over tacos, grain bowls, tofu, green salads, fruit salads, or sprinkled over sliced avocado or melons with sea salt and served as a snack.
- Pulp also compliments seafood such as grilled salmon, oyster shooters, seared scallops, sushi, nigiri, and ceviche.
- Finger limes can be incorporated into marmalades and desserts including cheesecake, ice cream, cookies, cakes, and cream puffs.
- They are also popularly used as a floating garnish on cocktails and spirits such as mojitos, margaritas, martinis, and gin fizz.

