

The Story of Homemade Lemonade

Sometimes you just want to treat yourself to a cool drink. You could go with soda, but what are all of those strange words on the ingredients list? Maybe you should make with your own hands, so you know exactly what's in your drink. Lemonade might be the perfect idea. But how much do you really know about the lemons? How does a glass of ice cold lemonade make it to your table? What's the story?



Lemon Grafting

In the United States, almost all lemon orchards are in California and Arizona. A fun fact about lemon trees is that the tree trunk may be from a different kind of tree than the branches and fruit! Tiny buds from the fruit tree are added onto the trunk of a different baby tree. This process is called grafting. Grafting creates a tree with the good qualities of both trees. The branches produce the desired fruits, and the trunk might be one that is less likely to get sick. Lemon farmers may still use chemical pesticides, but they use less thanks to grafting.



There are a few challenges to lemon farming. Lemons can grow in most kinds of soil. However, even sandy soil must have nutrients. Lemon growers often use chemical fertilizer to add these nutrients. The good news is that California soils require less fertilizer than



other citrus growing areas. Also, lemon trees freeze easily. Wind machines are used to blow warm air down from above to keep orchards warmer longer during cool nights. In the past oil-burning heaters were used, but the fuel is too costly for most lemon farmers these days.



Lemon Harvest

Lemons are picked by hand year round and carefully loaded onto trucks to be taken to nearby packinghouses where they are sorted and washed. Washing the lemons removes their natural wax, so they are coated in an edible wax. The wax help keep the lemons juicy and fresh. Other chemicals are also added to stop insects

and fungus from ruining the fruit. Lemons that are too small, too large, or bruised are sorted to be sent to juice plants. The best lemons are sorted out to be sold as whole lemons. These are packed in 40 pound cartons and shipped via truck or train to be delivered to markets across the country.

Lemonade

The best part of making your own lemonade is that the rest of the story is up to you! Once you buy the lemons and bring them home, you can wash off the waxes and chemicals with a vegetable scrub brush. You decide how much sugar to add so that it is just the right flavor and not too sweet. Pour it over some ice, and enjoy your well-earned treat!