

Lemons and Strawberries

Here in Sonoma County we are lucky to have great weather for growing lemons. Lemon trees begin producing fruit and suddenly there are more lemons than you can use and/or share.

Remember, when life gives you lemons there is so much more to make than lemonade!

Lemonade

1 3/4 cup sugar
1 cup water
12 lemons or more as needed (about 2 cups lemon juice)
7 cups ice water

*Combine sugar and 1 cup water in a small saucepan, stir and bring to a boil. This is simple syrup. Let mixture cool slightly

* Roll lemons on your counter to soften. Cut lemons in 1/2 and squeeze into measuring cup. Add the pulp to the juice and discard seeds. Continue until you have 2 cups juice and pulp

*Pour ice water into a pitcher, add juice and pulp, add simple syrup and ice and stir

Frozen Lemon Curd

4 teaspoons grated lemon peel
1/2 cup lemon juice
5 eggs
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup melted butter

*In a blender, blend the first 4 ingredients until smooth

*With blender running at lowest setting, gradually add the melted butter, pouring in a steady stream until just blended

*Transfer the mixture to a small saucepan and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until mixture bubbles and thickens

*Remove from heat. Ladle into hot jars leaving a 1/4 inch headspace

*Cover with cap and ring, cool in the refrigerator, then freeze

*Yields approximately 3 cups

Preserved Lemons

10 lemons, scrubbed in warm water, dried and divided
1/2 cup canning salt, divided
4 Bay leaves
4 Cinnamon sticks about 4 inches long
1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns
One quart jar, sterilized for 10 minutes in boiling water and kept hot until ready to use

*Cut 5 of the lemons as follows: cut a thin slice, about 1/8 inch off the stem end. From the stem end cut into quarters without cutting through the bottom end. Juice the remaining 5 lemons to measure 1 ½ cups of juice.

*Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of salt over the bottom of sterilized jar. Working over a bowl, pack 1 heaping tablespoon of salt into each lemon before placing in jar, stem side up. When 3 lemons are packed into the jar, slip Bay leaves and cinnamon sticks against the side of the jar and sprinkle on peppercorns. Repeat with remaining lemons and salt. Cover with remaining salt.

*Fill jar with lemon juice to ½ inch of top of jar. Center lid on jar and screw band on jar until finger tip tight.

*Place jar in dark, cool closet for 2 weeks, shaking the jar everyday to distribute the salt. After 2 weeks the lemons are ready to use. Remove pulp and membrane, using only the peel. Rinse under water to remove excess salt and dry the peel with a paper towel. Store in the refrigerator in a container with an airtight lid for up to 6 months

Lemon Salt

1 cup flake or coarse salt

3 tablespoons lemon zest

*Mix salt and zest in a bowl. Work the zest into the salt with your fingers to release the oils and flavor.

*Spread on baking tray lined with parchment paper, Air dry until completely dried, 8 hours or overnight OR heat oven to 200 degrees F and insert the baking tray and turn off the oven. Let tray sit in the oven overnight. Use a fork to separate any clumps.

*Keep airtight at room temperature for up to 2 months.

For lots more ideas including vinegars, drying and canning refer to:

<https://ucanr.edu/sites/MFPSC/>

Strawberries

*file397753*Did you know that Strawberries are a member of the rose family? Did you know it's not really a berry? Strawberries are a "false" fruit or achene. Strawberries consists of many small individual fruits.

You can grow them in a home garden or purchase them from farmers or at the grocery store. Locally grown strawberries are best for freezing and making jam.

The strawberry growing season in California lasts from January to November. In California, the peak season is April, May and June. Popular varieties in California include Chandler, Camarosa,

Diamonte and Selva. California grows about 83% of the strawberries sold (fresh or frozen) in the United States.

Strawberries are easy to grow in the home garden. Strawberries do not ripen once they are picked. Pick when they are fully red, no white or green areas, and have a firm texture. Strawberries are high in fiber, a good source of folate, potassium and Vitamin C. They are low in calories. Storing strawberries starts with the fruit; do not purchase dull, bruised or moldy fruit. Strawberries should be stored in the refrigerator in a ventilated container. Rinse the strawberries when you will eat them. Never soak them in water.

Preserving Strawberries

Strawberries can be frozen, dehydrated and canned. For best quality, preserve the strawberries on the day they are picked. Preserve them to extend the harvest throughout the year. They can be used in syrups, jams, jellies and leathers. Strawberries are acidic. The pH ranges from 3.3 to 3.6.

Freezing: Strawberries may be frozen whole, sliced, crushed or pureed. Choose red, firm, ripe berries. It's best to freeze them in the form you plan to use them. The four methods for freezing strawberries include: unsweetened pack, syrup pack, sugar pack and pectin pack. Strawberries packed in syrup, pectin or sugar will have better flavor, texture and yield a higher quality frozen fruit.

Dehydrating: Strawberries can be dried in the oven (18 hours) or dehydrator (sliced 7-14 hours, whole-24-36 hours).

Canning: Strawberries are low pectin fruits. Strawberries can be preserved in syrups, jams, and spreads. Safely process strawberry jams and jellies using a water bath canner or atmospheric steam canner (the exception would be a freezer jam).

References are provided for additional information and recipes.

<http://fruitsandnuts.ucdavis.edu/>

<http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu/Produce/ProduceFacts/Fruit/Strawberry.shtml>

<http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu>

Andress, E., Harrison, J.A. (2014). So Easy To Preserve (Bulletin 989). (6th edition). University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.

National Center for Home Food Preservation. <http://nchfp.uga.edu/>

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015). Complete Guide To Home Canning (Rev. ed.). (Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539).

http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html

University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Publication
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