

# *Florida Food Fare*

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## *Lychees*

**Description:** The lychee is a totally different fruit from others and looks like clusters of rough cherry red golf balls hanging onto handsome dark green trees. The skin is thin and leathery but it pulls easily away exposing a delicate white flesh underneath. A single dark seed is found in the center of the fruit. It's flavor is different and difficult to describe. Think of the sweetest, juiciest, most fragrant grape you can imagine, then try to make it sweeter. Even now you have not captured this elusive flavor.

**History:** Known as a treasured fruit of the Gods in the Orient, the lychee's origin has been traced back at least 3500 years. Today this age-old Oriental delicacy grows in Florida. It brings to us a fruit rich in color, flavor and natural beauty.

**Available:** Florida lychees begin to ripen in mid-May and continue throughout July. They should be tree-ripened for best flavor. Large supermarkets seldom have these available but you may find them fresh in season in smaller specialty markets and local produce stands. Canned lychees can also be found in the oriental markets or ethnic sections of grocery stores.

**Nutritional Value:** Excellent source of vitamin C, good source of vitamin B and potassium, and fair source of vitamin E and D. High sugar content - 13-15%. For 3 1/2 oz. serving, raw, peeled: 82% water; 64 calories; 0.9g protein; 0.3g fat; 16.4g carbohydrate; 3mg sodium; 170mg potassium; 42mg ascorbic acid.

**Storing:** Up to 2-3 weeks in refrigerator, using covered containers or polyethylene bags. Freezing methods: best frozen in its skin, with a short stem and taking care not to break the skin. Wash fruit well, drain and pack into containers dry. This maintains the high juice content. Lychees can also be

peeled, pitted and frozen in a sugar syrup or dry sugar pack. Some toughening may occur this way though, due to loss of juices.

**Basic Uses:** Since lychees have such a short season in Florida they are usually consumed fresh. They mix well with other fruits in salads and as accompaniments for pork and poultry.

**Preparation:** Hold a lychee with the stem end up and gently break the skin with your fingernail or knife. Peel it down and pop the whole fruit in your mouth, or set aside for use in recipes. Don't forget about the seed in the center. The number of lychees needed for a definite measure varies with the size of the fruit and size of seed. On the average 25-30 lychees peeled and seeded will equal one cup.

### **Recipes:**

#### **Lychee Fruit Cocktail**

2 cups seeded fresh lychees	1 cup sliced bananas
2 cups pineapple tidbits	¼ cup seedless raisins
	2 tablespoons lime juice

Peel and cut lychees in uniform size. Combine with other fruits. Pour off juice and stir in lime juice. Cover fruit with this mixture and chill about an hour before serving. Yield: 4 servings.

**Lychees with Ham** Arrange peeled and pitted lychees on top of ham during the last half hour of baking. Lychees bring out full flavor in ham and are excellent baked this way.