Drinks / Italy

Limoncello

Lemon zest steeped in near-pure alcohol for a month until every aromatic oil is extracted and the spirit glows a supernatural yellow, then sweetened with cold sugar syrup and diluted to a silky, icy liqueur that tastes of the Amalfi coast in a frozen glass. Patience is the only ingredient you cannot buy.

Time 43200 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 8 whole Organic (unwaxed) lemons
- ☐ 500 ml Grain alcohol (95% ABV, Everclear)
- ☐ 400 g Granulated white sugar
- ☐ 500 ml Filtered water (for syrup)

Let's make it.

01 Scrub the lemons under hot water to remove any wax or residue. Using a vegetable peeler or microplane, remove only the bright yellow outer zest — avoid any white pith, which is intensely bitter. The strips should be thin, flexible, and almost translucent. If any white pith is visible on the back of a strip, use a paring knife to scrape it clean. You are only after the oil-rich yellow layer.

02 Place all the zest in a clean, sealable glass jar. Pour the grain alcohol over the zest — it will immediately begin turning yellow as the essential oils dissolve in the alcohol. Seal tightly and store at room temperature in a dark place for 20–30 days. Shake gently every few days. The color will deepen from pale straw to a vivid, electric yellow over the first two weeks, then plateau. Taste: it should be intensely lemony, fiercely alcoholic, and slightly sweet.

03 Combine the sugar and water in a saucepan over medium heat. Stir constantly until the sugar is completely dissolved — about 3–5 minutes. Do not let it boil vigorously or the syrup will reduce and change in character. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature completely before combining with the alcohol — adding warm syrup to alcohol causes the volatile aromatics to flash off.

04 Combine the strained infused spirit with the completely cooled simple syrup. Stir well. The mixture will turn slightly cloudy as the water content interacts with the essential oils — this is the 'louche' effect, and it is normal. Bottle in clean glass bottles and store in the freezer. Limoncello must be served ice-cold, directly from the freezer, in frozen glasses. It will not freeze solid due to its alcohol content.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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