

*With a range of **proven benefits** and a
scent that is **sunny** but not overly
showy, **limes** add a shot of
sophistication to the **SPA***

Limes have always been just a little more exotic than oranges or lemons. Among spa aficionados they are now the latest twist in the perennial love affair with citrus. Lime-infused hot baths, scalp treatments, scrubs, and rubs are winning praises everywhere—to say nothing of lime-spiked summer cocktails and spritzers.

Limes and spas are a natural blend. "Exoticism not only excites the imagination, but also leaves room for thought," Pierre Laszlo writes in *Citrus, a History* (University of Chicago Press, 2007). Yes, it turns out that citrus fruits have a history, and as Lazlo shows in his erudite spritzer of a book, it's a tangy one.

Sour limes—the type you are most likely to find in the supermarket—originated in Northwest India, where they were prized for their zesty flavor. Arab traders brought them to al-Andalus—now part of modern-day Spain—where they flourished in the dry, sunny weather. Italians began cultivating limes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when returning crusaders planted lime groves.

From there, this tart little fruit began its own conquest of Europe. Limes and other citrus fruits became symbols of status and power when French kings, returning from visits to Italy, brought them back to Paris and cultivated them in "orangeries" in their grandest palaces. Limes arrived in North America with Christopher Columbus, and rapidly spread through the West Indies and the Florida Keys.

It was in the eighteenth century that Europeans realized that the lime was more than just another pretty fruit—that it, as we now know, boasts a remarkable number of health benefits. At the time, sailors frequently succumbed to scurvy—a horrifying disease. James Lind, a Scottish physician for the Royal Navy, discovered that the disease could be prevented by taking doses of lime juice. (We now know that it's the vitamin C

in lime that does the trick.) Before long, people started calling the sailors limeys. In the nineteenth century, when the Royal Navy was Britain's face to the world, the world started calling all Britons limeys.

Today, even more is known about the health benefits of citrus fruits, which contain hesperidin, lycopene, citric acid, limonene, and other anticancer antioxidants. These healing properties, as well as lime's refreshing and clarifying qualities, make lime an especially attractive ingredient in topical preparations. Dr. Jody Alpert Levine, who heads the division of pediatric dermatology at Montefiore Hospital in Bronx, New York, says, "Lime's astringent, antiseptic, and disinfectant qualities are good for treating oily and acne-prone skin." Levine adds that its uplifting aroma makes it pleasing for use in spa treatments, but notes that in order for the antioxidants in lime to penetrate the skin, it must be formulated with care. "Vitamin C, once exposed to the air, can soon become unstable and inactive," she says.

Perhaps the best lime-themed spa treatments are noted for their freshness. At the Montage Resort & Spa located in Laguna Beach, California, guests may opt for the California Citrus Polish, which utilizes the fruit of local groves. This exhilarating body scrub is made with a combination of lime, orange, and lemon. Combined with sea salt, the exfoliating mixture is scrubbed into the skin. Guests then wash off in a Vichy shower. A citrus scented hydrating lotion, delicious but not overly sweet, is applied to the body with long, firm strokes to lock in moisture and further enhance the absorption