

The Best Fresh Margaritas

MAKES MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS, SERVES 4 TO 6

TIME 15 MINUTES, PLUS 4 HOURS CHILLING

Why This Works: The best margarita recipe would produce a drink with a balanced blend of fresh citrus flavors and tequila. We discovered the correct proportions (equal parts juice, orange liqueur, and tequila) for the best balance. The right alcohol (Triple Sec and a reposado tequila, made from 100 percent blue agave) gave our margarita recipe a mellow, delicate flavor. And the best citrus mix (lemon and lime zest steeped in their juices) gave it a deep, refreshing citrus flavor.

- 4** teaspoons finely grated lime zest plus $\frac{1}{2}$ cup juice (4 limes)
- 4** teaspoons finely grated lemon zest plus $\frac{1}{2}$ cup juice (3 lemons)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup superfine sugar
- Pinch salt
- 2** cups crushed ice
- 1** cup 100 percent agave tequila, preferably reposado
- 1** cup triple sec

Before You Begin: The longer the zest and juice mixture is allowed to steep, the more developed the citrus flavors in the finished margaritas. We recommend steeping for the full 24 hours, although the margaritas will still be great if the mixture is steeped only for the minimum 4 hours. If you're in a rush and need to serve margaritas immediately, omit the zest and skip the steeping process all together.

1. Combine lime zest and juice, lemon zest and juice, sugar, and salt in 2-cup liquid measuring cup. Cover and refrigerate until flavors meld, at least 4 hours or up to 24 hours.

2. Divide 1 cup crushed ice among 4 or 6 margarita or double old-fashioned glasses. Strain juice mixture into 1-quart pitcher or cocktail shaker; discard solids. Add tequila, triple sec, and remaining 1 cup crushed ice; stir or shake until thoroughly combined and chilled, 20 to 60 seconds. Strain into ice-filled glasses and serve immediately.

