

Freezing Fresh Lemon Juice
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Many people have been very fortunate this winter to receive a large quantity of fresh lemons from friends and family. At first, elation, as there are so many delicious recipes that can use fresh lemons and lemon juice! But then comes the knowledge that only so many lemons can be eaten before these gems start to go bad. So, juice then freeze in ice cube trays!

Many lemons may come right from the tree to the house, so the yellow wonders may not look the way most people see them at the grocery store. Some can be pretty dirty. Who knows where those lemons have been and what creatures have been sitting on the tart, sweet fruit. Put on rubber gloves to protect hands from the cold water and start scrubbing. Make sure that the outsides are clean before cutting into them. Otherwise, any pathogens on the peel will spread to the inside with the cut of the knife.

A bonus to the fresh juice is that the kitchen smells wonderful as each fresh fruit is cut open before juicing. A small electric juicer helps, if one is available. Try to extract every drop of juice. Pour the juice into freshly washed ice cube trays and put the loaded trays in the freezer with wax paper over each tray.

Then, freeze and dehydrate some of the best rinds to use to make lemon zest, and to make the house smell like a lemon dessert.

The next morning, pop the frozen lemon cubes into a freezer container. Seal it, and label it with the contents, freeze date, and use-by date. These frozen gems will keep wonderfully for up to a year. The juice will still be good after that, but the quality starts to lessen, even though the item is still safe to eat. Measure the amount of liquid each individual ice cube tray will hold; each cube is usually about two tablespoons. Whenever the need for lemon juice arises for a recipe, there is a ready supply that tastes, oh, so much better than bottled. Start dreaming of sipping on fresh lemonade this summer!

One thing not to use the lemon juice for is to increase the acidity of any foods that will be canned; for that, use bottled lemon juice. There is no way to guarantee that the acidity level of fresh lemon juice has the correct pH level. But, for making lemon curd, lemon cakes, and lemon tarts, nothing beats fresh lemons.

For questions about safe home food preservation, or to schedule a speaker for organizations or clubs on the topics of food safety or food preservation, call the Master Food Preservers at (530) 621-5506. For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/.