

Lemons - The Versatile Fruit

Lemons - a fruit with a wonderful fragrance, great in food and beverages, but also very handy for multiple purposes around the home!

Lemons have been cultivated by humans for over a thousand years. The fruit is mentioned in tenth century Arabic literature, but was probably first grown in Assam, India.

Lemons are high in vitamin C, have an anti-bacterial effect and are thought to possess antioxidant and anti-carcinogenic properties. The juice consists of about 5% acid, which also makes them useful for a variety of household purposes.



Selecting and storing lemons

The best lemons are those that have smooth, oily skins and are heavy for their size. They should be bright yellow with no green tinges. Lemons will keep for up to a week at room temperature, two to three weeks refrigerated. Lemon zest (peel) can be frozen for months.

Juicing lemons

To get the most juice from a lemon, it should be allowed to reach room temperature, or microwaved for a few seconds prior to juicing. Using your palm to roll the lemon on a hard surface can also help improve juice yields. If you only need a little juice, some people pierce the end with a fork, squeeze the amount needed, cover the holes with tape and then store in the fridge.

There's so much more to lemons than just using them in cooking and making lemonade! Here's a selection of handy tips. Remember to test in inconspicuous areas first.

Ant deterrent

Pouring lemon juice around areas that ants frequent is said to repel them.

Air freshener

An equal amount of lemon juice and water added to an atomizer will create a wonderful synthetic chemical-free green air freshener for your home.

All purpose cleaner

Again, an equal amount of lemon juice and water added to a spray bottle is an effective kitchen and bathroom cleaner and can also be used on walls (spot test first).

A small amount of lemon juice can also be added to vinegar based cleaning solutions to help neutralize the smell of the vinegar.

Microwave

Heat a bowl of water and lemon slices in your microwave for 30 seconds to a minute; then wipe out the oven. Stains will be easier to remove and old food odors neutralized.

Fridge

Half a lemon stored in your fridge will help control and eliminate unpleasant smells.

Chrome/copper/brass

Rub a lemon juice and baking soda paste onto chrome or copper, rinse and then wipe/buff with a soft cloth or paper towel.

Toilet

Mix 1/2 cup borax and a cup of lemon juice for a powerful toilet cleaner that will leave it smelling extra clean!

Lime scale

Use a half lemon to clean the lime scale off a sink or taps/faucets; rinse well.

Laundry

For bleaching purposes, add 1/2 cup of lemon juice to the rinse cycle and hang clothes outside to dry.

A teaspoon of lemon juice thrown into your wash can also help your clothes to smell fresher.

Dishes

A teaspoon of lemon juice added to your dishwashing detergent can help boost grease cutting power

Drains

Hot lemon juice and baking soda is a good drain cleaner that is safe to use in septic systems.

If you have a garbage disposal unit, throw in some lemon peel from time to time while it's working in order to keep it smelling fresh.

Chopping boards

Rub lemon juice into your wooden chopping board, leave overnight and then rinse. Wood chopping boards appear to have anti-bacterial properties anyway, but the lemon will help kill off any remaining nasties and neutralize odors.

Glass and mirrors

4 tablespoons of lemon juice mixed with half a gallon of water makes an effective window cleaner

Degreaser

Straight lemon juice can be used as a general degreaser

Furniture

2 parts olive oil or cooking oil mixed with 1 part lemon juice makes for an excellent furniture polish!

Hair

To lighten hair, dampen it with lemon juice and sit out in the sun for an hour.

I've read that the juice of a lemon mixed with one cup warm water makes for a great hair conditioner. It should be allowed to stay in your hair for a few minutes then washed off. Exercise caution if you have a sensitive scalp.

Cuts, stings and itches

A small amount of lemon juice pour onto minor wounds can help stop bleeding and disinfect the injury (it will sting a bit). Lemon juice applied to itches, poison ivy rashes and wasp stings is said to relieve discomfort.

Mouthwash

A 50/50 mixture of lemon juice and water makes for an effective mouthwash.

Hands

The smell of fish can linger on your hands, even after scrubbing with soap - rubbing your hands with lemon juice will neutralize the smell and leave your hands smelling wonderful.