

Preserving Citrus without Canning

Too many lemons, limes, or mandarins? Learn a variety of ways to preserve citrus without canning. Techniques and recipes include dehydrating citrus, candied peels, freezing whole fruits & making sorbet, citrus salts, and traditional salt preserved lemons.

Freezing Whole Citrus

Use any citrus fruits for this method

- Thoroughly scrub fruits under running water
- Fruit can be frozen in it's whole form or cut into slices or chunks, or juiced.

Whole fruit can be placed in an airtight container and frozen.

Slices or chunks should be frozen separately on sheets to prevent clumping then stored in an airtight container or bag once fully frozen

Juice can be poured into freezer safe, airtight containers and frozen. For smaller quantities efreeze in an ice cube tray then transferring to an airtight container once frozen.

Single Ingredient Sorbet

2 cups frozen citrus sections

Process in a food processor for 3-4 min, scrape down the sides of the bowl, process for another 3-4 min until the sorbet becomes creamy. Store in the freezer in an airtight container.

Dehydrated Citrus Wheels

Wash and slice citrus evenly (1/8 to 1/4 inch thick) – use the fleshy part of the fruit

Arrange slices in a single layer on the trays

Dehydrator Method:

Set dehydrator to 130-135 °F

Dry 12-18 hours, flipping halfway

Oven Method:

Preheat oven to 130-170 °F

Leave oven door slightly open to increase airflow

Bake for 4-6 hours, flipping halfway

For both Methods:

Check for doneness (brittle with a leathery texture)

Condition the citrus slices for 7 days after drying by placing them in a container and shake daily to evenly distribute the moisture

Store in an airtight container with a food safe desiccant packet for up to one year.

Air Drying Makrut Leaves

Wash leaves thoroughly and pat dry

Tie in small bundles and hang upside down in a dry, well-ventilated space avoiding direct sunlight to prevent discoloration

Allow 1-2 weeks for complete drying

Store in airtight containers for long term use

Citrus Salts

1. Citrus – any variety whose zest you find palatable will work. Start with fresh fruit in excellent condition that is well-scrubbed and dried. Unwaxed fruit is preferred.

2. Salt – any salt will do. Salt flakes tend to capture the flavors better than cubes. You may also process your citrus salts to a finer texture in a grinder or mortar and pestle.

3. Optional – You may add other fresh or dry flavorings, such as garlic, herbs, and spices to your citrus salt. Lime-chili-salt is a classic. Finely chop and dry any add-ins.

Wash and dry your whole citrus. Zest the colorful exterior; avoiding the white pith. Aim for similar size pieces for even drying; finely chop any large chunks. (Use the remaining bald fruit for flesh or juice).

Combine your zest and salt. A tablespoon of fresh citrus zest will flavor up to ½ C (~65 gr) of flaky sea salt, although you may increase the zest to up to equal the amount of salt. Feel free to adjust for your own uses. Work

the zest in well—rubbing between your fingertips works—making sure there are no clumps of zest. Spread in a thin even layer on your dehydrator tray or lined cookie sheet.

Dehydrate at 125°F or bake in a 220°F / 105°C oven. If possible, use a convection setting or crack your oven door slightly so moisture escapes. After an hour, check the salts to avoid browning or burning, stirring occasionally. The salts are done when the zest feels dry and crumbles when pinched.

Remove from oven and cool. You may now mix in other fully dried herbs and spices or grind the mixture to a finer texture. Store in clean labeled jars; adding an optional desiccant pack will help preserve dryness. Your salts will be shelf-stable indefinitely, but will have their best flavor in the first three months.



Photo Credit: Joy Agcongay

Traditional Salt Preserved Lemons

Adapted from the Ball Complete Book of Home Food Preservation – 2020 edition

10 Lemons – Divided

½ Cup Pickling Salt

4 Bay Leaves

4 Cinnamon Sticks

1 tsp Whole Black Peppercorns (optional)

1. Prepare jar and lid: For this recipe, the jar needs to be sterilized prior to packing. Boil jar in water for 10 minutes and keep hot until ready to used
2. Wash 5 of the lemons in warm water, scrubbing well to remove any dirt and wax, and dry well, using paper towels. Cut a thin (1/8 inch/ 0.25cm) slice off the stem end. From stem end, cut each lemon into quarters, without cutting all the way through the bottom end and leaving it intact. Juice the remaining 5 lemons to measure 1-½ cups (375mL) juice.
3. Sprinkle 1 tbsp (15mL) pickling salt over the bottom of the sterilized jar. Working over a bowl, pack 1 heaping tbsp (15mL) salt into each lemon before placing in the jar, stem end up. When 3 lemons have been salted and packed, slip bay leaves and cinnamon sticks against sides of the jar and add peppercorns, if using. Repeat with remaining lemons and salt. Cover with the remaining salt.
4. Fill jar with lemon juice to within 1/2 inch (1cm) of top of jar. Center lid on jar. Screw band down until resistance is met, then increase to fingertip-tight.
5. Place jar in a dark, cool cupboard for 2 weeks, shaking every day 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 with a paper towel. Store preserved lemons in the refrigerator.



Photo Credit: N. Heumann