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Brined Lemon

At the restaurants we preserve lemons in two main ways: brining with salt and drying (see Note). To use brined lemons, remove the pulp and set aside, cut off and discard the pith, and thinly slice the rind. We use the pulp and brine itself to add salinity and acidity to sauces, roasts, and stocks. Thinly slice or finely chop the rind to add brightness to preserved mussels, other seafood conserva dishes, or pretty much anything else you can imagine.

Makes 24 lemon wedges

6 ripe lemons (regular or Meyer)
½ cup kosher salt
4 green cardamom pods
1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise
1 teaspoon black peppercorns
2 northern bayberry leaves

1. Cut the lemons lengthwise into four wedges. Fill a sterilized 32-ounce glass jar with 2 tablespoons of the kosher salt. Place 6 wedges of lemon in the jar and pour 2 tablespoons salt on top. Repeat with the rest of the lemon wedges, 6 at a time, and more salt. Top with the cardamom pods, vanilla bean, peppercorns, and bayberry leaves. Lightly mix and gently press the lemons with the back of a spoon. Add water until the lemons are submerged and the jar is full. Close the jar and shake well.

2. Refrigerate the jar for 3 weeks, flipping the jar over every couple of days to rearrange the contents. As long as the lemons are submerged, they will keep for up to 1 year, but will continue to get softer.

Note: To dry whole lemons or any other citrus fruit, place them in a dehydrator set to 110° to 130°F and let them slowly air-dry until they shrink to about one-third their original size and feel completely dry. This can take anywhere from 10 to 14 hours. They're delicious shaved or simmered into soups, stocks, or sauces.