

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

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BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776

e-mail:makeith@ifas.ufl.edu

It's Guava Season!

Judging by the calls I've been getting, there's a bumper crop of guavas this year. If you're lucky enough to have access to this native local fruit, count your blessings. Our fruit is not usually as large as the oriental fruit in the supermarket, but what it lacks in size it makes up for in flavor and aroma. Of course not everyone likes the aroma of guava. But once it's cooked into a jam or jelly it's the flavor that counts, and that is delicious.

Guavas can be round, pear-shaped or oblong. Some are only the size of a walnut, while others are as large as apples. The skin is usually tender, but sometimes is tough enough that you might want to peel it. It can be yellow, pale green or even white when it's ripe. Inside, the shell and pulp can be anywhere from deep pink or salmon through yellow to almost white inside. And of course, there are lots of seeds.

If you want to just eat a ripe guava you can boldly bite right in, or carefully nibble the outer layer, the meaty shell, off and leave the seeds behind. Be prepared with a toothpick if you bite right in!

A medium guava only has about 70 calories but is very high in vitamin C. The vitamin C content is between 150 and 300 mg, at least twice what an adult needs in a day. The darker colored fruits can be significant sources of vitamin A, and most fruit has a decent amount of calcium, phosphorous and even a little iron. Cooked guava paste or jam has lost a lot of the vitamin C (it's destroyed by the heat), but the other nutrients are still there.

Most recipe directions call for cutting the fruit in half and scooping out the seedy pulp. Since most of the vitamin C content is in the shells rather than the pulp, you're not losing any nutrition by doing that. If the fruit will be cooked until it's tender and then pureed the seeds can be left in and simply strained out at the end. This way gives more pulp for jam or smoothies.

Some guava varieties can be quite acidic, but most are milder, just slightly acidic and usually sweet. The sweet varieties are best for eating fresh, the acidic ones for cooking, canning or freezing. For home jelly and jam making, another ingredient is very important. Guavas naturally contain lots of pectin, so no powdered pectin is necessary. By simply using about half slightly unripe fruit to half ripe fruit you can get a nice firm jam. Longer cooking makes guava paste. Instead of spreading it on bread you just slice it off the loaf. On a cracker with a mild white cheese, that makes a dessert that can not be beat!

Fresh (or canned or frozen) guava shells (fruit halves with the seeds scooped out) can be added to any fruit salad. One combination that shows up repeatedly in old cookbooks, simply called Guava Delicious, is chopped guavas, sliced bananas, a bit of sugar and lemon juice, and whipped cream. The really fancy versions have either toasted coconut or grated chocolate on top.

If you don't want to spend the time cooking guava puree into paste you can stir pureed guavas into smoothies with milk or yogurt, use as a topping over ice cream or cake slices, or mix with other fruit juice and soda water or lemon lime soda for a cooling drink. Or, just get a can of guava nectar or a jar of guava jam and go from there!

Here's a recipe for a deep dish guava pie. If you use Splenda to cut the calories use a little more fruit so you have a full dish. It's delicious plain or to be really decadent,

serve it warm with vanilla ice cream. Either way, it's an old fashioned taste of summer.

Enjoy!

Deep Dish Guava Pie

1 pie crust, homemade or prepared

4 C seeded, sliced (peeled if necessary) guavas, fresh, canned or frozen

½ C sugar (or Splenda)

2 Tbsp flour

½ tsp cinnamon

⅛ tsp salt

1 tsp lime juice

2 Tbsp butter

Place guava shells in 1 ½ qt baking dish. Combine flour, cinnamon, sugar and salt.

Sprinkle over guavas. Sprinkle with lime juice, then dot with butter. Cover with pie crust

and fit to the dish. Cut slits in crust to allow steam to escape. Brush with milk for a

glazed crust. Bake in 375° F oven 30 to 40 minutes, until crust is browned and fruit is

tender. Serve warm.

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