

Limoncello

Limoncello is a Lemon liqueur which is primarily produced in the southern coastal areas of Italy, such as the gulf of Naples and the Amalfi Coast. It is made from fresh Lemon rinds, alcohol, water and sugar. Traditionally it is served chilled (from the freezer) as an after dinner digestivo.

Limoncello is simple to make; however it needs time to steep properly. Recipes I've worked with vary widely in how long to steep the lemons in the Vodka, and then again after the simple syrup (of sugar and water) is added. Essentially, the longer it steeps, the better it will be; yet you hit a point of diminishing return, where the differences are so subtle it is hard to even differentiate.

In addition to the ingredients listed below you will need a large glass jar, such as you would use to make sun tea. You will also need enough clear, sealable glass bottles to accommodate nearly 8 cups (about 1800 ml) of finished Limoncello. In my experience, World Market is a good place to find both the glass jar and the small bottles.

Makes about a half gallon

8 Lemons

1 bottle (750 ml) Vodka

2 cups sugar

2-1/2 cups water (filtered or distilled)



1. Wash and rinse glass jar thoroughly.
2. Unless you are using organic Lemons, wash them with produce wash or soap to remove any residue of pesticides or wax. Dry with a clean towel.
3. Using a vegetable peeler, remove the peel from the lemons in long strips, being careful not to get an excessive amount of the white pith. Save the lemons for another use (such as making fresh squeezed lemonade—yum!).
4. Place the peels in glass jar and pour the Vodka over the peels. Seal the jar and place in a dark, cool room temperature spot for at least 10 days (or up to 40 days).
5. After the initial 10 to 40 day period, make the simple syrup by combining sugar and water in a large sauce pan. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer about 5 minutes to thicken slightly.
6. Cool syrup completely, then pour into the Vodka mixture.
Note: If using a shorter steeping period, leave the lemon peels in for the next phase. If using periods of more than 15 days, remove them at this time.
7. Allow to rest an additional 10 to 40 days.
8. After the rest period, remove the lemon peels and strain the Limoncello by placing a coffee filter in a mesh strainer and pouring the mixture through it into a clean pitcher. Pour from pitcher into bottles, leaving a half inch or so unfilled for expansion. Store the bottles in the freezer. Enjoy!



Frankie's Tips:

- ◆ The reason you want a minimal amount of the white pith (which is the layer under the rind of the lemon), is because it will make your Limoncello bitter. A good sharp peeler is a must!
- ◆ This recipe is easy to double, and if you have a one gallon jar, it will just accommodate a double batch. Because of the alcohol, and since held in the freezer, it will last forever (well almost).
- ◆ Many recipes downplay the importance of using a high quality Vodka, and their results speak for themselves with a rough tasting Limoncello. Good Vodkas can be very expensive though. My local liquor store recommended the Vikingfjord brand to me. It costs about a third compared to the most highly reputed, but I was very happy with the results.
- ◆ Some recipes call for using Everclear, which is similar too Vodka but higher proof (95% alcohol / 180 Proof); or using one bottle of Vodka and one Everclear (for a double batch). One reason for this is to ensure it will not freeze in the freezer. Feel free to do so, though personally I don't like my Limoncello quite so strong. I've had great results with the Vodka. It might freeze up slightly, depending on just how cold your freezer is, but will thaw very quickly.
- ◆ A good friend of ours made a batch of Limoncello in which she placed Lavender during the steeping period. It was very good—so if you are adventurous, give it a whirl. I chose to follow tradition.