



# THE Traveling Fork

Perhaps you have never heard of this. Don't knock it if you haven't tried it. This isn't fiction! My recall of this dessert from my childhood was stimulated by a trip Marcia and I made on a recent weekend.

We decided to visit the home of Marjorie Kennan Rawlings between Ocala and Hawthorne, just off US Hwy 301. She was a prominent writer in the first half of the 20th century and she initiated her Florida home near small Cross Creek which connects two historic Florida waters, Lochloosa and Orange Lakes. Her home and the remains of her orange grove are maintained as a Florida State Park with very interesting tours conducted by Park Rangers in period clothing. She owned this property and maintained it from 1928 to 1953.



I won't say more about our interesting trip other than to mention this is where she wrote two of her most interesting books, *THE YEARLING* and *CROSS CREEK*. *THE YEARLING* was the basis for a movie of the same name in 1946, starring Gregory Peck and Jane Wyman. This was one of the first movies in the magnificent "Technicolor" of the time, and the country school I attended was dismissed early one day so all the local school children could go to a special matinee to see a movie in color filmed in Florida.

Following our tour of Rawlings' home and surroundings we followed the road down to Cross Creek where we enjoyed an appropriate lunch of Rawlings' time, in a restaurant appropriately named "The Yearling", followed by a dessert of sour orange pie, a delicacy of my youth. For many years Sour Orange Pie was recognized as Florida's "official" pie until it was displaced by Key Lime Pie.



Seedling sour orange trees, or their seeds, were brought to Florida in the 16th Century, along with grapefruit seed or seedlings, by the Spaniards who explored Florida. These seedlings produced sour orange trees from which we make the pie. As you know the Florida Citrus Industry improved on these early imports and grafted millions of trees with improved varieties on the seedlings of these early imports. I have eaten fruit from some of these early historic seedlings which still show up on some higher

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hammock lands of south Florida owned by the Collier families.

Sadly, the Florida Citrus Industry is a shadow of its former self. Our citrus groves are being destroyed by microbes from southeast Asia arriving on Chinese imports (“from China with love”). But that’s another story.

There are two recognized variations of “Sour Orange Pie”. I will call them “The Short Form” for the quickest and easiest recipe to make, and “The Long Form” for the more complex recipe, which includes a meringue topping.

## THE SHORT FORM

- 1 Graham cracker pie crust (available at your favorite supermarket)
- 14 ounces sweetened condensed milk
- 2/3 cup of sour orange juice (we found it at Amazon)
- 4 egg yolks.
- 1 heaping teaspoon of orange zest (any orange will do).

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees F. Mix the sour orange juice, sweetened condensed milk, orange zest, and the egg yolks for several minutes with a good mixer. Pour this mixture into the pie crust. Cover the edges of the pie crust with aluminum foil to prevent burning of the crust. Bake the pie for 28-32 minutes until the center is set. Wiggle the pie to be sure the center is set. There should be no movement of the pie filling. After the pie has cooled, keep it in the refrigerator until you are ready to serve. Garnish the top of the pie with zest of an orange peel or a slice of a fresh orange.

## THE LONG FORM

- 1 Graham cracker pie crust (again, at your favorite supermarket)
- 2/3 cup sour orange juice (available at Amazon, if not at your other favorite foods vendor)
- 1 heaping teaspoon of orange zest (any fresh orange)
- 4 egg yolks
- 1 14 oz can of sweetened condensed milk

Mix well the sour orange juice, 4 egg yolks, condensed milk and zest with a good strong mixer; pour this mixture into the pie crust and bake at 350 degrees F. for 28-32 minutes or until the center sets and won’t wiggle when you jiggle the pan; leave the oven on for the meringue.

Make the meringue with 4 egg whites, 1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar, and 1/4 cup of sugar; beat the mixture of egg whites and cream of tartar at high speed for 4-5 minutes until soft peaks begin to form; gradually beat in 1/4 cup of sugar until well blended; spread the meringue over the pie filling to the edge of the crust and bake at 400 degrees F. for 5-10 minutes until the peaks of the meringue are golden. Watch closely as the meringue can burn quickly. If you want to use whipped cream as a topping in lieu of meringue, go for it! Chill the pie before serving. Use more orange zest over the whipped cream topping. ENJOY!

Now, if you have purchased a bottle of sour orange juice from Amazon and you are wondering what, if anything, you can do with it other than making sour orange pie, take heed! There are other uses for it in addition to making pies. You can make whiskey sours, pineapple and fig sour, homemade catsup, sweet and sour sauce, and citrus cake. I’m sure you can find even more usages with a little search and discover activity.

