

Preserved Lemons



3 to 5 lemons (more or less, depending on how many will fit in your jar)
10% salt to weight of lemons (Pickling salt/pink Himalayan salt/sea salt)

Wash and scrub your lemons thoroughly. It is a good idea to leave the lemons in the sun for a while or put them into the microwave for a minute or so to make them more juicy. Slice off the top and bottom of the lemon so that a little flesh is showing. Slice the lemon lengthwise into quarters, but do not slice all the way through. Liberally salt the inside of your almost-quartered wedges and set aside while you cut and salt the other lemons. You can if you wish slice the lemons or even cut into smaller individual wedges if you prefer. We prefer this option as I find it easier when it comes to eventually using the preserved lemons.

Pack the lemons into your jar. As you go use a wooden mallet to press down and extract juice from the lemons. You can if you wish add various spices such as coriander, bay leaf, rosemary, thyme, peppercorns, cinnamon stick, cardamom (obviously not all of these – just chose what appeals to you).

Fill your jar nearly to the top so that there will be very little oxygen in the jar. If the lemons have not produced much juice squeeze another lemon or two and pour the lemon juice on top of the lemons so that they are submerged. It is a good idea to sprinkle a little more salt on the top (mould grows on the top of ferments/preserves but salt inhibits mould growth). Use a Viscodisc or glass weight to make sure your lemons stay submerged.

Seal the jar with a non-reactive lid and leave at room temperature (in the sun if you wish) for at least 4 weeks. We prefer to leave my lemons for quite a bit longer than 4 weeks. The lemons may turn darker and the brine may become cloudier during this time.

It is said that preserved lemons can be kept at room temperature but we prefer to keep them in the fridge just to be sure. They will keep for a long time – after all they are preserved with salt. Always use a clean utensil to scoop the lemons out.

Preserved lemons are often used in Moroccan cuisine but there are so many other ways you can use them. Any time you'd normally add some lemon zest or a squeeze of juice, you can swap in some preserved lemon. You use the whole lemon, rind and all (remove the seeds first). Due to the salt the bitterness of the rind and pith mellow out and develop a lovely lemony character. Chop the lemon up and use it in salads, salad dressings, sauces, salsas, dips, pasta dishes, stews and tagines, or you could even use it to make a Vietnamese salty lemonade drink called Chanh Muoi (see below).

Chanh Muối

1 *chanh muối* preserved lemon wedge
Soda water, still water, or Sprite
Sugar

Separate and spoon a *chanh muối* wedge into a tall glass. Muddle the lemon in your glass with a spoon to mash most of the juices out. Add your choice of soda water, still water, or Sprite. If using soda or still water, stir in a few spoonfuls of sugar to taste. It should have a salty-sweet flavor that's not too overpowering.

If you want to soothe your cold symptoms, simply steep a *chanh muối* wedge in a cup of hot water and stir in some honey.

*PS We recently made some preserved grapefruit and preserved mandarins so if you have other citrus fruit available why not experiment with them too.