

Elderflower Cordial

Elderflower cordial is delicious and refreshing mixed with cool water on a hot day - or spritzed with Prosecco for an indulgent adult cocktail. An excellent base for a fruit salad, it can also be added to gooseberries in a fool.

This recipe has been prepared by the 16 New Street Cook, Lindsey Noble. When foraging for elderflowers, choose a warm, dry day and select unblemished flowerheads from high up (out of the way of dust and dogs) - you should be able to smell the sweet fragrance on the blooms.

You will need

- 20 creamy elderflower heads, picked in the morning on a sunny day
- 1 large orange
- 3 large lemons
- 1 litre cold water
- 1.5kg white sugar, any kind is fine
- 1½ teaspoons citric acid (optional) – available from chemists, this ‘magic’ ingredient should help it last longer
- Sterilised muslin square, for straining
- 1-litre sterilised bottle with a lid

1. Give the elderflower heads a shake and then swish them through a sink of cool water to get rid of any insects or dust. Shake well and set aside in a large mixing bowl.

Either pare off the rind off the orange and lemons using a vegetable peeler or finely grate the zest. Add to the flowers in the bowl.

Using your hand, and pressing firmly, roll the citrus fruits on your work surface to release their juice. Squeeze the juice of one of the lemons into the bowl with the flowers. Slice up the remaining two lemons and the orange and add to the bowl.

2. Place the water and sugar in a large, heavy-based pan and warm gently over a low heat to dissolve the sugar. Do this slowly to prevent the sugar from catching and continue stirring until all of the sugar crystals have dissolved. Bring briefly to the boil, and then add the citric acid (if using).

Pour the boiling syrup over the fruit and flowers, and give everything a really good stir. Then cover the bowl with a clean tea towel and set aside to steep overnight.

3. The following day, strain the syrup through a muslin set over a clean jug. Pour the cordial into a sterilised bottle and put on the lid. Store in the fridge - or freeze for a longer life.

Variation

Elderflower Cordial Flavoured with Ginger, Strawberry or Mint

To ring the changes, you can flavour the hot syrup with one of the following:

- 1 x 5cm piece of fresh root ginger, finely grated
- 250g ripe strawberries, washed and gently crushed
- 6 large sprigs of mint, bruised

