

# Not Your (Italian) Grandmother's (Lemon) Tiramisu

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Traditional Italian lore tells us that the dessert we know as tiramisu was invented in a 19th-century brothel to entice more patrons. The original spelling of tiramisu, *tireme su*, means “pick me up.” The dessert was meant to be an energy boost post-brothel visit. Other, more realistic versions of the origin say it comes from a woman named Norma Pielli, the proprietor and chef of the Albergo Roma Hotel. Apparently, she invented the dish to serve to hungry hikers who gave it the name it has today. Either way, as Americans will do, we’ve Americanized it with lemons. Which is not that American because lemons are worshipped in Italy. And I can say with confidence that once you taste this, you will kneel at the altar of the lemon tiramisu. If you are not alcohol averse, don’t skip the limoncello. And please, if you can, make the lemon curd homemade. It’s not hard, and it’s so worth it. Take your time, let things chill when they need to chill, and, as always, read the recipe and the notes first. They will help you make a lemon tiramisu worthy of worshipping!

## **Ingredients:**

### *Lemon Curd*

- 4 large egg yolks
- 4 large eggs
- ¼ tsp. salt (Diamond etc.)
- 1 ¼ cup (250g) granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. lemon oil or zest of two lemons
- ⅔ cup (151g) lemon juice
- ½ cup (114g) unsalted butter

### *Lemon Syrup*

- ½ cup (114g) water
- ¼ cup (50g) granulated sugar
- 1 lemon, use the peel (don’t zest it), and the juice
- ¼ cup (57g) limoncello

### *Mascarpone Filling*

1 ½ cups (341g) heaving whipping cream, cold  
1 ½ cups (480g) lemon curd  
16 oz. (454g) Mascarpone cheese, room temp.  
3 packages of ladyfingers (see notes)

**Directions:**

*For the lemon curd:*

1. In a glass bowl (avoid metal), whisk the egg yolks, eggs, salt, sugar, lemon oil (or zest), and lemon juice together.
2. Pour mixture into a stainless steel or glass saucepan and heat on medium heat, stirring constantly until mixture has thickened. Once it begins to thicken, cook for an additional minute or so and remove from heat.
3. Strain the curd through a mesh strainer to remove any lumps and the zest if you used it.
4. Add the butter to the curd and stir to combine.
5. Cover the surface of the curd with parchment paper or plastic wrap to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate until well-chilled.

*For the lemon syrup:*

1. Prepare the syrup while the lemon curd chills. Combine water, sugar, lemon juice, and peeled lemon zest in a stainless steel or glass saucepan.
2. Simmer on medium heat until sugar is fully dissolved.
3. Remove from heat, let cool.
4. When ready to use, strain the peel out and add limoncello.

*For the filling:*

1. Freeze the bowl you will whip the heavy cream in for at least 5 minutes. Whip the cream in the chilled bowl until stiff peaks appear.
2. In a large glass bowl (remember, no metal), combine half of the lemon curd and the mascarpone cheese. Be careful not to overwhip the mascarpone, or it will be gritty.
3. Gently fold in the whipped cream, being careful not to deflate it.

*Assembly:*

1. Using an 8x11 glass or enamel-coated casserole dish, dip the ladyfingers into the lemon syrup one at a time and layer the bottom of the dish in tight rows.
2. Spread half the filling on the ladyfinger layer, spreading evenly to the edges.
3. Repeat the dipping process for a final layer of ladyfingers.
4. Spread the remaining filling on the final layer, being careful to cover edge-to-edge.
5. Cover tightly and refrigerate overnight.
6. When you're ready to serve it, spread the remaining lemon curd on top. Fancy it up with lemon slices and a basil sprig if you like!

**Notes:**

- I'm never super interested in straining things. It bores me. This is why I used lemon oil in the lemon curd — I thought I'd get out of it. But no, I still had to strain the lemon curd even though I stirred like a madwoman. Still got lumps. Nonetheless, I would still use the lemon oil.
- Let's talk ladyfingers. In my 8x11 pan, I used about 60 ladyfingers of the brand I bought (I bought some French brand in a box on the cookie aisle because my Italian husband is a total Francophile). Something to keep in mind whether you buy or bake your ladyfingers.
- Even with using 60 ladyfingers, I did not have to double my lemon syrup but keep that in mind.
- I broke my own rule and did not read the amount of ingredients, just the ingredients list. So, I came home with only 8 oz. of mascarpone. That was easily solved by adding 8 oz. of cream cheese. If you use half cream cheese (it was delicious), whip the cream cheese to a fluffy softness before you add the mascarpone, etc.
- I didn't think the lemon curd recipe was enough. I could have used more to cover the top. Next time I will double the recipe for the lemon curd. But man, it was out-of-this-world yummy. Having extra lemon curd is never a bad thing. ☺