

Limoncello

Limoncello (Italian pronunciation: [limon 'tʃɛl:o]) is an Italian lemon liqueur mainly produced in Southern Italy, especially in the region around the Gulf of Naples, the Sorrentine Peninsula and the coast of Amalfi, and islands of Procida, Ischia, and Capri.

Limoncello originated in Italy over a century ago and, although it is most often produced in the southern part of the country, today it is made around the world.

Limoncello is made by steeping lemon zest in a grain alcohol that is like vodka. This process extracts the oils and infuses the lemon flavor into the liquor. Sorrento lemons are common in Italian limoncello while American-made versions tend to use California lemons. Since lemon peels are used, organic fruit is often preferred to avoid possible contamination from pesticides and other chemicals. Once infused, the liquor is then blended with simple syrup to obtain the desired balance of citrus flavor and sweetness. It is also common to clarify limoncello to make it less cloudy, though even this method retains limoncello's signature yellow color. Most limoncello is bottled between 28 percent and 32 percent alcohol by volume (ABV, 56 to 64 proof).

It is possible to produce a homemade version using high-proof neutral grain alcohol (Everclear and vodka are popular choices). The process is amazingly easy, though it does take a considerable amount of time (a month or more) for the flavor to develop. Like commercial versions, simple syrup is added for one's chosen level of sweetness.

THE LIMONCELLO EXPERIENCE

Limoncello is an extremely sweet liqueur with an intense flavor of lemons. It lacks the tartness of lemon juice and is more like a spiked, highly concentrated, citrus-flavored syrup that is very delicious.

It is traditional to serve limoncello well-chilled as an after-dinner drink or digestive aperitif. In parts of Italy, particularly the Amalfi Coast, well-chilled small Capodimonte ceramic cups are the preferred drinking vessels. Limoncello is best stored in the freezer and makes a delicious topping for ice cream.



In cocktails, it is used as a sweetener that adds a bright citrus flavor to the mix.

Italy offers the largest selection of limoncello and it is a favorite purchase for travelers to the country. You can also find limoncello in many liquor stores, particularly those that have a diverse stock of imports. Shopping online will increase your limoncello options, though shipping regulations vary greatly by country and state so that is not a viable option for everyone. For the most part, limoncello is affordably priced like other liqueurs and bottles of wine. You will find some luxury options, too.