

For treats that pack a punch, try:

DESERT LIME JAM DROPS

Pure zing



SUE BENNETT

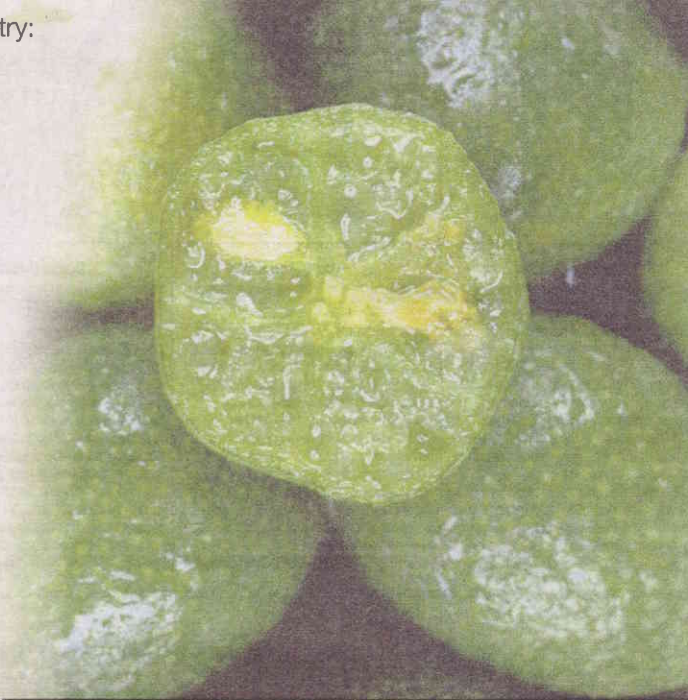
The native tree *citrus glauca* is a tough individual and produces a small but intensely flavoured lime. Evolved to survive the Outback climate, the limes have been eaten by Aborigines for many years. More recently they've been made into cordials, sauces, marmalades and pickles in cattle-station kitchens. Now the fruit and its uses are being taken to a wider audience by the Douglas family, which has developed a range of food products.



KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

The Douglas family has farmed around the Roma area of western Queensland for about seven generations. Throughout that time, it's been common practice to pick desert limes as thirst quenchers in the paddock. Squeezed into water, they make a "fantastic drink", say cattle-station owners Mina and Jock Douglas. "When we came to this property 30 years ago, I noticed there were some really big clumps of lovely lime groves that bore fruit well," Jock recalls about their current, 1200ha property, Wyoming. The limes' taste was exceptional so they began propagating the largest. One thing led to another and - with the help of their four daughters - they began looking at ways of using the lime. "It's been a whole new bunch of skills for an old cattleman!" Jock says.

The Douglas family range of desert lime products



you will need

- ✓ 2 cups self-raising flour
- ✓ 1 cup caster sugar
- ✓ 1 cup desiccated coconut
- ✓ 200g melted butter
- ✓ 1/2 cup desert lime jam
- ✓ 2 tsp milk

HOW TO DO IT

Combine flour, sugar and coconut. Add butter and milk. Roll teaspoon of mixture into ball and put on greased tray. Make hole in centre and drop in jam. Bake in a moderate oven for about 15 minutes or until just brown. Remove from oven and add more desert lime jam to centre.

Desert lime jam drops make a sweet treat



GROWING CONCERN

The first limes were put in as a plantation in 1988; today, there are many thousands. In the meantime, led by daughter Eve, they began work in the kitchen. Now their company Australian Desert Limes makes a wide range of goods including desert lime jam; lime and orange marmalade; lime and tomato jam; lime chutney; lime glaze; apple and lime sauce; and lime paste. Online sales are available at australiandesertlimes.com.au.

GOING TO MARKET

Uncertain about the public's reception to their products, Mina and Jock decided to put them to the test at a farmers' market. "It was a 500km drive to Brisbane to do the market then a 500km back and we did that for months on end," Jock recalls. "That's a five- or six-hour drive both ways and we finally gave up after hitting a beast on the way home and smashing the car - and ourselves - pretty badly. But of our first six buyers at the farmers' market, four came back as repeat buyers then we were getting a lot of buyers coming back and we thought: 'We're on a winner here'."

CULINARY CRINGE

It's well-known that Australian native products often have far greater appeal beyond our shores than at home. Already the Brits are loving the desert lime marmalade, with a mail-order

company ordering a second consignment almost before the first had arrived in the UK. "I can't really understand why Australians are reluctant to eat these native ingredients," Jock says.

BACKYARD BEAUTY

The CSIRO has been working on developing a variety of desert lime suitable for back yards, including courtyard pots. They have developed *Australian Desert*, which produces a small, green, juicy fruit that ripens at Christmas. It's best used for making sauces. There are two further varieties - *Australian Red Centre* and *Sunrise*. They're being sold through wholesalers Floriana. For stockists, 1800 631 679.

Sydney's Redoak Beer Cafe serves a pan-seared fillet of Tasmanian salmon, topped by a desert lime salad

