

# Versatile Vinegar: Making and Using Herbal Vinegar for Cooking, Cleaning, and Curing

## Making Herbal Vinegar

### General Process

- I. Preparing the containers
  - A. Wash all utensils, bottles, and containers with hot, soapy, then rinse in hot water.
  - B. Use nonreactive materials—glass, pottery, or enamel-coated steel.
  - C. Use plastic lids if using canning jars for steeping.
  - D. Clean bottles with a bottle brush and then sterilize use one of the following methods.
    1. Using a funnel, fill bottles with boiling water and let stand for 10 minutes, drain and allow to dry.
    2. Wash and rinse bottles and place them upright in a pan with 1 inch of water in the bottom. Place the pan in a preheated 350 degree oven for 10-15 minutes.
    3. Run through a dishwasher on the “sanitizing setting.”
- II. Preparing the herbs
  - A. Harvest the herbs early in the morning just after the dew has dried.
  - B. Herbs must be clean and **dry**.
    1. Add 1/4 cup or vinegar or a tablespoon of salt per two quarts of tepid water; swish.
    2. Rinse again and spin in a salad spinner or lay on several layers of paper towels to dry.
    3. Bruise herbs slightly.
    4. Crush seeds with a rolling pin or mortar and pestle.
- III. Selecting the base vinegar—5% acidity
  - A. Unpasteurized Apple Cider—“the mother” —\$\$
  - B. Pasteurized Apple Cider
  - C. Rice Wine
  - D. White Wine
  - E. Red Wine
  - F. Distilled White Vinegar—Cleaning vinegars
- IV. Flavoring the vinegar (unheated method.)
  - A. Place herbs in a 1 quart or half-gallon jar—2 cups of herbs per quart of vinegar.
  - B. Pour in vinegar.
  - C. Cap with a plastic lid
  - D. Place in a dark, room temperature location and allow to steep for 1-3 weeks, checking flavor after one week.
- V. Bottling the vinegar
  - A. Strain herbal vinegar through a coffee filter into a sterilized bottle.
  - B. Add a fresh sprig of herb for presentation
  - C. Seal with new corks.
  - D. Label and date.
- VI. Storing the vinegar
  - A. Store vinegar in a cool, dark location.
  - B. **Do Not** place in a sunny window.
  - C. After opening a bottle, date and use within 6 months.
  - D. Remove herb sprig when no longer covered with vinegar.
  - E. Discard vinegar if any mold appears.
  - F. May store in fridge.

## Versatile Vinegar: Recipes and Hints

### Vinegar/Herb Combinations and Recipes

To make these flavored vinegars follow the steps listed in the **General Process** handout.

#### Chive Blossom Vinegar

2 cups chive blossoms  
1 quart white distilled vinegar, or white wine vinegar

*Splash this vinegar on vegetables or use to make salad dressing and marinades.*

#### Dill or Dill-Garlic Vinegar

1 quart white wine or cider vinegar  
2 or 3 heads dill  
2 cloves garlic, chopped (optional)

*Splash on vegetables or fish. Provides a dill pickle taste without the pickles.*

#### French Tarragon Vinegar

Following the steps in the **General Process**, fill a sterilized glass jar two-thirds full with clean, moisture-free tarragon sprigs. Pour white wine vinegar over the leaves to cover.

*A great vinegar for salad dressings or to use with chicken. Can also be used in vinegar candy.*

#### Mint Vinegar

3 cups cider vinegar  
2 tablespoons sugar  
3 cups mint, cleaned and dried

Heat vinegar, sugar and 2 cups of mint in a large nonreactive saucepan to just below the boiling point. Turn off heat, cover and steep until the mixture has cooled to room temperature. Remove and discard mint. Place the other 1 cup mint in a sterilized jar. Fill with steeped vinegar. Let stand in a cool, dark place for about 3 weeks. Discard mint. Strain vinegar through a coffee filter into a sterilized bottle. Cork or seal.

*Use this vinegar in salad dressings, or to splash on fresh sliced tomatoes or to season peas and carrots. Deglaze a lamb roasting pan with it to add extra flavor to the sauce or gravy. Follow the same procedure as above.*

#### Sage Caraway Vinegar

1 qt cider vinegar  
1 cup cleaned, bruised, chopped fresh sage leaves  
1 teaspoon caraway seeds

Heat vinegar\* in a nonreactive pan to nearly the boiling point. Pour vinegar over the sage leaves and caraway seeds. Let cool, then pour into a sterilized jar. Seal or cork jar and set in a cool, dark place for about 3 weeks. Discard sage leaves. Strain vinegar through a coffee filter into a sterilized bottle and seal or cork.

*Splash a little of this vinegar over a pork roast or pork chops. Add a tablespoon or two when cooking cabbage or use to flavor meat marinades.*

\* I do not normally heat the vinegar, preferring the slower method, but these two recipes call for heated vinegar.

### **Citrus Vinegar**

Follow steps in the General Process for preparing the containers, straining and bottling. Cut the fruit of choice—lemon, orange, lime— into quarters or sixths, place pieces in a jar, cover with white wine vinegar and allow to steep for one week. Use within 6 months. Lemon balm, lemon thyme, or orange mint can be added, if desired.

### **Using Herbal Vinegar in cooking**

#### **Tarragon Dressing**

2 tsp to 1T brown sugar  
1/2 tsp fresh tarragon  
1/4 tsp salt  
1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper  
1/2 tsp paprika  
1/4 tsp dry mustard  
1/4 cup white wine tarragon vinegar  
1/2 cup olive oil

Stir together herbs, spices, and vinegar. Whisk in oil until dressing emulsifies and appears creamy.

#### **Mustard-Tarragon Marinade**

*Use with lamb, chicken, salmon, swordfish, or halibut*

*Yield: 1 1/2 cups*

1 cup olive oil  
1/4 cup tarragon white wine or rice vinegar  
1/4 cup Dijon mustard  
1 tablespoon fresh tarragon, minced  
2 cloves garlic, minced

Process all ingredients until smooth. Pour into a glass or ceramic container.

#### **Fruit Dressing**

*Use this dressing for fruit salads. Vary the juice, vinegar, and herbs used to your taste.*

*Yield: 1/2 cup*

1/4 cup fruit juice  
2 tablespoons fruit or herb vinegar  
2 tablespoons canola or safflower oil  
1 tablespoon fresh anise hyssop, mint, sweet cicely, lavender, or lemon balm, minced  
1 teaspoon honey

Combine all ingredients in jar or glass bowl. Cover and chill for several hours before using. Store in a tightly covered jar in the refrigerator.

## **Just for Fun**

### **Old-Fashioned Vinegar Hard Candy**

2 cups sugar

1/2 cup tarragon or other herbal vinegar

2 tablespoons butter

1. Grease a large cookie sheet
2. In a saucepan, mix the sugar, vinegar, and butter together.
3. Cook over medium-high heat until the mixture starts to boil. Continue cooking, stirring frequently, to 207 degrees on a candy thermometer (or until a few drops of the mixture dropped into very cold water separates into threads that are hard).
4. Pour the mixture onto the cookie sheet and cut into 1-inch squares while the candy is still warm. When the candy is cool enough to handle, roll the squares into balls with hands.
5. If, desired, you can add a few drops of your favorite flavoring or extract and a few drops of food coloring. Add peppermint, cherry, or lemon extract, and you have homemade cough drops.
6. Makes about 50 candies.

### **Haymakers Drink—the forerunner of Gatorade**

1 gallon water

1 cup molasses

1 1/4 cup cider or flavored vinegar

2 cups sugar

1 teaspoon ginger

Mix all ingredients and serve chilled or over ice.

Serves 16-24

## **Using Herbal Vinegar for cleaning**

Because a 5% acetic solution of distilled white vinegar kills 99% of bacteria, 82% of mold, and 80% of germs, it has many uses around the house as a cleaner and disinfectant.

To scent your vinegar cleaning solution, add a few sprigs of lavender to unseasoned rice vinegar, let stand, capped for a few weeks. Or use rose petals or any sweet-smelling flower to give a lovely aroma to white vinegar.

There are numerous uses for white vinegar around the house. Here are a few highlights that may be helpful.

### *In the Kitchen:*

- Shine up chrome sink fixtures marred with lime buildup with a paste made of 2 T salt and 1 tsp white vinegar.
- Spray full-strength white vinegar on a cutting board after use and leave out overnight. The vinegar smell will evaporate and the vinegar will have cleaned all germs and bacteria from the board.

- Use vinegar ice cubes to deodorize and clean your garbage disposal. Freeze vinegar in molded ice cube trays. Run several cubes down the disposal while flushing with cold water. (Note: as the vinegar freezes in the trays, it will deodorize the freezer as well!)
- Clean your glass cooktop with a cloth or sponge dipped in warm sudsy water to which a splash of white vinegar has been added.
- Remove film from narrow-necked glass bottles or vases by letting undiluted white vinegar sit in them for a few hours. Add a little rice or sand and shake vigorously to loosen stubborn stains.

*In the Bathroom:*

- Clean grout by letting full-strength white vinegar sit on it for a few minutes and scrubbing it with an old toothbrush.
- Wipe tub, tile, and shower curtain or door with undiluted white vinegar to remove grime, mildew, and scum. Rinse with water.
- Pour 1 cup of vinegar and 1 cup of borax into the toilet bowl. Let sit for a few minutes before using a toilet brush to scrub the bowl and under the rim.
- Freshen air in the bathroom by spraying a solution of 1 tsp baking soda and 1 T white vinegar and 1 cup water. Shake the spray bottle well after the mixture stops foaming.

*For Windows:*

- Combine ½ cup non-sudsy ammonia, 1 cup white vinegar, and 2 T cornstarch in a gallon of water. Use it in a spray bottle or wipe it on with a cloth.
- Apply full strength vinegar with a clean paint brush to remove paint splatter from windows or when trying to saturate a decal you wish to remove.

*For Furniture:*

Make a frugal and effective furniture polish with equal parts white vinegar and vegetable oil, or with 1 part vinegar and 3 parts olive oil, always rubbing with the grain of the wood. This solution will also often remove white water rings from wood.

*Other:*

- Check the growth of mold in a humidifier by rinsing it out thoroughly, then adding about ½ cup white vinegar when refilling with water.
- Scent a room pleasantly by adding a bit of cardamom or another fragrant spice to a small bowl of vinegar and placing the bowl in a warm corner.
- Spray full strength vinegar on doorknobs and wipe them dry. This is especially helpful during flu season.

**Note: Don't use white vinegar on marble. The acid can affect the surface.**

**Medicinal Uses for Herbal Vinegar**

- Use a few spoonfuls of peppermint vinegar in a glass of warm water to calm an upset digestive system. Prepare the vinegar by putting a few leaves of peppermint in a small jar of cider vinegar and letting it sit for a few days to infuse. The addition of a few teaspoons of honey will make it easier to drink.
- Rub full strength scented vinegar on after washing and drying your hands. It will act as an astringent.