



When life gives you lemons... make limoncello

For those of us trying dry January, 31 days can feel like painfully long time. On the bright side, it is the perfect amount of time to make some gorgeous, infused cocktail components that will make your February drinking even more enjoyable. At the Spirit-Level we try to use ingredients that are in season, and we aim to minimise our food waste, this recipe is perfect for this. Citrus fruits peak between December and March, and there are lots of ways you can use the juice and the peel, and they are also packed with lovely vitamin C that helps keep the winter sniffles away. I didn't want to mention the dreaded 'cost of living crisis' but making your own drinks is also cost very effective. With all these benefits you can start 2023 with a smug glow and when February finally comes you will feel extra virtuous.

Recipe for limoncello and lemon & honey syrup

What equipment do you need?

- A peeler
- Big glass jars with secure lids (you can buy posh preserving ones, but any old thing will work, you just need space for about 1.5 litres of liquid)
- A sieve or muslin bag
- Two glass bottles for the final product (old gin bottles with corks are best)

Ingredients

- 1 litre vodka (Absolut is a good choice)
- 6–7 unwaxed lemons
- 750g caster sugar
- 600ml water
- 4 tablespoon honey

Day 1

Peel lemons - you want the minimum amount of pith (the white bit) left on the peel, because this will make the drink bitter.

Sterilise your jars by boiling them or popping them in a low oven for 15 minutes

Stuff the peel into your jar or jars and cover with vodka. Seal with lid.

Leave for 2-3 weeks. Just give them a shake every couple of days.

Now you need to do something with all those left-over lemons. Squeeze them all into a pan and add 4 tablespoons of honey. Heat slowly until it forms a syrup. You can add cinnamon or other spices to taste. Cool and then pour into a jar or bottle, keep in the fridge. The syrup can be used to make hot drinks or mix with soda water for a lovely lemonade.

Day 14 (ish)

You will need a big pan. Add the caster sugar and water. Heat slowly until it forms a syrup. Turn off the heat and pour in the vodka and peel. Mix it all together and pour back into jars (you might need some extra ones).

Leave this mixture for another week – give it a good shake everyday

Day 21 (ish)

Sieve the mixture and pour into sterilised bottles. Don't over fill the bottles because limoncello is best kept in the freezer and the liquid will expand. It will last well over a month but to be honest we have always drunk it long before then.

Limoncello can be served straight from the freezer in cherry style glasses or be used for a variety of cocktails. Some classics are the lemon drop martini, a limoncello gin spritz or a simple limoncello and tonic.

What next....

If you are feeling experimental, you can use the same method but with different citrus or types of alcohol. We serve a margarita version made with lime peel, tequila and orange syrup. Gin works well with lemon or blood orange. We have not tried a rum version yet but if you do, let us know how it goes @thespirit_level