The LimoncelloQuest
Troubleshooting Guide

Problem: Your limoncello is forming a yucky film or scum that is floating on top.

Solution: That film is called “il collarino” and it is the mark of a true homemade limoncello. Some artisanal commercial brands also have this film which manifests as a ring at the neck of the bottle.

This is by far the most common question I receive about making limoncello and the film can take a variety of appearances. I’ve heard everything from yellow to green to gray in color and the appearance can vary from thin to thick to clumpy. Many people mistake it for mold of some sort.
I even had one reader who sent a sample of it to a lab for analysis! And true enough, the results came back saying the substance was harmless.

Because water, liquor and sugar tend to be pretty pure, I believe this film comes from impurities in the lemons that are transferred to the liquor as it infuses. I also tend to get a lot less of this film if I use organic lemons that are carefully cleaned. Careful filtration also helps prevent the film from forming.

However, I’ve simply shaken the bottle and consumed it on many occasions and it has made no noticeable difference to either the flavor or my health!
Problem: You forgot to scrub your lemons.

Solution: This isn’t a big deal really. You may get more of the aforementioned film on top of your limoncello, but you can reduce any impact by filtering more carefully. I recommend an extra filtration with 2 paper coffee filters at once.

Problem: You forgot to filter your liquor.

Solution: The severity of this problem depends on the liquor you used. If you used high quality vodka, don’t worry about it. If you used low quality vodka or grain alcohol, you’ll probably notice.
There are two ways to remedy a batch like this. One is to add more simple syrup, which produces a sweeter batch that is less potent but it will also mask some of the roughness in the liquor.

The other method is to allow the finished product to rest on the shelf for a lot longer, I’d recommend an extra 6 months or more. It tends to mellow as it ages and that also takes off the edge.

**Problem:** Your limoncello is cloudy.

**Solution:** Some readers pose this as a problem but I think it’s really just an aesthetic preference. I like the look of a cloudy limoncello and most of the artisanal brands have that appearance.
Letting the limoncello rest for a long time does have a clarifying effect and bottles that I’ve rested for long periods of time usually end up looking very clear. So if that’s what you like, that’s how you can get that result.

**Problem:** Your limoncello is too sweet.

**Solution:** It’s very difficult to doctor a batch like this because adding water dilutes both the alcohol and the sugar. I recommend using an overly sweet batch for making mixed drinks. Increase the alcohol percentage in your next batch to better suit your tastes. If you like a less sweet limoncello, target a 30% alcohol level in the finished product.
Problem: Your limoncello has too much alcohol heat.

Solution: This is the opposite of the previous problem but it can be doctored after the fact. Just add more simple syrup and let the mixture rest longer. The exact amount you need to add is guesswork unless you know the alcohol percentage in the limoncello you have so far. If you have that, then use the [calculator](http://limoncelloquest.com/limoncello-articles/limoncello-alcohol-percentage-calculator) on LimoncelloQuest to determine the correct quantity.

Problem: Your limoncello has a weak lemon flavor/aroma.
**Solution:** This can’t be fixed after the fact. Use more and/or better quality lemons in the next batch.

**Problem:** Your limoncello is too dark or light in color.

**Solution:** This also cannot be fixed after a batch is complete but it is also just an aesthetic concern. Organic lemons tend to produce a darker color limoncello but it’s otherwise difficult to predict. Sugars other than plain white sugar can also darken the liquor.

I’ve made batches that range from a dull, dark (nearly brown) yellow all the way to a brilliant chartreuse and I’ve never noticed that the color was related to the flavor. I believe this usually has to do with the quality and freshness of the
lemons you use, so choose wisely if it’s important to you.

Problem: Your limoncello freezes in the freezer.

Solution: This just means that the alcohol percentage of your limoncello is too low given the temperature of your freezer. The solution is to make a stronger batch next time. If you like a sweeter batch and the recipe is to your liking, you can alter the temperature by placing the bottle higher in your freezer (cold air drops) or possibly by slightly altering the temperature of the whole freezer. I have a calculator (http://limoncelloquest.com/limoncello-articles/alcohol-freezing-point-calculator) on LimoncelloQuest that helps you figure this out.