

TRADITIONAL PRESERVED LEMONS

With lemons, particularly Meyer lemons, readily available this time of year, zesty, salty Preserved Lemons make sense. Preserving extends lemon season for seasoning foods later in the year. A staple of Middle Eastern cooking, they are fermented, a valuable food preservation method. It preserves foods and can also create more nutritious foods.

INGREDIENTS

Makes about 1 quart.

10 lemons
½ cup pickling or canning (non-iodized) salt
4 bay leaves
4 cinnamon Sticks ~ 4" each
1 teaspoon black peppercorns

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sterilize jar by boiling in water 10 minutes. Keep hot until ready to use.
2. Scrub 5 lemons well and dry with paper towel.
3. Slice ⅛ inch off stem end. Starting at stem end, cut lemons in quarters lengthwise without cutting through the bottom, leaving the end intact. Juice the remaining 5 lemons for 1½ cups juice.
4. Add 1 tablespoon of salt to bottom of the jar. Working over bowl, pack 1 tablespoon salt into each lemon and place in jar, stem side up.
5. When 3 lemons are in jar place bay, cinnamon, and peppercorns in jar, if using. Repeat with remaining lemons. Cover with remaining salt.
6. Add lemon juice to within ½ inch of top of jar. Cover with lid, screwing band down for airtight seal.

7. Place in dark, cool cupboard for 2 weeks, shaking daily to distribute salt.

8. Lemons are ready to use in two weeks. Refrigerate. These will keep in the refrigerator for up to six months. Remove pulp and membrane, using only the peel. Rinse under water to remove excess salt.

Use in recipes from Lemon Chicken and salad dressings to traditional Moroccan Tagines. For a simple pasta dish take a preserved lemon, remove pulp and seeds. Chop rind finely and place in bowl with olive oil and chopped parsley. Add hot cooked pasta and toss. Add fresh ground black pepper and Parmesan cheese as desired. Add capers and canned tuna to make it a main dish!

REFERENCES

Ball Complete Book of Home Preserving.
J. Kingry and L. Devine. 2006.

LOCAL CONTACT

For more information, contact the University of California Cooperative Extension office in your county. See your telephone directory for addresses and phone numbers, or visit http://mfp.ucanr.edu/Contact/Find_a_Program/.

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PRESERVED LEMONS, METHOD 2

I recently acquired a lot of Meyer lemons from my neighbor's tree. I can only drink so much lemonade, eat so many lemon pies, and make so much marmalade! So I decided to make preserved lemons, and it was ridiculously easy. Now I have several jars of preserved lemons that I can use in Middle Eastern recipes.

INGREDIENTS

Makes about 1 quart.

8 to 10 lemons (Meyer or any regular lemon)
Kosher salt
1 quart-sized wide mouth jar with lid

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sterilize the jar in boiling water for 15 minutes.
2. Scrub the lemons under running water with a stiff brush to remove any dirt and impurities.
3. Slice off the stem end and the tip end of each lemon. Starting at one end, cut the lemons in half lengthwise, but stop about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch before you reach the bottom. Repeat the cut perpendicularly so you have cut each lemon lengthwise in a "X" formation, but not all the way through; they should still be attached at the bottom, about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.
4. Liberally sprinkle salt on the inside and outside of the lemons. Hold them open with your fingers and really get the salt inside them.
5. Add about 2 tablespoons of salt to the bottom of the sterilized jar. Place each lemon in the jar, pushing down on them and squeezing them to release the juices. Fill the jar but leave about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of headroom. The lemons should be completely submerged

in juice. If you can't get enough juice out of them, remove a lemon wedge or juice a lemon and add it to the jar. Add 2 more tablespoons of salt to the top. Seal the jar.

6. Let the jar sit at room temperature for 2 to 3 days. Each day, turn it upside down and shake it to distribute the salt and liquids.
7. Put the jar in the refrigerator and turn it upside down every other day or so.
8. The lemons will be ready in three weeks, when the rinds have softened. When using, rinse your lemon thoroughly in water to remove excess salt. Discard seeds.
9. These will keep in the refrigerator for six months.

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PRESERVED LEMONS, METHOD 3

Preserved Lemons could also be called pickled lemons, but preserved sounds so much more exotic. Traditionally from the cuisines of the Mediterranean, specifically Morocco, Turkey and the Middle East, this was a way to keep the wonderful flavor of mid-winter citrus for months. We keep these in the refrigerator now, but they used to be kept in barrels in a cool, dark place. Though the recipe says that the product can be used in one week...don't bother, the lemons will not have achieved anything toward being Preserved Lemons...wait at least one month!

INGREDIENTS

Makes about 1 quart.

6 lemons
Juice of 6 lemons
½ cup kosher salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Wash the lemons very well. Cut each of the lemons into 6 wedges lengthwise and remove all the seeds. Place the lemon wedges in a very clean quart jar with a tight-fitting lid.
2. Add the salt and the lemon juice and mix well. Add more lemon juice if necessary to just cover the lemons.
3. Cover with the lid and refrigerate. Turn and rotate the jar of lemons every day or two to help dissolve and redistribute the salt more. Allow the lemons to “cure” for at least 1 week before using.
4. Store the lemons in the refrigerator. Rinse them under cold water before using.
5. The lemons will keep in an airtight container, refrigerated, for up to 6 months.

VARIATION

Follow the directions above. Add to your jars of lemons, salt and juice:

1 cinnamon stick
3 whole cloves
5 coriander seeds
4 black peppercorns
1 bay leaf

REFERENCES

June Walsh. Recipe and Method from Preserving, Putting up the Seasons Bounty, Culinary Institute of America

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