



Four Things You Should Know About Lemons

I crave lemons all year long, but especially right about now when I'm more than ready for spring. Here are four things I've learned about my favorite citrus fruit.

- 1 Wash lemons before zesting them to remove any dirt, pesticides or wax. Be sure to zest before juicing them. I know from experience it's virtually impossible to zest juiced lemon halves.
- 2 Freeze freshly-squeezed lemon juice in ice cube trays so you have it on hand when you need it. Use a peeler to remove zest in thick strips and you can freeze it in re-sealable freezer bags.
- 3 Freshly-squeezed lemon juice can bring out the flavors in foods, much like salt. Squeeze a little lemon juice into sweet and savory dishes at the end of cooking to enhance flavor.
- 4 Cut lemons in half and scoop out the flesh to use the empty shells as serving bowls for sorbets, ice creams or salads.

Lemon-Chive Cucumber Sandwiches

Lemon-Chive Compound Butter jazzes up cucumber sandwiches.

8 ounces (2 sticks), softened
½ cup chopped chives
½ teaspoon lemon zest
2 teaspoons freshly-squeezed lemon juice
2 cloves garlic, minced
Salt and pepper, to taste
thin sandwich bread, crusts removed
thinly-sliced English cucumber

Place the butter in a medium bowl. Stir in the chives, zest, lemon juice and garlic. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Spread a thin layer of the butter onto the bread. Arrange the cucumber slices evenly over the butter and top with a second piece of bread. Cut the sandwiches into squares or triangles and serve.





Lemon rivals salt in its ability to enhance flavor. If you're on a low-salt diet or just looking to cut back, reach for a lemon instead of the salt shaker. Here are three ways to skip the salt and use freshly-squeezed lemon juice:

Roasted Lemon Asparagus with Garlic & Feta

Lemon brings out the flavor in sweet and savory dishes. This dish is a great choice for a quick and flavorful side dish.

Serves four.

- 1 pound bunch asparagus, trimmed**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- zest of 1 lemon**
- 1 tablespoon freshly-squeezed lemon juice**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 1 – 2 tablespoons crumbled feta cheese**
- salt and pepper**

Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Line a baking sheet with foil.

Arrange the asparagus on the baking sheet in a single layer. Whisk together the garlic, lemon zest, lemon juice and olive oil in a small bowl. Add salt and pepper to taste and pour the olive oil mixture over the asparagus. Toss until it's evenly coated.

Roast the asparagus for 8-10 minutes, until it's tender and the sprouts begin to brown at the edges. Remove the asparagus from the oven and transfer it to a serving platter. Sprinkle with the crumbled feta and serve.

- 1** Squeeze a little lemon juice over salad greens for a quick salad dressing.
- 2** Wake up chicken or fish with a spritz of freshly-squeezed lemon juice.
- 3** Give steamed or roasted veggies a flavor boost with a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.



Lemon curd is my favorite way to put lemons to work. It's a creamy mix of lemon juice, zest, sugar and eggs cooked slowly over low heat until it thickens. You can use it to:

Lemon Curd

Makes about 2 1/2 cups.

1 1/3 cups sugar
8 ounces butter (2 sticks)
1 teaspoon cornstarch
zest and juice of 4 lemons
4 large eggs, lightly beaten

Place the sugar and butter in a medium pot over medium-low heat, stirring until the butter melts. Whisk the cornstarch and lemon juice together in a small bowl and add it to the butter along with the lemon zest. Remove the pot from heat and whisk in the eggs.

Return the pot to heat and cook, whisking constantly, until the curd thickens, 2 to 3 minutes.

Remove from heat and strain the curd into a bowl. Cover the curd with plastic wrap, pressing the wrap onto the surface of the curd, and chill.

- 1 slather on scones;
- 2 use it as a base for tarts;
- 3 serve it alongside pound cake and fresh berries; or
- 4 as a delicious layer in a Lemon Strawberry Trifle.



Trifles are layered desserts usually made of fruit, sponge or pound cake (cut into squares), custard and whipped cream.

Modern trifles feature additional ingredients like crushed cookies, candy and sauces. At a dinner party trifles serve double-duty as both dessert and an eye-catching centerpiece. They're served in glass bowls or dishes with high, straight sides so you and your guests can see the delicious layers before they're served for dessert. What I love most about trifles is their versatility and simplicity. My favorite recipe features lemon curd and fresh strawberries.

Lemon Curd & Strawberry Trifle

You'll notice there are no ingredient amounts for this trifle. That's because trifles are more technique than recipe. Use your favorite ingredients to make trifles large or small. The amounts will vary depending on the size of your trifle.

**Pound cake, cut into small cubes or ladyfingers,
broken into small pieces (not completely
crushed) Lemon Curd
sliced fresh strawberries whipped cream**

Line the bottom of your dish with the cubed cake or crumbled ladyfingers. Top with the lemon curd, sliced strawberries and whipped cream.

Repeat the layers in that order until you reach the top of your dish, ending with whipped cream.

Garnish the trifle with fresh strawberries. Cover and chill for at least 2 hours and up to overnight.

Visit www.cookingclarified.com for more lemon tips and recipes.