

Golden Eureka Lemons

CITRUS LIMON EUREKA VARIEGATA



Description/Taste

Golden Eureka lemons are a medium to large varietal, similar in size to standard eureka lemons, but have a distinct round to oval shape with blunt, curved ends. Some lemons may also exhibit a small point on the blossom-end, and the stem end is generally flatter. The lemon's peel is moderately thick, clinging tightly to the flesh, and is covered in sunken oil glands giving the surface a slightly rough, textured feel. The peel also ranges in color from golden-orange to dark orange, a color unusual for lemon varieties. Underneath the surface, the flesh is encased in a thin layer of bitter, white, and spongy pith and is divided into 8 to 10 segments by membranes. The yellow-orange flesh is soft, aqueous, and tender, either mostly seedless or containing a few cream-colored, tear-drop-shaped seeds. Golden Eureka lemons contain volatile aromatic oils that are released through the peel, emitting a bright, sweet, and refreshing scent. The lemon's juice, zest, and flesh are highly acidic, creating a sour, tart, and tangy taste balanced with a subtle sweetness.

Seasons/Availability

Golden Eureka lemons are available in the winter through early spring.

Current Facts

Golden Eureka lemons, botanically classified as *Citrus limon*, are a very rare citrus variant belonging to the Rutaceae family. The golden-orange fruits were discovered growing as a natural mutation on a eureka lemon tree in the late 20th century and were selected for their unusual coloring and shape. Golden Eureka lemons have a tart, subtly sweet, and floral flavor similar to standard eureka lemons, but on the outside, they resemble small oranges. Despite their unique appearance, Golden Eureka lemons were never deemed commercially viable and are challenging to find in the present day. The variety is likely not found outside of California and is only grown on a small scale through a few select specialty orchards in Southern California.



Nutritional Value

Golden Eureka lemons are an excellent source of fiber to regulate the digestive tract and vitamin C to strengthen the immune system while reducing inflammation. The fruits also provide potassium to balance fluid levels within the body, calcium and phosphorus to protect bones and teeth, flavonoids that have antioxidant-like properties to guard the cells against external environmental damage, and contain other nutrients, including zinc, copper, magnesium, B vitamins, iron, niacin, and folate.

Applications

Golden Eureka lemons have a sweet-tart, acidic flavoring well suited for a wide range of sweet to savory preparations. The lemons are not typically consumed out of hand due to their sour, mouth-puckering nature, but the rare variant is generally served as a unique garnish to showcase its unusual coloring. Golden Eureka lemons can be sliced and served on the rims of glasses, wedged and placed on seafood dishes, cut and twisted into visually attractive shapes as a garnish over main dishes, or incorporated into fruit displays. In addition to showcasing the fruit's visual nature, the juice and zest provide bright notes similar to standard eureka lemons to create depth of flavor in sauces, dressings, oils, and marinades. Golden Eureka lemon zest can also be shaved over seafood, mixed into pastries, pies, cakes, muffins, cookies, and bread, or combined into ice cream, panna cotta, and crème brulee as a refreshing dessert. Golden Eureka lemons can be used in any recipe calling for tart lemons. The juice can be squeezed over salads, mixed into ceviche, stirred into cream-based pasta dishes, or sprinkled onto roasted vegetables. The lemons can also be simmered into marmalades, lemon curd, or syrup. Golden Eureka lemons pair well with cheeses including gruyere, ricotta, and parmesan, fruits such as strawberries, cranberries, cherries, blueberries, and coconut, seafood including fish, crab, shrimp, and scallops, meats such as poultry, beef, and turkey, pistachios, and herbs such as basil, thyme, and mint. Whole, unwashed Golden Eureka lemons will keep up to one week when stored at room temperature and around one month when kept in the refrigerator. The juice and zest can also be separately frozen for extended use.

Ethnic/Cultural Info

Golden Eureka lemons are grown and offered through Mud Creek Ranch, a family-owned and operated farm in Santa Paula, California. Mud Creek Ranch was established in 1985 and has been certified organic since 1990. The ranch grows over 200 varieties of citrus, with several types that are unique to California, including Golden Eureka lemons. Mud Creek Ranch also resides in Santa Paula, a 4.6 square mile city that is self-proclaimed as the "Citrus Capital of the World." This zesty nickname was claimed due to the city's proximity to several large citrus growers and distribution centers. The city is also the geographical center of Ventura County within the Santa Clara River Valley, a region nationally known for its citrus production.

Geography/History

Golden Eureka lemons are a spontaneous mutation of standard eureka lemons, first discovered in a commercial grove in Saticoy, California, in 1995. The golden-hued citrus was found in a grove managed by Paramount Citrus, a grower now a part of the Wonderful Citrus LLC, the world's largest vertically integrated citrus company. Their parent variety, eureka lemons, were developed in Los Angeles, California, in 1858, believed to be a descendant of lunario lemons brought from Italy in the early 1800s. Eureka lemons quickly became a favored commercial variety, and after the Golden Eureka lemon's discovery, Paramount Citrus planted seven acres of Gold Eureka lemon trees in Ventura County, California, to test if it could become a commercially viable fruit. Over time, Paramount Citrus decided that Golden Eureka lemons were not suitable as a new variety and eventually removed all of the trees except for one. It is rumored one Golden Eureka tree still exists in a 550-acre grove of lemons in Somis, California. Today Golden Eureka lemons are very rare and are localized to California. The lemons are grown as a specialty fruit and are offered through Mud Creek Ranch at farmers markets in Southern California.

