

South Florida Tropicals: Guava¹

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Background

Native to the American tropics, the guava (*Psidium guajava*) is one of the more widely used tropical fruits throughout the tropical and sub-tropical world. In Florida, guava grows as both a semi-wild and cultivated tree. Guavas can be grown along the central and southern Florida coastal areas, and in warm areas of the interior. Depending upon

the variety Guavas may have thick or thin skins. Skin color is light green to yellow and the flesh may be white, yellow, or pink to red.

Availability

Fruit matures almost year round, with the peak season during the summer months.

Selection

Ripe guavas have a fragrant aroma that ranges from strong and penetrating to mild and pleasant; shells give to gentle pressure. Guavas sold in markets are usually quite firm and should be ripened further at home before using. The fruit ranges from thin-shelled with many seeds embedded in a firm pulp to thick-shelled with a few seeds. The flavor ranges from sweet to highly acidic.

Storage

Ripen guavas at room temperature until they give to gentle pressure. Refrigerate ripe guavas immediately, and use within 2 days.

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Freezing

Use firm, ripe guava. Wash, peel thinly, and cut in half. With a teaspoon, scoop out seeds and soft pulp. Pack into moisture-vapor-proof containers and cover with a medium syrup (2 parts sugar to 1 part water). Do not heat; the sugar will dissolve without heat if stirred. Allow 2 cups of syrup for each quart of guavas. Seal and freeze. Lime juice may be added if guavas are sweet. Guavas will keep at 0°F for 8 months to 1 year.

Uses

Sweet or low-acid guava is best suited to eating raw. Sour or highly acid guava lends itself to cooking or freezing with some sugar added.

Yield

1 fruit = 100 grams (edible portion), approximately ½ cup.

Nutritive Value

100 grams of guava (1 medium, 2½” diameter with seeds discarded) contains:

86% water
50 calories
.8 gram protein
.6 gram fat
12 grams carbohydrate
183 milligrams vitamin C
624 IU vitamin A

Food Safety During Preparation

Following these steps will help reduce your risk of food-borne illness.

- Wash your hands with hot soapy water before and after:
 - handling fresh produce
 - handling raw meat, poultry, or seafood
 - using the bathroom
 - changing diapers
 - handling pets
- Wash fresh guava with cool tap water just before preparing or eating. **Don't use soap or detergents.**
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops often. Use hot soapy water and rinse well. **Sanitize** them after contact with fresh produce, or raw meat, poultry, or seafood.

Table 1.

To Sanitize
• Mix one teaspoon of unscented chlorine bleach in one quart of water.
• Pour the mixture onto the surface and let sit at least one minute.
• Rinse well with hot running water.

- Don't cross contaminate. Use clean cutting boards and utensils for fresh produce. If you can, use a separate cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Do not consume ice that has come in contact with fresh produce or other raw products.
- Use a cooler with ice or gel packs when taking perishable food outdoors. This includes cut fresh fruits and vegetables.

Using Guavas

Tropicals may vary in natural pectin, acid and sugar content from one season to another due to the variations of the climate.

- Cut guava in half crosswise. Remove seeds. Fill these guava “shells” with cottage cheese and serve on lettuce leaves.
- Combine guava chunks with sliced bananas and citrus sections for fruit cups. Your favorite frozen fruit salad will take on added flavor when guavas are included; use them as you would peaches or fruit cocktail.
- Substitute guava chunks for apples in a brown betty recipe.
- Use guava in a cobbler or deep dish pie recipe. Serve plain or topped with low-fat ice cream or frozen yogurt.
- Try guava shortcake (made like strawberry shortcake).
- Tapioca pudding becomes a tropical treat when topped with guava sauce or chopped guava shells.
- Add a tropical flavor to any punch by adding guava juice or guava nectar.

Fresh Guava Sorbet

½ cup water
½ cup sugar
1 cup guava pulp (8-10 guavas)
1½ tablespoons lemon juice

Cut guavas in half and scoop pulp from the centers into a one cup measure. In a 1- to 2-quart pan combine sugar and water. Bring to a boil over high heat. Boil until mixture is reduced to ½ cup (about 5 minutes). Let cool. In a food processor or blender, whirl guava pulp and lemon juice until pureed. Mix syrup and fruit puree; pour into a 9-inch

square metal pan. Cover and freeze until almost firm (about 1 hour).

Break frozen puree into small pieces. Process *briefly* in a food processor just until smooth and slushy; do not overprocess. Wrap airtight and freeze until firm (at least 2 hours) or for up to 1 month. To serve, let sorbet stand at room temperature to soften slightly, then scoop out. Makes about 1½ cups (3 or 4 servings).

Variation: Alternate layers of guava and mango sorbet, using the above procedure (with 1 cup peeled, cubed mangos and 2½ tablespoons orange juice).

Guava Nectar

Wash firm ripe guavas. Cut off stem and blossom ends. Slice the guava into a large sauce pan. Add 2 cups water to 2 quarts of sliced fruit. Cover and cook until soft. Put this through a sieve to remove seeds. Add water until puree is thin enough to drink. Sweeten with ½ cup sugar to each quart of nectar.

Serve cold with equal parts of limeade or gingerale, or try it over a scoop of vanilla ice milk in a tall glass.

To freeze guava nectar, place in moisture-vapor proof containers, allowing a 1-inch headspace for expansion. This will keep up to a year at 0°F.

Guava Juice

2 quarts firm, ripe guavas
2 quarts slightly green guavas
2 quarts water

Wash, remove blossom and stem ends and blemishes; slice. Add water, bring quickly to a boil and cook about 20 minutes. Strain through a jelly bag or a double layer of cheesecloth. To serve, dilute with an equal amount of water or other fruit juice and sweeten to taste. Guava juice may be frozen by placing in moisture-vapor-proof containers. Allow a 1 inch of headspace.

Stuffed Guava Shells*

8 ounces reduced fat cream cheese, softened, or lowfat cottage cheese
3 cups guava shells
2 tablespoons skim milk
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon orange juice
1 tablespoon lemon or lime juice

Beat softened cream cheese or cottage cheese in a large bowl. Add remaining ingredients, except guava. Beat well. Place cream cheese mixture in guava shells. Chill before serving.

**Tropical Fruit Recipes*, Palm Beach County Extension Home Economics Programs and Tropical Foods Committee