

NATIVE AUSTRALIAN FOOD FACT SHEET:

Lemon Myrtle

Backhousia citriodora

A beautiful medium to large subtropical rainforest tree endemic to central and south-eastern Queensland. It has large green aromatic leaves and masses of white flowers in summer. One of the well known bushfood flavours, it is sometimes referred to as the "Queen of the lemon herbs".



Flavour/aroma/texture:

Strong floral citrus flavour and aroma. The texture of the fresh leaf is firm but pliable.

Seasonality:

Leaves can be harvested all-year-round.

Edible parts of the plant:

Leaf.

Fresh/Frozen/Dried/Distilled Oil:

Sold in all forms.

Cultivation (growing):

Regions - Large plantations in northern NSW and southern Qld. Smaller plantings now all over Australia.

Size - Small to medium tree (3-20m)

Leaf - Leaf may even be harvested from a small pot plant sized tree. Widely available in nurseries, and grown in the home garden, leaf is always available for fresh harvest.

Harvest to kitchen (processing):

- Leaves are used either fresh or dried
- Larger plantations use mechanical harvesting
- Dried leaves can be milled (ground) to larger 'tea flakes' or to a finer powder.
- Essential oil is extracted from the leaves through steam distilling.

Kitchen to Plate (prep/cook):

- Use whole fresh or dried leaves to flavour curries, soups and sucs (remove when spent)
- Ground dried leaf - use in baking, condiments, desserts including ice cream, where the grounds are left in also for their texture and visual aspect
- The Oil is principally used in manufacturing for flavour and aroma.

Other nutritional info:

Lemon myrtle is high in antioxidants, vitamin E, calcium, zinc and magnesium.

Non-culinary uses:

Anti-microbial, anti-fungal, cosmetics, cleaning, soaps, aromatherapy, natural food preservative.

Shelf life:

Fresh leaf - 2-3 weeks

Dried leave/grounds - 12-18 months

Oil - 1-2 years

Storage:

Fresh - chilled

Dried leaves/grounds - ambient

Oil - ambient

Companion flavours:

Stone fruits, Asian flavours, white meats, seafoods, many vegetables.

Substitute:

Lemon grass, lemon zest, lemon verbena.

Interesting facts:

Lemon myrtle leaves contain the highest amount of citral (>90%) of any plant known in the world and its flavour and aroma show refreshingly intense citrus notes, often described as "lemonier" than lemon.

Its first commercial use for general consumption by the wider Australian population is reported to have been in World War 2, when it was used by a soft drink company to flavour lemonade.

Reference resources:

<https://www.healthbenefitstimes.com/lemon-myrtle/>

https://anfab.org.au/main.asp?_Lemon%20Myrtle

https://anfab.org.au/edit/research_publications/14-117_LemonMyrtle.pdf

<https://education.abc.net.au/home#!/digibook/3122184/bruce-pascoe-aboriginal-agriculture-technology-and-ingenuity>



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Nutritional Values*:

(per 100gm dry weight)

Energy	18.9kj
H2O	72g
Protein	0.8g
Fat	0.5g
Carbs	-
Sugar	-
Fibre	7.1g
Ca	282mg
Cu	0.3mg
Fe	3.99mg
Mg	203.8mg
P	52.45mg
K	1901mg
Na	10.45mg
Zn	0.574mg
Mn	3.5mg
Mo	5.5µg
K:Na	182.3

Source: anfab.org.au

