Farm and home - Consider the lemon.

Margaret Spencer
SURELY the lemon is one of the most useful of all fruits! We can use it in cooking and cleaning, and even in Milady’s beauty care, and wise is the family that grows at least one lemon tree and so has “on tap” lemons at their best—picked fresh, full of juice and flavour and rich in Vitamin C.

To people on low calorific or restricted salt diets the lemon lends new zest to meals which all too frequently become drab and tasteless. Added just before eating, a generous squeeze of the juice brings out to the full the flavour of salads, meats and vegetables. Squeezed on meat before cooking lemon juice not only adds flavour but actually helps to tenderise it!

LEMONS IN COOKING
Grated lemon rind is practically a “must” in stuffing and, if used in cakes or biscuits made from clarified dripping, it quite disguises the fact that more expensive shortenings have not been used. And just a tip—there’s no need to waste the rind of lemons you use for drinks etc. If you grate it and store it in tightly-covered jars at refrigerator temperature you will have a delicious flavouring on hand to add to braised carrots, salad dressings and baked fruit puddings.

Of course you can always prepare from good clean ripe fruit the candied peel for your cakes and puddings and it will be beautifully moist and rich in flavour. Very thin strips of lemon rind—the yellow part only—will enhance the flavour of fricassees of chops, tripe or chicken and also stewed pears and apples.

THIRST QUENCHERS
Always popular for their refreshing and thirst-quenching properties are lemon squashes and if you keep two or three bottles of the concentrated syrup in the refrigerator you can use it as the base of many delightful drinks. Served with soda, ginger ale or other aerated waters it can be given added glamour with decorative ice cubes in which cherries or mint leaves have been set and a slice of lemon, orange or cucumber added as a final touch.

So many cakes and puddings feature lemons that it is easy to see what general favourites they must be. A cake which is welcome at afternoon tea table and in the lunch box for its “different” texture and flavour is the lemon coconut cake featured later in this article. Lemon icing teams well with spicy ginger cakes, cinnamon sponges and date slices too. It does not suffer from the defect of over-sweetness so common in many icings and fillings.

JAMS, JELLIES AND SWEETS
Used in jams and jellies, lemon not only adds to piquancy, but the acid and pectin content helps greatly toward ensuring a good “set,” especially with over-ripe fruits and fruits low in natural pectin.
By the way, although lemons contain acid they do not as some people imagine, cause hyper-acidity. Rather do they help maintain the normal balance in the digestive juices.

In boiling sugar for sweets, a squeeze of lemon juice may take the place of cream of tartar or glucose in converting some of the sugar into invert sugars, so helping to prevent unwanted crystallisation of the syrup. Sweets in which lemon juice or cream of tartar have been used do not soften so quickly as those in which glucose is used, the last named being used mainly in sweets of the fondant type.

AS A CLEANING AGENT

But it is not only for its special qualities in cooking and garnishing foods that we value the fruit. If you have a pine-topped kitchen table you will find it benefits remarkably from a rub with cut lemons—even after most of the juice has been removed for another purpose. For best results, leave a few minutes before rinsing thoroughly with clean cold water. Your table will be much whiter. Your brass ornaments and taps will have a new shine if rubbed thoroughly with a cut lemon then rinsed and dried. No powder or paste to catch in crevices! Salt and lemon is one of the most effective cleaning agents in cleaning your copper, while a little lemon juice in the final rise when washing glassware gives a bright sparkle. When piano keys or ivory knife handles become discoloured clean with a paste made from lemon juice and whiting. In the laundry too, you will find lemon juice has its uses—for instance soaking in it will often remove ink stains.

AS A BEAUTY AID

As it helps toward a sparkling cleanliness in the home, so too, blonde hair has a bright lustre when lemon juice in the last rinsing water ensures that all traces of soap are removed. And nearly every housewife knows that even those lemons she has just squeezed for flavourings in puddings etc., can still work wonders on toll stained hands.

On and on the list could go, so many and varied are the uses to which this wonderful fruit can be put. Use lemons often, use them well, and you will have your reward in appetising meals and household tasks made easier.

LEMON COCONUT CAKE

Ingredients—
4 oz. butter.
4 oz. sugar.
6 oz. self-raising flour.
2 tablespoons coconut.
Juice of 1 lemon.
2 eggs.
Milk if necessary.

Method—
Soften butter slightly.
Add sugar and cream well.
Add beaten eggs gradually, beating well.
Add coconut, then lemon juice.
Fold in the sifted flour.
Add milk, if needed, to make a soft mixture.
Bake in a greased tin in a moderate oven about 25 minutes.
Cool, then ice with lemon icing and sprinkle with coconut.

LEMON SYRUP

Use 1 lb. sugar to each pint of lemon juice, to make this popular squash, the base of many good drinks.

Method—
Place sugar in saucepan with just enough water to wet the sugar thoroughly. Add 2 or 3 thin strips of lemon rind.
Stir over gentle heat till the sugar has dissolved. Allow to cool.
Strain and add to lemon juice. Bottle, and keep in the refrigerator.

Important.
You will spoil the flavour—and you will destroy most of the Vitamin C which lemons contain—if you boil the lemon juice.

SUMMER PUNCH

(A refreshing drink featuring lemon, mint and dry ginger ale).

Ingredients—
3 oz. castor sugar.
3 oz. tablespoons of water.
½ pint mint leaves.
**LEMON PUDDING**

(This is a delicious pudding which may be served hot or cold though it is nicest hot. Sliced bananas, cream or icecream may accompany it. And of course, if you want to prevent bananas from discolouring, use lemon juice again!)