

# Gifts from the Kitchen

## Fruit Infused Vinegar

### The Vinegar

First, the base vinegar. It's important to find a high-quality white wine vinegar to start with, one with minimal levels of ethyl acetate, the compound that shows up in lesser-quality vinegars.

### The Fruit

Then the fruit. You want an equal weight of fruit to vinegar. Raspberries, blackberries, and currants are all good choices. You can use frozen berries; it is best to use unsweetened ones. You can also add herbs to the vinegar for more complexity.

### The Process

Pick over the fruit and remove any bad berries, then crush the berries lightly with a fork in a saucepan. Pour in the vinegar and bring everything to a simmer. Simmer for just a minute to help release the berries' flavor into the vinegar, then turn off the heat. Pour everything – vinegar and fruit – into a hot sterilized jar. Let it cool with the cap off, then capped and put it all away in a dark cupboard. Let it age for at least 2-3 weeks. After that time, strain out the fruit, bottle into sterilized jars/bottles. It can be used right away, but aging will improve the flavor.

## Raspberry Vinegar

This is similar to the recipe above, but adds sugar to bring out the fruit flavor.

1 1/2 cups white vinegar or white wine vinegar

1/2 cup granulated sugar

1 cup fresh or frozen (unsweetened) raspberries

Preparation:

Combine sugar and vinegar in a stainless steel or enameled saucepan. Heat, stirring occasionally, until hot but not quite boiling. Pour mixture into glass bowl. Stir raspberries into the vinegar. Cover with plastic wrap and let stand in a cool place 6 to 7 days. Strain through cheesecloth twice. May be stored for several months in the refrigerator in a jar or bottle with tight-fitting lid.

Makes 1 1/2 to 2 cups.



## Quince and Coriander Jelly

1¼ lb. quinces, washed and coarsely chopped with skins and cores intact.

1 tbsp coriander seed

Juice and seeds of 2 large lemons

3¾ cup water

4½ cup sugar, warmed (put into ovenproof container and place in 200°F oven)

Place quince, coriander, lemon juice and water into a large pan. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer gently for about 1½ hours. Cool slightly, then pour into a scalded jelly bag suspended over a non-metallic bowl and leave to drain overnight. Measure the strained juice into a large kettle. Add 2¼ cups warm sugar to every pint of juice. Heat, stirring over low heat until the sugar has completely dissolved. Increase the heat and boil rapidly without stirring for 5-10 minutes until the jelly reaches the setting point. Ladle into hot, sterilized jars. Seal and process 10 minutes in a boiling water bath. *Rosemary (2 sprigs fresh or 2 Tbsp dried) can be substituted for the coriander for a more savory jelly.*

## Ginger-Pear Preserves

9 cups peeled, cubed pears (about 2 ½ lbs) 2 thinly sliced, seeded lemons  
6 cups sugar  
1/3 cup chopped fresh ginger

Combine pears, lemons, ginger and sugar and let stand in refrigerator at least 12 hours or overnight. The next day, bring the mixture to a boil, uncovered, over high heat. Reduce heat and simmer until thick (1 to 1 ½ hours), stirring occasionally. Ladle into sterilized jars, seal, and process 10 minutes in a boiling water bath. Makes 6-8 8 oz. jars.

## Caramelized Apple Marmalade with Thyme

About 4 pounds tart apples  
5 Tbsp fresh lemon juice 2 cups sugar  
2 cups fresh apple cider  
1 vanilla bean, split, scraped, and cut into thirds  
1 tsp cinnamon  
2 tsp finely chopped fresh thyme or 1 tsp dried thyme

Peel, core, and cut the apples into 1" pieces. Toss immediately with lemon juice and set aside. Stir together the sugar, ½ cup apple cider, and the vanilla bean in a large shallow pan. Place over high heat and bring to a boil. Cook, without stirring, until the mixture caramelizes to a medium amber color. Add the apple slices, the remaining apple juice, cinnamon, and thyme. The caramel will clump together but will eventually remelt. Continue cooking on moderately high heat, watching carefully that it doesn't boil over. Turn the apples over in the syrup until the pieces are completely glazed and translucent and there is little liquid left in the pan (20-30 minutes). Remove from heat; ladle into hot, sterilized jars and seal. Process in a boiling water bath 10 minutes.

## Medlar and Tarragon Jelly

The brown-skinned medlar is a somewhat forgotten, old-fashioned fruit. It is about the size of a crabapple and resembles a rose hip (it is in the rose family). The medlar is not considered mature until it is completely soft, which can occur on the tree after the first frost; or, the fruit can be picked earlier and then spread on a straw mat in a cool place. The flesh of the fruit is not particularly interesting on its own, but the juice has a perfumed scent and thus is prized for compotes, jams, and jellies. The following tarragon-flavored jelly is good with meats— and without the tarragon the jelly is nice on toast and muffins.

2 pounds very ripe medlars, quartered 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice  
About 2 cups sugar  
4 to 8 sprigs of fresh tarragon, blanched



Combine the medlars with 1 cup water and 2 tablespoons of the lemon juice in a preserving pan, bring the water to a boil, and simmer for 1 hour, or until they are very soft and mushy.

Tip the contents of the pan into a dampened jelly bag set over a large bowl and let it drain for at least 12 hours or overnight. Measure the strained juice, reserving it, and for every 2 cups juice measure 1 cup sugar. In a preserving pan melt the sugar and the remaining 2 tablespoons lemon juice over low heat, stirring. Bring the syrup to a boil, and add the medlar juice. Boil the mixture, skimming any froth, for 15 minutes, or until the jelling point is reached. Ladle the jelly into four warm sterilized 1-cup jars, add 1 or 2 tarragon sprigs to each jar, and seal. Process 10 minutes in a boiling water bath.

## Italian Fruit Syrups

Fruit syrups are great for making fruit sodas (syrup plus seltzer water) or for topping pancakes and ice cream. They can be made from most fruits. A popular flavor is raspberry, and the following recipe can be modified to create any other fruit or berry syrup. The general rule of thumb for making fruit syrup is equal measures of sugar and water, and roughly four cups of any puréed fruit of your choice. You can also add herbs such as mint or thyme for more complexity.

1 pound (roughly 4 cups) raspberries or other berries  
1/2 cup water  
1/2 cup sugar  
2 tablespoons lemon juice

Bring berries, water and sugar to a boil in large saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring until sugar dissolves. Boil uncovered 10 minutes, stirring occasionally and adjusting heat to prevent mixture from boiling over. Add lemon juice. (This prevents browning.) Strain through a fine-mesh sieve, discarding the solids. Pour into sterilized jars or bottles. Let it cool: Once chilled, cover and store, refrigerated.

## Crème de Cassis- Black Currant Liqueur

2 lbs black currants, with a few leaves (about 7 cups)  
4 cups brandy or 4 cups vodka  
1 1/2 cups sugar (amount can be increased or decreased according to taste)  
1 cup water  
Directions

Put the bunches of black currants, with their leaves, in a wide mouthed glass jar or a stoneware bottle. Add the sugar and water. Pour in the alcohol, cover tightly, shake to dissolve sugar, and let macerate for about two months.

Strain the liqueur through a cheesecloth, wringing to get all the fruit goodness. Bottle and cork. Keep the bottles of liqueur for one month before opening. Makes about 2 quarts.

## Homemade Apple Liqueur (Meilach)

2 1/2 pounds apples  
1 cup vodka

2 cups brandy  
1 1/2 cups sugar 3/4 cup water

Cut apples into wedges, put in jar. Pour vodka and brandy over apples. Cap and age in a cool place for one month. Strain and filter. Combine sugar and water, boil, cool. Combine liqueur and syrup into aging container, age for a month. Strain as needed.

Variation: Spiced apple. Add two 3" cinnamon sticks, 10 whole cloves, remove spices when filtering/squeezing apples.

## Raspberry Liqueur

raspberries  
grain alcohol/vodka  
sugar  
water

Rinse the raspberries and place them in a glass jar. Pour in enough grain alcohol to cover by a few inches, screw the lid on, and allow to steep 3-4 weeks. Over this time, the flavor and color will leach out of the raspberries, leaving the alcohol a deep ruby color, and the raspberries a weird ghostly pink.

When the raspberries have finished steeping, strain them from the alcohol, discard, and filter the solution through several layers of cheesecloth or, preferably, coffee filters.

Measure the final amount of alcohol -- this is your base number. In a saucepan, heat 1.5 times that amount of water, and 1/4-1/2 that amount of sugar, depending on how sweet you like things. To give an example: 4 cups raspberry alcohol would need 6 cups of water and 1-2 cups sugar. Let the sugar syrup cool, then add it to your filtered alcohol. Taste (the flavors will be a bit harsh), and add more sugar if desired. Let age for at least a month before enjoying.

## Roasted Red Pepper Spread

6 lb. large red sweet peppers (or use combo of sweet and hot peppers)  
1 lb. Roma tomatoes  
2 large garlic cloves 1 small white onion 2 Tbsp.  
minced basil 1 Tbsp. sugar  
1 tsp. coarse salt  
1/2 cup red wine vinegar (or 1/4 cup red wine vinegar  
+ 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar)

Roast peppers under broiler or on a grill at 425°F until skin wrinkles and chars in spots. Turn over and roast other side. Remove from heat. Place in a paper bag, secure opening, cool 15 minutes. Roast tomatoes, onion, and garlic under broiler or grill 10 - 15 minutes. Peel onion and garlic. Finely mince onion and garlic.

Peel and seed peppers and peel tomatoes. Puree in food processor or blender. Combine with onions and garlic in a large pan. Bring to a boil over medium high heat, stir to prevent sticking. Reduce heat, simmer until spread thickens. Ladle hot spread into hot jars, leave 1/4 inch headspace. Process in water bath canner for 10 minutes.

