

MAKING & USING VINEGAR

Recipes That Celebrate
Vinegar's Versatility



Bill Collins



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Storey Publishing

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*To Michael Palmer, the finest thriller writer ever,
and an even better friend, mentor, and fan of my food.
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INTRODUCTION TO VINEGAR

The discovery of vinegar is an early example of true visionary genius. Thousands of years ago someone's wine went bad and it sat around for weeks, maybe months. Upon tasting it, they found it to be incredibly harsh with a deep acid bite. That's when they decided that this would be the magical addition to improve the taste of food all around the world.

Vinegar can make simple foods sparkle. It can make a good dish great. And it can make a great dish memorable. It's a lot to ask of one ingredient, but it does its job well. That's because vinegar is easily the most contradictory food ever created. It's both mysterious and common. It's easy to make, yet almost everyone rushes out to buy it. We don't like to eat foods that are tart and acidic, but we use vinegar in everyday foods such as salads, savory dishes, and even desserts. We combine vinegar

with other ingredients all the time. Yet how often do you taste a spoonful of vinegar?

Using vinegar can make you a better, more interesting, and more confident cook by providing a balance that's often lacking in food. When vinegar is combined with something mild, sweet, or spicy, its benefits jump out. Think of vinegar as a member of a sports team. If you don't field all of the players, you can't win the game.

In all of my years teaching cooking lessons, when I include recipes that use vinegar, I usually get asked the same questions. Is there a difference between vinegars? How long does vinegar last? Is it necessary to have nine vinegars in the pantry? And my favorite: are all balsamic vinegars the same? As you'll see from this book, the answers are yes, a very long time, no, and definitely no.



WHAT IS VINEGAR?

THE WORD *VINEGAR*, translated from the French, means “sour wine.” Quite simply, vinegar is something containing sugar that has been fermented into a drinkable alcohol, in this case, ethanol. This continues to ferment and become vinegar. If you’re someone who loves wine, then it’s gone bad. If you’re someone who loves vinegar, then something good has happened!

Usually, the source of the ethanol for vinegar is wine. But it doesn’t have to be. It can be apple cider that has turned into hard cider. Or beer. This is just the first step. In its most basic form, vinegar is ethanol that has continued the fermentation process. At this point, good bacteria starts to have its effect, combined with air. The result is the forming of acetic acid, which is the main component of vinegar. This is what gives vinegar its tart, biting taste. The liquid that becomes vinegar has an acid level that’s between 4 and 7 percent of its volume.

That’s the short version. The longer one is almost as simple: You make ethanol, and then you convert it into acetic acid. The first step is to take any food item that contains natural sugars. With some added yeast, the sugars will then ferment into alcohol. The second step involves adding oxygen, found in air, combined with a vinegar *mother*. A mother is like the starter for yogurt or sourdough bread. It’s made from starch, from the sugar family, plus a healthy bacteria, which then combines with the liquid that you want to turn into vinegar.

With the mother as the foundation for the vinegar, all you have to do is add the liquid of the flavor that you want, and

you'll have that vinegar within a few weeks. If you add beer, you'll have malt vinegar. If you add red wine, you'll have red wine vinegar. Adding hard cider, made from apples, will give you cider vinegar. The common ingredient in these is that they all have the alcohol/ethanol, which feeds the healthy bacteria in the mother to make vinegar.

Vinegar can be also created just with the ethanol and oxygen. That is, pour a bottle of wine into a larger, wide-mouth jar and let it sit. But this can take months to create and may not even result in vinegar. A number of things along the way, such as temperature fluctuations, bacteria, and dust in the air, can derail and ruin a motherless vinegar. But if you use a mother, with its good bacteria, your vinegar will turn out well, and faster.

In some cases, ethanol can be converted into vinegar in less than three weeks. While it's true that three weeks in this Internet age of instant gratification seems like forever, you don't have to do anything to it while it's fermenting. Just go about your life and come back after a few weeks to see how it's going.

THE ESSENTIAL KITCHEN VINEGARS

IF YOU'VE DONE ANY COOKING, then you'll have some vinegar in your kitchen. It might be one bottle. Or three. Or maybe fourteen. And if you're new to cooking, you might be wondering why anyone would buy, or need, all of that vinegar. As a starting point, I think most home cooks can prepare most foods with three vinegars. But to make life easier, I'd suggest five, all of which are commonly available in most supermarkets

with choices ranging from generic and supermarket brands to national and international brands.

- Apple cider vinegar
- Balsamic vinegar
- Red wine vinegar
- Rice vinegar
- Distilled white vinegar

Apple Cider Vinegar

When it comes to cooking, cider vinegar is the most versatile vinegar. You can use it in vinaigrettes and pickling, two of the most popular uses of vinegar. Cider vinegar comes from crushed apples. If you're making it yourself, it's best made with hard cider. This is also the vinegar that is most commonly available in markets as both organic and nonorganic. The organic option offers the mostly anecdotal evidence of being good for digestion. And many people believe that a daily tablespoon of organic cider vinegar, usually diluted with water and honey, will help with weight loss. The question of whether it really works is debatable, but if you are going to drink vinegar the important thing is to dilute it. This is true with all vinegars. If you don't dilute it, you can get a painful burn in your throat.

Balsamic Vinegar

One way to gauge the popularity of balsamic vinegar is to see how much more space it occupies on supermarket shelves. My own nonscientific surveys have found that supermarkets carry more varieties and brands of balsamic than any other type of vinegar.

Balsamic vinegar has a balanced flavor, as it's both naturally sweet and acidic. Its complex flavor improves over time while it's aging in wooden barrels. Its time in the barrels can range from a

year to decades. The longer the balsamic is aged, the smoother, richer, and more mellow the flavor. Keep in mind that balsamic vinegar only improves in flavor and texture as it gets older when it's aging in the barrel, not as it sits in the bottle on your shelf.

Balsamic vinegar is not made from wine; it's made from wine *must*, which is what the grapes are called after they're pressed, but before they're set aside to start their long process to become wine. The wine must is filtered and the remaining liquid is reduced by 30 to 70 percent. This is what helps give balsamic vinegar its darker color and sweetness. Most balsamic vinegars that you will see on the shelf have the words "of Modena" on the label. This certifies that the vinegar is from Modena, Italy, home of all things truly balsamic. It also certifies that it was made by the process with the wooden barrels and grape must.

A result of this aging process means that there is a huge range of quality when it comes to balsamic vinegar. A balsamic aged for decades, while being transferred to a variety of barrels made from different types of wood, results in a vinegar that is

White Balsamic Vinegar

The process to make white balsamic vinegar is different from the regular balsamic. It's only aged for a year, which stops the sugars from caramelizing and giving the vinegar its familiar brown color. The flavor is very similar to the regular balsamic vinegar, but not the one that's aged for decades. The main benefit of white balsamic vinegar is in making light-colored sauces and dressings. It's not crucial to have white balsamic vinegar unless its color is important to you.

more than just something to be used in cooking or a salad. It becomes much thicker than regular vinegar, a sauce all by itself, terrific drizzled over cheese or fruit, or as a dipping sauce. And it can be yours for \$200 for a little more than three ounces!

This is very different from the quart-sized bottle of balsamic vinegar of Modena that you can buy for a few dollars. The only things they have in common are their ingredients, early steps for becoming vinegar, and their name. The lower-priced vinegars are what would be used for everyday cooking. Younger, cheaper balsamics will likely have “caramel color” in the ingredients because they haven’t been aged long enough to develop their own color and intense flavor. But it’s not as though you only have two choices between very low- and high-priced balsamic vinegars. The prices and quality gradually go up from the low end.

Red Wine Vinegar

Red wine vinegar is surprisingly versatile. Due to a slightly lower level of acid, the flavor of the wine stands out a bit more than the flavor of other vinegars. As my eighth grade math teacher used to say, you get out of it what you put into it. So, if a better red wine goes into making your vinegar, then you’ll taste that directly in your foods. This is because red wine vinegar is often splashed onto foods just before serving. This could be something as simple as using it with olive oil and herbs on a salad, or even in tuna before it ends up in a sandwich. Its advantage for many people is that it lacks the sweetness of balsamic vinegar. This gives a cleaner taste and finish to many foods.

This especially comes in handy if you're making infused vinegar. Its smooth, less-acidic taste won't overpower delicate herbs and fruit. And its color is more appealing than any of the other vinegars. It's this versatility and flavor that make it so popular.

Rice Vinegar

Rice vinegar is used mostly in Asian cooking. It has a mild flavor that is generally less acidic and a bit sweeter than Western vinegars. It comes in many varieties and colors, including clear, red, and black; if you wanted, you could fill your cabinet with just a variety of rice vinegars.

There's often confusion about rice vinegar and rice wine vinegar. The main questions are whether they're interchangeable, and what is the difference. Generally, they have very similar tastes and you can substitute one for the other. But their differences are subtle, yet significant. Rice vinegar is made with fermented rice. Rice wine vinegar is made with rice wine, which is made from fermented rice. The result is that the flavors of

Sushi Vinegar

Neither rice vinegar nor rice wine vinegar should be confused with sushi vinegar, which is a rice vinegar with added sugar and salt. These additions flavor the rice, which is used as the foundation of sushi. The flavor of the rice would be bland if you were to use something other than sushi vinegar.

the two are similar, which makes them interchangeable in most recipes.

Distilled White Vinegar

More than any other vinegar, distilled white vinegar (also called white vinegar) has a dual purpose. For cooking, it gives a nice bite, but without flavor. Its main use is for pickling and baking. But it also has many noncooking benefits such as cleaning household and kitchen items such as copper pots, coffeemakers, and glass (see below).

It's a common misunderstanding that white vinegar and white wine vinegar are the same. They're not. White vinegar comes from distilled alcohol. White wine vinegar comes from white wine and is often used to make infused vinegars.

NONCOOKING USES FOR VINEGAR

IT IS A BIT ODD TO THINK that a food item that can be used with such variety is also one of the most effective natural household cleaners. But it's true, and has been for centuries. The one you want to use is distilled white vinegar, which has a higher acidity than other vinegars. If you try to clean with a nice balsamic, you'll be very disappointed with the messy results. White vinegar is also so inexpensive that you can buy it by the gallon, and it'll probably last for ages. Just make sure that you don't mistake it for white wine vinegar.

Here are some ways to clean with distilled white vinegar:

All-purpose. For a general cleaner, fill a spray bottle with 2 parts water to 1 part white vinegar and add a few drops of dishwashing soap. If the smell of this is too strong, add 10–25 drops of your favorite essential oil.

Glass. Vinegar makes a great window cleaner. Use $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of white vinegar to get streak-free glass. If you find that the vinegar smell is too strong, add 10–20 drops of an essential oil to greatly improve the fragrance.

Drains. To clear clogs in sink and tub drains, first pour $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of baking soda in the drain. Then add 1 cup of white vinegar. When the foaming stops, run hot water to flush the drain. Wait 5 minutes, and then flush it again with cold water. If it only slightly improves the draining, repeat the steps.



Coffeemaker. Whether you use a drip coffeemaker or a percolator, this will work as well as any commercial cleaner. Plus, it doesn't use any harsh chemical cleaners to get the job done. Mix 1 cup of white vinegar with water to fill the dispenser (or percolator). Run it through a full cycle as though you were brewing your coffee. Then repeat this, just with water, two more times, to rinse out the pot. This will get rid of coffee stains and other deposits.

Copper pots. Copper gets tarnished when it's exposed to oxygen. While this is a cool look for a copper roof, it's not so cool on your copper pans. You need three ingredients: white vinegar, salt, and a cloth. Just splash some vinegar on the pot and then sprinkle on the salt. Or you can put the salt on before the vinegar. It doesn't matter which goes on first. Then, rub the salt and vinegar on the tarnished copper. You might find that you have to keep adding salt or vinegar. Just keep rubbing this on the copper, and the tarnish will be removed. It does take some effort, but you'll find the copper will shine as though it were new.

Dishwasher. To avoid a soap buildup on your dishes in your dishwasher, run the empty machine through a full cycle with 1 cup of white vinegar. Just pour it inside the machine. Make sure you check with the manufacturer or manual to make sure this doesn't affect the warranty.

Microwave oven. Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of white vinegar with 1 cup of water, and bring it to a rapid boil in your microwave oven. This will help loosen food bits that might be stuck inside the oven. Plus, it will make the microwave smell better.

Greasy areas. This is a great way to remove grease on your stove top or exhaust fan area. Just pour some white vinegar on a sponge and wipe away the grease.

Scissors. Scissors blades become blackened and sometimes rusty after being used for a long time. Soak a cloth or paper towel in undiluted white vinegar, and carefully rub it on the blades. This will remove the unsightly stains. The advantage of this over soap and water is that the scissors won't rust from being immersed in water and then not being thoroughly dried.

Pans. If you burn food in a pan and it won't come clean with scrubbing, place the pan in an empty sink. Put a thin coating of baking soda into the pan, covering the entire surface. Carefully, pour in white vinegar. You'll get a roiling, bubbling reaction when the vinegar is added. Wait for a few moments for it to stop, and then scrub out the pan.

Wooden cutting boards. Simply wipe cutting boards with undiluted white vinegar. This is a great way to reduce bacteria on porous boards.

HOMEMADE VINEGAR AND BEYOND

People have asked me why they would ever want to make vinegar when it's so easy and inexpensive to buy. Others have asked why anyone would ever buy vinegar when it's so easy and inexpensive to make. Hmm. That sounds like a tie vote to me. So there must be other reasons to make your own vinegar. I can think of two compelling ones: a crisp, unique flavor that you created, plus bragging rights.

For bragging rights, it might not be as cool as winning the Nobel Prize, but it's still pretty great. If you're rather new to cooking, it will elevate your cooking status among friends and

family significantly. If you've been cooking for years, it will solidify your status as someone who really knows how to cook. How great is that?

Making your own will also give you a uniquely flavored vinegar. The reason it's unique is that no one else will be using the same combination and types of wine. If you start with a bottle or two of wine, or leftover wine that you didn't finish drinking, you'll be using flavors that no one else will have in their vinegar. You probably have a better chance of winning the lottery than having another homemade vinegar taste exactly like yours.

If you do make just one vinegar, making it with a red wine will give you the most versatility, uses, and flavor of any type of vinegar. It'll be milder than the others and will be perfect with almost any food you prepare. The only downside of red wine vinegar is that it might change the color of some foods. If you're making a chilled rice salad, the rice will probably turn a nice shade of red. If your guests mention this, just tell them that you did it intentionally!

MAKING YOUR OWN VINEGAR

THE METHOD FOR MAKING YOUR OWN vinegar is almost identical from vinegar to vinegar. The basic concept is that you combine a fermented liquid (such as beer, wine, or hard cider) with the vinegar mother at a ratio of 1:3 (that is, an 8-ounce bottle of mother, plus 24 ounces of fermented liquid). The vinegar must be exposed to air, so use a wide-mouth jar and cover it with cheesecloth instead of a lid. Then leave it for a few weeks in a dark place and soon enough, you'll have vinegar! Simple, right? Here's what you need to get started:

A large glass or ceramic jar. You can get a specific vinegar vessel with a spigot on the bottom or you can just use a large, wide-mouth, one-gallon jar. It's important that the container



be made only of glass or ceramic. If you use metal or plastic, then the acid in the vinegar will likely react with the container and ruin the vinegar.

B-Brite cleanser (or another brand). This is the go-to cleaner and sanitizer that you'll need for making vinegar. It's very popular among people who make beer and wine at home, and is available at homemade beer- and wine-making supply stores, and online. It's very simple to prepare and use. Just add the powder to water, and let it sit in the bottle for 10 to 15 minutes. With just this one step, your bottle is cleaned and sanitized, and ready to be filled with your homemade vinegar.

Using B-Brite isn't to be confused with the cleaning and sterilizing steps that are needed when you use Mason jars for canning pickles and other homemade foods. You'll find these steps on page 32.

Vinegar mother. An 8-ounce jar of mother will get you started. You can buy this at homemade beer- and wine-making supply stores, and online. Or, you can buy a natural vinegar such as Bragg's organic apple cider vinegar. This will already have a mother in it (the cloudy clump that looks like something from a bad alien movie) that you can just scoop out and use. However, buying the jar of mother is easier, as you'll know exactly how much ethanol to add. If you take it from the Bragg's bottle, you may not have enough mother.

Fermented liquid (ethanol) such as wine, beer, or hard cider. The main thing to remember is that using bad ingredients (such as spoiled wine) will give you a bad result. If you start with a robust flavor you'll get a richer-tasting vinegar.

Cheesecloth and a rubber band. You'll use the rubber band to secure the cheesecloth to the opening of the wide-mouth, one-gallon jar. The cheesecloth allows air to come in without those pesky flies and other insects.

Acid testing kit (optional). This is also available at homemade beer and wine supply stores. This is optional, but it will confirm if your vinegar is in the desired range of 4 to 7 percent acidity. This is rarely a problem. But if you use the testing kit, then you'll know for sure.

Five Steps

There are just five steps to making your own vinegar, and the active time is less than 15 minutes:

1. Wash the jar you'll be using for the vinegar. Do this as you would any dish in your kitchen.
2. Following the directions on the B-Brite cleanser, fill the jar with water and B-Brite, and let it sit for 10 minutes. Then thoroughly rinse the jar with water.
3. Combine the mother and the alcohol in the container. Cover with a double layer of cheesecloth and secure it with the rubber band. Store it in a dark place (too much light can slow down, or even stop, the vinegar's creation) at 60° to 80°F (16°C–27°C) for at least 3 weeks.
4. After 3 weeks, dip a ladle or a spoon into the vinegar and take out a small amount. Put a few drops on a piece of white bread to taste it. Bread diffuses the intense,

harsh flavor of the vinegar, and helps you avoid burning your throat if the acid level is a bit too high. If the vinegar is not ready yet, come back every few days to see if you like the flavor.

5. Strain the vinegar with a coffee filter, cheesecloth, or paper towel. You can reuse the solids that you strained, as these will include the gelatinous mother that will get your next batch under way.

Endless Vinegar

Another benefit of buying the mother is that you only have to do it once. Because once your vinegar has matured, you can extend it forever in two steps.

The first step is to combine your vinegar with the ethanol, at the same ratio of 1:3. That is, use one part old vinegar with three parts new ethanol. And then wait for your new batch to mature. You can do this, pretty much, forever. This stretches your initial \$10 cost for the mother for many years, or even decades.

You can also save yourself the price of buying the mother and just take the mother out of a bottle of Bragg's apple cider vinegar. This will make a terrific cider vinegar. But if you want to make another kind of vinegar, you'll need to start with an appropriate mother, such as a red wine mother for red wine vinegar. If you use the Bragg's, you'll have cider undertones of flavor in your red wine vinegar.

MAKING VINEGAR INFUSIONS

INFUSING VINEGAR SIMPLY MEANS adding something with flavor to vinegar. Usually, it's a solid, natural addition like rosemary, thyme, raspberries, or citrus. Why would you want to infuse vinegar rather than just add that flavor to the dish that you're preparing? Because infusing the vinegar adds even more flavor to whatever you're preparing. For instance, let's consider using an orange-infused vinegar when making a salad. If you only added orange segments to the salad, then you would have a very nice salad with occasional tastes of orange. But if your dressing were made with the orange-infused vinegar, then you could have that terrific orange flavor in every bite.

Since so many infused vinegars can be purchased at supermarkets, specialty stores, and online, why would you want to make it yourself? Other than the usual bragging rights, it's easy to do, and you get to choose any flavor you want. Many people like to use herbs such as rosemary, thyme, dill, or basil. Even spices, like cumin or chile peppers, work. Garlic is also quite good. Whatever appeals to you will probably work.

Either homemade or store-bought vinegar will work for infusing, but if you're using homemade, there's one additional step to follow: use an acid-testing kit to make sure the vinegar has an acid level between 4 and 5 percent. A higher acidity can negatively affect your infused vinegar flavor, as the additional acid will react more harshly than with a lower acid amount. The higher acid can often hide, or completely stifle, milder flavors.

Infusion Methods

Two methods work well for making infused vinegar. I like to think of them as fast and faster.

For the fast method, simply combine the flavoring ingredients with the vinegar in a covered, clean, and sanitized lidded jar. Place the vinegar in a cool, dark place for 2 to 3 weeks. You don't have to do anything to it except check the flavor every week or so. When you're ready to bottle the vinegar, strain it through a fine cheesecloth or coffee filter.

For the faster method, bring the vinegar to a light boil. Then add the flavoring ingredients and turn off the heat. The heat of the simmering vinegar brings out the new flavors that you've added. Let it cool to room temperature and then store it covered, in a cool, dry place. Depending on the flavor that you want, you can strain and bottle the vinegar after it has cooled, or wait 1 or 2 weeks for the flavor to intensify.



Bottling Vinegar Gifts

If you're keeping the vinegar for your own use, then you can store it in a wine bottle, or any bottle that appeals to you. But when giving your homemade or infused vinegar as gifts, you should think more about what kind of bottle to use and what size. I suggest using bottles that are between 12 and 16 ounces, the size of most beer and soda bottles. This amount is enough vinegar for your lucky recipient to make all types of recipes, and it will give you the option of all kinds of bottles.

Empty bottles are so easy to find that you'll probably be able to get exactly what you're looking for. You can buy used bottles at yard sales and on eBay, or shop at beer- and wine-making supply shops, craft stores, and national chains like Pier 1 and Michaels. A particularly fun bottle is made by Grolsch, the Dutch beer brewer. Its bottles have swing-away lids, making it easier to open and close the bottle. They are available either filled with beer from your favorite liquor store, or as empty bottles on eBay and other websites.

When preparing your infused vinegar gift, a nice touch is to add some of the flavor back in when bottling. For instance, if you've made rosemary vinegar, add a sprig or two of fresh rosemary into the bottle. This will make the gift look even better and will slightly increase the flavor over time.

INFUSED VINEGAR RECIPES

THE TWO INFUSION METHODS apply to these recipes and many more. All of these recipes can be increased in size, which is helpful if you want to give a bottle of vinegar as a gift. You might also want to have extra oranges, raspberries, or fresh basil to increase the vinegar's flavor if desired. Because all of these flavors are natural, their intensity can vary.

Garlic Vinegar

A splash of garlic vinegar in dressings, or right on top of cooked vegetables, adds a zing that's more flavorful than just adding garlic directly.

- 4 cups white or red wine vinegar
- 12 cloves garlic, crushed

Chile Vinegar

You can use the same type, or combine different chiles. When you strain the vinegar, make sure that no seeds remain.

- 4 cups white wine vinegar
- 6 hot chile peppers, such as poblano or jalapeño

Almost Caesar Vinegar

Use this in your next vinaigrette to make it even zestier.

- 4 cups cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons crushed cumin seed
- zest of 3 lemons
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled

Barbecue Marinade Vinegar

Add this to your zesty barbecue marinades.

- 4 cups red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 inches of ginger root, peeled and sliced
- 1 jalapeño pepper, sliced, seeds removed
- zest of 3 limes

Roasted Chicken Vinegar

Follow your favorite recipe for roasted chicken. Before it goes in the oven, brush this vinegar all over the chicken and in the cavity, too.

- 4 cups white wine vinegar
- zest of 4 lemons
- 4 sprigs rosemary
- 1 small onion, chopped

Grilling Vinegar

Use this in place of the vinegar in your grilling marinades.

- 4 cups red wine vinegar
- 8 chives, minced
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled
- 8 basil leaves

Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme

Use over potatoes, hot or cold, or in your Thanksgiving stuffing.

- 4 cups white wine vinegar
- 3 sprigs each of parsley, rosemary, and thyme
- 4 sage leaves

Far East Vinegar

Use this in place of rice vinegar in your Asian recipes.

- 4 cups rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 6 edamame pods, unopened
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds, crushed
- 3 pieces pickled ginger

Raspberry Vinegar

You can use raspberry vinegar to make an excellent shrub drink (see page 26). Serve it with your favorite piece of chocolate for a perfect afternoon snack.

- 4 cups white wine vinegar
- 3 cups raspberries (fresh or unsweetened frozen), slightly mashed
- 2 tablespoons sugar

Dessert Vinegar

Lightly drizzle over mozzarella or mascarpone cheese, or over fresh peaches.

- 4 cups white balsamic vinegar
- 3 cups raspberries (fresh or unsweetened frozen), slightly mashed
- 6 basil leaves

Dessert Vinegar Redux

Sprinkle this vinegar over vanilla ice cream with chocolate chunks. Another equally delicious option is to replace the peach with 2 cups of blueberries.

- 4 cups white balsamic vinegar
- 1 peach, pitted and sliced
- 8 sprigs mint

Sunday Brunch Vinegar

Sprinkle on smoked fish, such as salmon or trout, and serve with cream cheese or crème fraîche.

- 4 cups white wine vinegar
- 4 whole shallots, peeled
- 6 sprigs fresh dill

Orange Vinegar

This is my favorite infused vinegar. You can use it to make a spectacular orange vinaigrette, especially when paired with a mild oil, like grapeseed.

- 4 cups white wine vinegar
- zest of 6 oranges
- 3 tablespoons sugar

Pie in the Sky Vinegar

Use this vinegar in place of lemon juice for apple dessert recipes.

- 4 cups cider vinegar
- 4 cinnamon sticks
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg

SHRUBS

THE MOST FUN AND DRINKABLE vinegar beverage is a shrub. No, it's not a plant that grows in the ground. A shrub, created in the eighteenth century, is a simple drink. With many variations, it's primarily a combination of three things: vinegar, sugar, and fruit. It is usually then mixed with sparkling water. The best analogy is that it's similar to the old soda fountains, where a concentrated syrup of your favorite beverage was added to carbonated water.

Enjoy shrubs with sparkling water as refreshing soft drinks, or add gin, vodka, tequila, or whatever you like to make a special drink of your own invention. The great thing about shrubs is that they have so many variations. You can use almost any fruit and even some vegetables in a shrub, including pineapple, beets, blueberries, peaches, and plums. You can use different types of vinegars and sugars, too, as well as spices and herbs.

Strawberry Shrub

This version is much thicker than the Mango Shrub (see page 28) and requires no cooking. It's perfect for thicker drinks, and with rum, will make a unique daiquiri.

- 1 cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cider vinegar
- 1 cup strawberries

1. Place the sugar and vinegar in a blender and process until most, or all, of the sugar has dissolved. Then add the strawberries and blend until smooth.
2. Combine this with 1 cup of sparkling water, or however much you like to get your exact, favorite flavor. Refrigerate leftovers.



Yield: 2 cups

Mango Shrub

If you purée this with the fruit, you'll have a thicker drink. And with the fruit and balsamic vinegar, you'll think you're having a fruity cola! This is terrific with sparkling water and dark rum.

- 1 cup water
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 mango, peeled, pitted, and diced
- ½ cup balsamic vinegar

1. In a saucepan, heat the water and sugar and simmer until the sugar dissolves. Add the mango and simmer for 10 minutes.
2. Add the vinegar and simmer for another 10 minutes.
3. When the mixture is cooled, either strain it or put it in a blender to purée it. Enjoy in a drink or refrigerate for later use.

Yield: 2 cups

Chocolate Shrub

A chocolate shrub is a refreshingly great chocolate drink. With sparkling water, it becomes a lactose-free alternative to chocolate milk. With vodka, it becomes a chocolate martini!

- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 cup chocolate chips

1. In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, combine the vinegar and chocolate. Warm until the chocolate melts.
2. Whisk the mixture together until it's smooth.

3. Combine 2 to 3 tablespoons of the cooled mixture with sparkling water for a refreshing and chocolate-filled drink. Add 1 ounce of vodka for a fizzy chocolate martini!

Yield: 4–6 servings

Drinking Vinegar for Health

Besides making shrubs, you have a few other approaches to drinking vinegar. The first is to dilute organic cider vinegar with water as an aid for digestion. As well as saving your throat from burning, diluting the vinegar will help save your teeth. The acid in vinegar can contribute to wearing down the enamel on your teeth if you drink it regularly without diluting it.

The next approach is to combine the vinegar with other ingredients, such as herbs and other liquids. This is often used for home remedies, as well as for general wellness drinks. The herbs, plus sweeteners, can make this much more drinkable than just the diluted vinegar. Deciding on what to add to your vinegar will depend on what ails you, or what you think needs to be improved.

One example is a vinegar-based version of the classic toddy to help cure the common cold. A toddy, which is Scottish in origin, is a mixture of whiskey, water, and honey. A healthier version, with vinegar but no whiskey, that's believed to cure a sore throat, combines 1 tablespoon of cider vinegar, 1 tablespoon of honey, and 10–12 ounces of warm water. The water will dilute the acidity of the vinegar, and the honey will take away its harsh bite and ease your sore throat.

PICKLING

PICKLING IS VERY MISUNDERSTOOD. Many people think it's simply about turning small cucumbers into sweet or not-so-sweet pickles. Yes, this is true. But it's so much more than that. Pickling is actually an age-old process for preserving foods.

Pickling is one of the two processes for preserving food before refrigeration was invented. Pickling uses vinegar's high acid levels as its key preserving ingredient to help to slow and stop the growth of harmful bacteria. The other process is brining, which is a mixture of salt, water, and sometimes, spices. When using brine, it's the salt that acts as the preservative. The word *pickle* comes from the Dutch word for brine, *pekkel*.

Along with cucumbers, you can pickle just about any vegetable and some seafood, too. These can include single items like beets, peppers, garlic, cabbage, mushrooms, and carrots, or mixed items like peppers and carrots, or zucchini and onions. It often depends on what vegetables are ripe in your garden that day. In the seafood world, pickled herring is popular throughout Great Britain, Scandinavia, and beyond. And if you find yourself in a pub in Britain, you'll often find pickled hardboiled eggs on the bar.

General Guidelines

Consider how sweet you like your foods. Think of the type of pickle that you like. Is it very sweet? Mildly sweet? Not sweet at all? Use your pickle preference when deciding how sweet to make your pickling liquid.

Pickle vegetables at their peak of freshness, and make sure they are not bruised. This will help with the texture and eye appeal of your pickled food.

Wear disposable kitchen gloves when pickling hot peppers. If for no other reason, this will save your hands and other parts of your body from becoming quite irritated from the natural hot oils in the peppers. It's one thing to have your fingers and hands feeling hot and irritated. It's even worse if you touch your nose, eyes, or somewhere or someone else, and transfer that discomfort. You definitely don't want to do that.

When adding salt to the pickling recipes, use pickling salt, which is usually suggested by the recipe. If this is unavailable, you can use kosher salt. The benefit of these salts is that they'll dissolve well in the vinegar and water, without leaving bits of salt at the bottom of your pickle jar.

Try a variety of flavors. If you were to ask 10 people about their favorite pickle flavors, you'd probably get 12 answers. Depending on the menu or even day of the week, people like their pickles ranging from not sweet at all to the very sweet bread and butter pickles. Making pickles is a very simple process: get some fresh pickling cucumbers (or beets or watermelon), heat some vinegar, spices, and maybe some sugar, and put them together! And they accompany almost any food. While they are good throughout the year, they really are the perfect summer dish.

Sterilize. Most important of all, just like when bottling vinegar, you want to have a sterilized jar for storing your pickled foods. Dirt and bacteria can ruin all of your work and vegetables, so you want to get this part right.

Canning, Storage, and Safe Handling

If you're making pickles, and will be eating them within a week or so, you can wash any nonreactive container you have and refrigerate your pickles in it. Nonreactive containers include stainless steel, glass, and food-safe plastic. Avoid aluminum bowls and containers, as they'll react badly with the acid, and this can ruin the flavor of the food.

If you'll be keeping your pickles for longer than a week, you'll want to can them. *Can* is the poorly named term for safely storing your foods in a glass jar. If you've never canned before, it looks complicated but is really quite simple. The gold standard for canning jars is the Ball Mason jar. Ball is the name of the company that makes them. And the generic term for the jar is Mason, named for the man who invented them before the American Civil War. It is more than just a jar with a lid; it's a three-piece safe and sanitary way to store and preserve food. This is important because if you were to just throw any food that you make, including pickles, into a leftover mayonnaise jar with a regular lid, bacteria would eventually settle into the food. If you eat this unpreserved food, you'll be lucky to just get a stomachache. Worst case, it could be your last meal, which is why you want to do this right.

Canning jars come in many shapes and sizes, including pints and quarts. The jars have three parts: the glass jar, the top part of the lid, with a rubber seal, and a screw-top ring to hold down the lid. After you clean the jar and lids you follow these steps:

1. Keep the clean jars filled with hot water until you're ready to fill them.

2. Fill a stockpot with enough water to cover the jars by 2 inches and bring the water to a boil.
3. Fill the jars with the food and liquid you prepared. Depending on the recipe, the food will be either hot or cold. Place the two lid pieces on the jar, and tighten the lids. The screw-top ring doesn't have to be super tight — just tight enough to hold the top lid in place.
4. Boil the jars in the water for 10 minutes or for however long the recipe requires.
5. Carefully remove the jars from the boiling water with tongs or a special rubber-tipped jar-removing tool.
6. Cool the jars to room temperature, remove the screw-top ring, and dry the jar thoroughly. This will remove any remaining water, which can cause unsightly rust on the jar. Store for up to a year, or for however long the recipe describes.

And there's one more key sanitation thing to remember: although the glass jars are washable and reusable, the top lid part with the rubber seal can only be used once. If you try to use it again, it may not seal completely. This would let that unwanted bacteria sneak in. You can find the top lid pieces at the same places where the jars are sold.



PICKLING RECIPES



Pickled Beets

People either love or don't love pickled beets. If you love them like I do, then you'll keep these in your fridge all the time.

- 4–6 medium beets, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 medium onions, sliced
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cider vinegar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water
- 6 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1. Place the beets into a large pot, cover with water, cover the pot, and bring to a boil. Simmer until the beets are tender and cooked through (30 minutes or more). Drain the beets and return to the pot.

2. While the beets are cooking, in a separate saucepan, combine the onions, vinegar, water, sugar, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil, and simmer until the onions are tender, approximately 15 minutes. Pour the onion mixture over the cooked and drained beets, preferably while the beets are still hot.
3. When the beet and onion mixture has cooled, adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper.
4. Serve warm, chilled, or at room temperature. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 weeks, or use Mason jars and the boiling-water canning method.

Yield: approximately 1¾ quarts

Bread and Butter Pickles

This is the classic American pickle. It's not only the perfect summer picnic pickle, but it also makes you think of summer in the middle of winter. If you make only one pickle, this should be it.

- 1½–2 pounds pickling cucumbers, cut into ¼-inch slices
- 1½ tablespoons pickling or kosher salt
- 1 large onion, thinly sliced
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 1 cup distilled white vinegar
- ½ cup cider vinegar
- 1½ teaspoons mustard seed
- ½ teaspoon celery seed
- ⅛ teaspoon turmeric

(continued on next page)

1. Combine the cucumbers and salt in a large shallow bowl; cover and refrigerate for 1½ hours.
2. Rinse the salt off the cucumbers, and drain the excess water in a strainer or colander.
3. Place the cucumbers and onions in a nonreactive bowl.
4. Combine the sugars, vinegars, mustard seed, celery seed, and turmeric in a saucepan, and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Once the sugar has dissolved, pour the hot mixture over the cucumber slices and onion, and let it rest at room temperature for 1 hour.
5. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 weeks, or use Mason jars and the boiling-water canning method.

Yield: approximately 2 quarts

Watermelon Pickle

This is considered to be the classic southern pickle. I like to think of it as a Thanksgiving pickle because the cinnamon, allspice, nutmeg, and cloves are all fall flavors and scents. But it's great all year round, especially in the summer, when fresh watermelon is everywhere.

- 1 pound watermelon rind
- 5¼ cups water
- 3 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1½ cups cider vinegar
- 1¾ cups sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground allspice

3 cloves

$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg

1. Remove the outer green layer from the rind with a vegetable peeler. Cut the rind into approximately 1- by 2-inch strips.
2. Add 5 cups of the water and the salt to a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add the rind, and simmer for 5 minutes. The rind will be tender. Remove from the heat, strain, and set aside.
3. In a separate saucepan (you can do this while the rind is simmering in the salted water), add the vinegar, sugar, cinnamon, allspice, cloves, and nutmeg, plus the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water. Bring to a boil, and remove from the heat as soon as the sugar has dissolved.
4. In a glass bowl (or another nonreactive bowl), add the rind, and pour the vinegar mixture over it. Let it cool to room temperature.
5. Chill for at least 2 hours, and serve. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 weeks, or use Mason jars and the boiling-water canning method.

Yield: approximately 1 quart

Senfgurken

This German mustard pickle looks different from most others. It's peeled and cut lengthwise, then sliced. It'll appeal to those who like their pickles a bit less sweet than a bread and butter pickle.

8–10 pickling cucumbers, peeled, cut in half lengthwise, and seeds removed

5 cups water

½ cup pickling salt

2½ cups cider vinegar

1 tablespoon dried dill

1½ cups sugar

2 tablespoons mustard seed

1. Soak the cucumbers overnight in 4 cups of the water and the salt. When done, remove from the liquid (discard liquid) and pat dry.
2. Cut the cucumbers into large (1- to 2-inch) slices.
3. Bring the vinegar, dill, sugar, mustard seed, and the remaining 1 cup water to a simmer. Add the cucumbers.
4. Simmer until the cucumbers are translucent but still a bit firm, 8 to 10 minutes.
5. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 weeks, or use Mason jars and the boiling-water canning method.

Yield: approximately 2 quarts

COOKING WITH VINEGAR

Vinegar is so versatile beyond its uses for infusions and pickling. It's also a great addition to many foods, including special diets. If you need to lower sodium, fat, sugar, or some other additions, vinegar can elevate your food's flavor to help compensate for the things that are missing. For instance, if you're not adding salt to your food, a splash of vinegar will add a vibrant zip to your meal. No, it won't have the same benefits of salt. But it will improve your food's flavor. Try a splash with a soup or a sauce, or even in a bowl of rice. You'll love it!

VINAIGRETTES, DRESSINGS, AND SAUCES

THE MOST COMMON USE FOR VINEGAR is with salad. The simplest, healthiest, and fastest dressing for a salad is a bit of vinegar and oil. From there, the sky and your ingredients are the only limits.

A vinaigrette is the classic combination of oil and vinegar. The only two things you have to know when making a vinaigrette is how to make an emulsion, and the ratio 2:1. An emulsion is what happens when you mix together two or more ingredients that usually don't mix together. If you can get them to stay mixed, and not separate, then you have an emulsion. The combination of oil and vinegar is the classic example. If you were to just pour the vinegar into a bowl, and then pour the oil on top of it, you'd end up with two separated liquids that are not combined into one. Even if you were to whisk them together, they'd still separate. But there is a way to combine them to stay together. First, you whisk all of the ingredients, except the oil, together. Once they're combined, you slowly drizzle in the oil while whisking it into the vinegar mixture. This will allow all of the ingredients to stay together, forming the emulsion.

How and why does this work? Think of Velcro, with its hooks and loops. The two sides hang on to each other and don't let go. With a vinaigrette emulsion, you have all of the ingredients hanging on to each. It's the whisking action, and the bit of air that's added, that gives you the Velcro-like holding of the ingredients. The two actions of slowly adding the oil and the

whisking are what create the emulsion. If you skip either one, you won't have a vinaigrette. You'll just have a lot of liquid with things floating (or sinking!) in it.

The other important thing to know about making a vinaigrette is the ratio of 2 parts oil to 1 part vinegar. While this may vary for different recipes, this is always a good starting point.

You can use a blender instead of a whisk to make your vinaigrette. If you use a blender, your emulsion will be much thicker and the color might be slightly different too. A balsamic vinaigrette, for example, may be a lighter brown color in the blender than when whisked.

A vinaigrette will last for at least two weeks in a sealed container on your countertop. If there's dairy such as sour cream in the vinaigrette, refrigerate it after using. If the vinaigrette separates during this time, whisk it just before serving.



Eggless Caesar Salad Dressing

It's very common to make a Caesar dressing with a raw egg yolk or two. That's because the yolks will help thicken the dressing and give it a good texture. However, raw egg yolks have been linked to food-borne illnesses for many years, so it's best to avoid them.

You may be inclined to skip the anchovies in this recipe, but I suggest that you keep them in. They add a bit of a salty zip to the recipe but are hidden enough that they don't stand out to make the dressing taste fishy.

- ¼ cup cider vinegar (or sherry or champagne vinegar)
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 4 anchovy fillets, rinsed and mashed (or 2 teaspoons anchovy paste)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 dashes Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ cup olive oil

Whisk together the vinegar, lemon juice, anchovies, garlic, mustard, Parmesan, Worcestershire, and pepper. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil while whisking. Check the seasoning. For a thicker dressing: In a blender, process the garlic. Add the remaining ingredients except for the oil. Slowly add the oil with the blender running.

Yield: approximately 1 cup

Ranch Dressing

This ranch dressing is tangy, zesty, and rich tasting. You can lighten it by using reduced-fat sour cream, mayonnaise, and yogurt.

- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 2 scallions, sliced, or 6 chives, sliced
- 2–3 teaspoons cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon plain yogurt
- 2 tablespoons honey or agave syrup
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

1. Whisk together the mayonnaise and sour cream.
2. To the mayonnaise–sour cream mixture, add the scallions, vinegar, yogurt, honey, salt, and pepper, and combine.
3. Chill for at least 1 hour.
4. Taste and adjust the flavors as needed.

Yield: approximately ¾ cup

Italian Dressing

This versatile dressing is perfect on salad, as a marinade for meats, seafood, and poultry, and as a dip for vegetables.

- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon dried basil
- ½ teaspoon mustard
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese (optional)
- ⅔ cup olive oil

Whisk together the garlic, oregano, basil, mustard, sugar, salt, vinegar, and Parmesan, if using. Then slowly add the olive oil while whisking until combined.

Yield: approximately 1 cup

Orange Vinaigrette

The orange flavors sing with the lighter grapeseed oil. Olive oil and canola oil are too heavy, and hide the delicate citrus flavors.

- ⅓ cup orange or grapefruit vinegar
- zest of 1 orange or grapefruit
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon honey (optional)
- ⅔ cup grapeseed oil

Whisk together the vinegar, zest, salt, pepper, and honey, if using. Slowly add the oil to the vinegar mixture while whisking.

Yield: approximately 1 cup

Balsamic Vinaigrette

This is my go-to vinaigrette for most of the year. The mustard, garlic, and honey give this extra flavor beyond the balsamic vinegar.

- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 teaspoon brown mustard
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup balsamic vinegar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil

Whisk together the garlic, honey, mustard, salt, pepper, and vinegar. Then slowly add the olive oil while whisking until combined.

Yield: approximately 1 cup

Balsamic Glaze

When you reduce the vinegar and add the honey, you end up with an intensified, slightly sweet mixture that's great on fresh mozzarella, fresh fruit, or grilled chicken, lamb, and beef. It'll even go well on vanilla ice cream!

- 1 cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 teaspoons honey

1. In a saucepan, bring the vinegar to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer until the volume is reduced to approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. The vinegar should thickly coat the back of a spoon.
2. Remove from the heat and add the honey. Cool to room temperature.

Yield: approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Korean Beef Marinade

This is the perfect marinade for beef ribs or flank steak. And it pairs well with the Asian Slaw (see page 59). After marinating, bring it to a simmer and use as a dipping sauce.

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 8 cloves garlic, crushed
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup rice wine vinegar
- pinch of black pepper

Whisk together the soy sauce, oil, garlic, sugar, vinegar, and pepper. This makes enough marinade for 3 to 4 pounds of beef.

Yield: approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Best Barbecue Sauce Ever

This sweet and tangy sauce gets its zip from vinegar, fresh ginger, and lime juice. You'll never buy or make another barbecue sauce ever again.

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup molasses
- 1 cup ketchup
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup balsamic vinegar
juice of 2 limes
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar, lightly packed
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons minced fresh ginger
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

Combine all of the ingredients in a saucepan over medium heat. Simmer for 15 minutes. Cool to room temperature and refrigerate until use. This will keep in the refrigerator for three weeks.

Yield: approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ quart

Béarnaise Sauce

Béarnaise sauce is a zippier version of hollandaise sauce. Hollandaise is known, among other things, as the sauce on top of eggs Benedict. Béarnaise is often paired with beef and is well known for pairing with the classic beef tenderloin dish, Chateaubriand.

Many people live in fear of making hollandaise and béarnaise. They even buy mixes for them, and continue to be fearful. If you take your time and don't try to rush things, your béarnaise sauce will be great. The secret is to use the double boiler/stainless steel bowl method in the recipe to make the sauce. If you try to cook it directly over the heat, without the double boiler, you will most likely end up with a "broken" sauce. This means the heat got too high, and the sauce will have separated into a yellow mush. The technique below will prevent that.

- ¼ cup white wine vinegar
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- 1 tablespoon minced shallots
- 1 tablespoon dried tarragon
- 3 egg yolks
- ¼ teaspoon white or black pepper
- 2 sticks unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh tarragon

1. In a small saucepan over medium heat, combine the vinegar, wine, shallots, and dried tarragon, and simmer until reduced to 2 tablespoons of liquid. Cool and strain through a fine sieve, coffee filter, or cheesecloth.

2. In the top of a double boiler (or a stainless steel bowl set over a saucepan with 2 inches of simmering water), whisk the egg yolks until they become thickened. Whisk in the reduced vinegar mixture and pepper until mixture is warm, about 2 minutes. The yolk mixture will be thickened enough when you can see the bottom of the pan between strokes and mixture forms a light cream on the wires of the whip.
3. Melt the butter in a saucepan. Let it cool (it can still be warm, but it should not be simmering hot), and then skim the white foam off the top of the butter.
4. With a whisk, add the melted butter, 1 tablespoon at a time, to the egg yolk mixture. (Do not add the milk solids at the bottom of the melted butter.) Whisk constantly, and make sure all of the butter is mixed in before adding more. As the mixture begins to thicken and become creamy, the butter can be added more rapidly.
5. Season the sauce to taste with minced fresh tarragon, salt, and pepper. To keep the sauce warm, turn off the heat under the water, and keep the sauce on top. You can also remove the bowl from the pan, and gently warm it over the hot water just before serving.

Yield: 1–1½ cups

CHUTNEYS

CHUTNEY IS A HYBRID FOOD that evolved when Britain's empire extended into India. It combines the English love of sweet sauces, their ancient need to preserve food during long voyages at sea, and foods not regularly found on English plates: mangoes, ginger, allspice, and (nonmalt) vinegar.

This put chutney into a new category, because it's not a jam, yet it can be eaten on bread. It's not exactly a relish, but it goes well with cheeses. It's not a gravy, yet it goes well with poultry and other meats, hot or cold.

So what is it? It's a sweet, tart, often fruit-filled condiment that pairs well with many dissimilar foods and keeps for months in the fridge. With a base of sugar and vinegar, you can create a chutney with almost any fruit that appeals to you. Some people like to purée their chutney, but I like it with the chopped, chunky fruit throughout. That's the beauty of chutney: there is no wrong way to prepare it, and it goes with so many foods.

Mango Chutney

Chutney's combination of sweet and tangy is perfect with so many foods, including seafood and poultry. If your entrée doesn't have a sauce, this chutney is a great substitute.

- 1 cup sugar
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup distilled white vinegar
 - 2 mangoes, peeled, pitted, and cut in $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch pieces
 - 1 small onion, chopped
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup golden raisins
 - 2 tablespoons finely chopped crystallized ginger
 - 2 cloves garlic, minced
1. Combine the sugar and vinegar in a 6-quart pot. Bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar dissolves.
 2. Add the mangoes, onion, raisins, ginger, and garlic and simmer, uncovered, until syrupy and slightly thickened, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Stir occasionally during the cooking.

Yield: 6 cups



Apple Chutney

This chutney is especially good during the holiday season, as it pairs well with turkey. Use Granny Smith apples if you like tart apples, or apples such as Golden Delicious or Gala if you prefer a sweeter flavor.

- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup cider vinegar
- 2 apples, peeled, cored, and finely chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- zest of 1 orange
- ¼ cup golden raisins
- 2 teaspoons peeled and grated fresh ginger
- ¼ teaspoon ground allspice

1. Combine the sugar and vinegar in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar dissolves.
2. Add the apples, onion, orange zest, raisins, ginger, and all-spice to the sugar-vinegar mixture. Simmer, uncovered, until syrupy and slightly thickened, approximately 45 minutes. Stir occasionally during the cooking.

Yield: approximately 2 cups

CHILLED SALADS AND SLAWS

HERE'S A TIP about vinegar and chilled salads that's been a secret for too long: after the salad's been chilled, and before you serve it, you have to taste it — even if you thought the seasoning was fine before being refrigerated. That's because the salt, pepper, and vinegar have had a chance to sink into and be absorbed by the food. When you first prepare it, these flavors are just on the surface. That's why, with so many foods, you have to add more salt, pepper, and vinegar to the food to elevate the flavor to where you want it to be. And this starts with a quick taste before you serve it.



Traditional Potato Salad

This American summer classic is improved with just a splash of red wine vinegar before serving. It'll bring out all of the salad's flavors.

3 pounds red bliss potatoes, unpeeled, cut into bite-size pieces

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup mayonnaise

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup sour cream

3 tablespoons red wine vinegar (plus extra as needed)

1 medium onion, grated

2 stalks celery, finely chopped

3 hard-boiled eggs, chopped (optional)

1 teaspoon salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper

1. Place the potatoes in a pot of cold water. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer until the potatoes are almost cooked through. Drain and place into a large bowl.
2. While the potatoes are cooking, whisk together the mayonnaise, sour cream, and vinegar. Set aside.
3. When the potatoes are cool enough to touch (they can also be at room temperature), gently combine them with the mayonnaise mixture. Do this with a rubber spatula to prevent the potatoes from breaking apart.

4. Add the onion, celery, and eggs, if using, and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or until chilled through.
5. Before serving, adjust the flavor with vinegar, salt, and pepper.

Yield: approximately 10 servings

Vinegar to the Rescue

Here are a few ways that vinegar can come in handy in the kitchen:

If your recipe calls for buttermilk, you don't have to rush out to buy it. Just add 1 tablespoon of vinegar to a liquid cup measure, and add enough milk to complete a 1 cup measure. Let this sit for 5 minutes, and you'll have an equal substitute for buttermilk.

If your recipe calls for lemon or lime juice, you can substitute vinegar for the citrus. Just be sure to use half the amount that's called for in the recipe.

If you're cooking with apples, a well-known way to keep them from turning brown after peeling is to put them in a bowl of water with some lemon juice. You can use cider vinegar instead. Add approximately 2 tablespoons of vinegar for every 1 gallon of water.

Vinaigrette Potato Salad

This lighter version of potato salad gets its flavor from the scallions, onions, and red wine vinaigrette. It's a simple salad that looks great with red potatoes.

- 3 pounds red bliss potatoes, unpeeled, cut into bite-size pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup plus 2–3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon or brown deli mustard
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil
- 3 scallions, finely sliced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ medium red onion, minced
- 3 tablespoons capers, drained (optional)

1. Place the potatoes in a pot of cold water and bring to a boil. Then reduce the heat and simmer until the potatoes are almost cooked through. Drain and place in a large bowl.
2. While the potatoes are cooking, prepare the vinaigrette. In a bowl, combine the garlic, the $\frac{1}{3}$ cup vinegar, mustard, salt, and pepper. Then, very slowly, drizzle in the oil, whisking until the vinaigrette is combined. Set aside.

3. Add the vinaigrette, scallions, onion, and capers, if using, to the warm (but not hot) potatoes.
4. Chill for at least 2 hours. Before serving, adjust the flavor with the remaining vinegar, salt, and pepper.

Yield: approximately 10 servings

Potato Salad Notes for Success

If you cannot find red bliss potatoes, use larger red potatoes or russet potatoes. Avoid Yukon gold potatoes, as they can turn mushy in the salad.

After the potatoes have been cooked and drained, spread them out in a sheet pan (or two) with sides to help them cool a bit faster and more evenly. This will also help keep them from breaking apart as they would if they were cooled in a big pile in a bowl. Once they have cooled a bit but are still warm to the touch, place them in a large bowl and add the vinaigrette, red onions, scallions, and capers.

If you want to cool the potato salad faster, return it to the sheet pans after the vinaigrette and other ingredients have been added. Cool to room temperature (approximately 15 minutes). Then place in a bowl and refrigerate.

Coleslaw with Sour Cream and Mayo

This traditional coleslaw gets its richness from both the sour cream and mayonnaise. The zing from the vinegar lightens and balances the flavors.

- 1 medium head green cabbage, shredded
- 2–3 large carrots, peeled and shredded
- 1 large onion, grated
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup mayonnaise
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sour cream
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon agave syrup
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper

1. Combine the cabbage, carrots, and onion in a large bowl.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, sour cream, vinegar, and agave.
3. Pour the mayonnaise mixture over the cabbage mixture and season with the salt and pepper. If time permits, chill for at least 30 minutes, and adjust the flavors with salt, pepper, and vinegar as needed.

Yield: approximately 4 quarts (1 gallon),
or approximately 20 servings

Asian Slaw

Perfect with a cookout or any Asian meal. The napa cabbage gives it a different flavor and texture from traditional slaws.

- 1 small head napa cabbage, thinly sliced
 - 1 bunch bok choy, leaves and stems, thinly sliced
 - 1 red bell pepper, seeded and julienned
 - 2 carrots, peeled and shredded
 - 1 small onion, grated
 - 2 scallions, sliced at an angle
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup rice wine vinegar
 - 1 tablespoon sugar
 - 1 teaspoon finely grated peeled fresh ginger
 - 1 tablespoon sesame seeds, toasted
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper
 - 1 tablespoon sesame oil
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grapeseed oil
1. Combine the cabbage, bok choy, bell pepper, carrots, onion, and scallions in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk together the vinegar, sugar, ginger, sesame seeds, salt, and pepper. Then, slowly add the sesame and grapeseed oils while whisking.
 2. Combine the vinegar mixture with the vegetables and refrigerate for an hour or overnight. Before serving, adjust the flavor with salt, pepper, and vinegar as needed.

Yield: approximately 4 quarts (1 gallon),
or approximately 20 servings

Sweet Potato Salad

(Adapted from *The Thrill of the Grill*)

The bright color and softer texture of sweet potatoes help make this a well-received addition to indoor and outdoor parties.

- 4 medium sweet potatoes (about 2 pounds), cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced small
- ½ large red onion, diced small
- 4 tablespoons finely chopped parsley
- 3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 3 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¾ cup olive oil

1. Bring salted water to a boil and boil the sweet potatoes for 8 to 10 minutes. You should be able to pierce them with a fork, but you should still feel some resistance, and they shouldn't fall apart. Don't overcook them! While the potatoes are boiling, prepare an ice-water bath in a large bowl or another stockpot for the potatoes. When the potatoes are done, drain in a colander and plunge into the ice bath. When the potatoes have cooled, drain them well.

2. Add the bell pepper, onion, and parsley to the potatoes.
3. Make the dressing by combining the mustard, ketchup, garlic, vinegar, Worcestershire, lime juice, salt, and pepper in a separate bowl. Slowly add the olive oil while whisking.
4. Pour the dressing over the vegetable mixture and refrigerate for at least an hour. Before serving, adjust the flavor with salt, pepper, and vinegar, as needed.

Yield: 10–12 servings

Mediterranean Orzo

The flavors of the kalamata olives stand out among all of the distinctive flavors of this salad. For a gluten-free alternative, use quinoa instead of orzo.

- 1 teaspoon brown or Dijon mustard
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup balsamic vinegar
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil
 - 1 pound orzo, cooked and cooled to room temperature
 - 1 zucchini, diced ($\frac{1}{4}$ -inch pieces)
 - 1 summer squash, diced ($\frac{1}{4}$ -inch pieces)
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ red onion, minced
 - 4 scallions, chopped
 - 2 roasted red peppers, seeded and chopped
 - 1 cup pitted kalamata olives, chopped
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ pound feta cheese, crumbled
1. For the dressing, whisk together the mustard, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Slowly add the olive oil while whisking, and combine well. Set aside.
 2. In a large bowl, combine the cooked orzo with the zucchini, squash, onion, scallions, roasted peppers, and olives. Add the dressing and chill.
 3. Just before serving, add the feta cheese, and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper to taste.

Yield: approximately 4 quarts (1 gallon),
or approximately 20 servings

How to Roast a Pepper

Put an oven rack to the highest level. Place a sheet pan or a piece of aluminum foil on the rack below it, under where you'll place the pepper(s), to catch drips. Turn on your broiler.

Place the peppers on their side, directly on the higher rack, under the broiler element or flame. Carefully rotate the peppers after each side is blackened. Do this for the whole pepper, until none, or very little, of the pepper color shows through.

After removing the peppers from the oven, place them in either a brown paper bag or in a bowl sealed tightly with plastic wrap. Let this sit at room temperature for at least 1 hour, but not more than 2 hours.

With a paring knife, remove the blackened skin and seeds. You're now ready to use them!

APPETIZERS AND SOUPS

SOUPS AND APPETIZERS don't always reach their potential for great flavor because they often include just terrific ingredients, plus salt and pepper. While this can work, it's the addition of vinegar that can elevate the flavors, signaling the start of more great-tasting food to follow.

Caprese Sliders

This variation turns this classic salad into a mini-sandwich. The key is to use a blender to make the vinaigrette. This will thicken it and keep the bread from becoming soggy. You can make the dressing a day or two ahead and refrigerate it. If you make the dressing in advance, let it sit at room temperature for 30 minutes before serving, in case the olive oil has thickened from the cold temperature of the refrigerator.

- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 teaspoon brown mustard
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 loaf French bread, thinly cut into approximately 36–40 slices
- 1 pound fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced (¼ inch) and cut in half to easily fit on sliced French bread
- 3 large tomatoes, sliced to approximately the same size as the mozzarella

5 fresh basil leaves, thinly sliced or chopped

20 frilly toothpicks (optional)

1. Make the dressing by combining the honey, mustard, salt, pepper, and vinegar in a blender. When everything is combined, slowly add in the olive oil with the blender running until it's all combined and thickened.
2. Lay half of the French bread slices on a sheet pan. Arrange the mozzarella, tomato, and fresh basil on top of the bread. Drizzle 1 teaspoon of the dressing on top of each sandwich, and cover with a slice of French bread. If you're going to stack the sliders on a platter, skewer each one with a toothpick to hold it together.

Yield: approximately 20 sliders

Caponata

Don't be alarmed by the number of steps; the recipe's not as complicated as it appears. If you have a convection oven, you can bake/roast the tomatoes and eggplant together.

- 1 pound (approximately) eggplant, peeled and cut into cubes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 pound (approximately) plum tomatoes, stem tops removed, cut in half lengthwise
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 medium red onion, peeled and cut in half
- 2 roasted red peppers (see directions on page 63)
- 2 tablespoons capers
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- cooking spray or olive oil for coating

1. Place the eggplant in a colander, and sprinkle with salt. Set aside for 1 hour.
2. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
3. Coat a sheet pan with cooking spray or a light drizzle of olive oil. Place the tomatoes, cut side up, on the prepared sheet pan, and coat with oil. Sprinkle with salt. Bake for 30 minutes.

4. Turn the tomatoes over and bake for 30 minutes longer. Remove from the oven and cool to room temperature. When they have cooled, remove the tomato skins.
5. Arrange the eggplant on a greased baking sheet and bake for 30 minutes, turning them every 10 minutes or so. Remove from the oven and let cool.
6. In a food processor, add the garlic and onion, and process until minced. Add the eggplant, tomatoes, roasted peppers, capers, vinegar, and lemon juice to the processor bowl. Pulse just until it's a very coarse purée. Do not make it too smooth.
7. Serve with toast points or crusty bread.

Yield: approximately ½ quart

Vegetarian Pot Stickers and Dipping Sauce

If you can't find black rice vinegar in your market, the regular rice vinegar is a good substitute. The gyoza wrappers can be found in Asian markets and many supermarkets. If you can't find round wrappers, square ones will work, too. Just fold them corner to corner and follow the same directions for sealing them as the round wrappers.

- 1/3 cup plus 2 teaspoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons black vinegar
- 1 tablespoon agave syrup or honey
- 3 teaspoons sesame oil
- 4 stalks baby bok choy, leaves and stems julienned
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 carrot, peeled and finely shredded
- 4 scallions, sliced
- 2 teaspoons peeled and grated fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoons rice vinegar
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 package round gyoza wrappers
- 3 tablespoons cooking oil

1. For the dipping sauce, combine the 1/3 cup soy sauce, black vinegar, agave, and 1 teaspoon of the sesame oil in a bowl. Set aside.
2. For the filling, combine, in a separate bowl, the bok choy, garlic, carrot, scallions, ginger, rice vinegar, the remaining 2 teaspoons each sesame oil and soy sauce, and egg.

3. Place 12 to 14 gyoza wrappers on your work surface. Put approximately 1½ teaspoons of filling in the middle of each wrapper.
4. Fill a small bowl with water. Dip your finger in the water and put a thin layer of water halfway around the edge of the gyoza wrapper. Fold the other half of the wrapper onto the dampened edge. Pinch together the folded-over edge of the wrapper.
5. Stand the dumplings seam side up on a lightly oiled or sprayed sheet pan. The oil will keep the dumplings from sticking to the sheet pan until they're cooked. Gently press down on the dumplings to give them a flat-bottomed surface so they can stand upright while cooking. Cover the dumplings with damp paper towels before cooking to keep them from drying out.
6. Heat the 3 tablespoons of cooking oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Place the dumplings in the skillet, seam side up. Place as many in the pan as you can fit, as long as they're not touching. Cook for approximately 3 minutes, or until they're golden brown on the bottom.
7. Add ½ cup water, lower the heat to medium, cover, and cook for 7 to 10 minutes. You can tell they're done when the dumpling wrapper has the consistency of cooked pasta.
Note: Check after 4 minutes of steaming to make sure there's still water in the pan. Add ¼ cup of water if needed.
8. Carefully remove them from the pan, preferably with a metal spatula to keep them from sticking to the pan and tearing. Serve with the dipping sauce.

Yield: 40–50 pot stickers

Bruschetta

When this classic Italian tomato salad, on garlic crostini, is sitting on a white platter, it'll look like you've been working for hours to prepare it. It's fast and simple, with a colorful look and great flavor.

¼ cup olive oil

2 teaspoons garlic powder (or 3 cloves garlic, minced)

1 loaf French bread, thinly sliced

10–12 plum (or other) tomatoes

¼ cup basil leaves, sliced

3 scallions, chopped

2 tablespoons olive oil, divided

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

2 cloves garlic, minced

salt and pepper

grated Parmesan cheese (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Combine 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, garlic powder, and salt and pepper to taste. Brush the mixture onto the sliced bread, and place the bread onto a sheet pan. Bake in the oven until golden, 5 to 7 minutes. Set aside to cool.
2. Cut the green stem end off of the tomatoes and discard. Chop the tomatoes into approximately ½-inch cubes. Add the basil, scallions, the remaining tablespoon of olive oil, vinegar, and garlic to the tomatoes. Adjust the flavor with salt and pepper.
3. Spoon 1 tablespoon of the mixture onto each slice of toast. Sprinkle with Parmesan, if using, and serve.

Yield: approximately 60 pieces

Lentil Soup

Lentil soup is one of the all-time comfort foods and can be on your table less than an hour after you start to prepare it. Freeze the leftovers, and you'll be set for the next chilly suppertime.

Avoid red lentils as they can get mushy. If you want to make this a protein-rich main course, simmer two bone-in chicken breasts in the stock and water before you add the lentils. After the chicken is cooked, remove it from the pan, add the lentils, and follow the rest of the recipe. By the time the soup is ready, the chicken will be cool enough to shred by hand, or dice, and be added to the soup!

- 1 quart chicken stock
 - 2 cups water
 - 1 cup brown or green lentils
 - 1 (15-ounce) can diced tomatoes
 - 3 carrots, peeled and diced
 - 1 large onion, diced
 - 2 celery stalks, diced
 - 2 teaspoons red wine vinegar
 - salt and pepper
1. Bring the stock and water to a simmer, and add the lentils. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes for brown lentils, 30 minutes for green. They'll be mostly cooked through.
 2. Add the tomatoes, and bring to a simmer, covered.
 3. Add the carrots, onion, and celery. Cover and simmer for another 15 minutes, or until the vegetables are cooked.
 4. Add the vinegar, and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Yield: 6 servings

Kale and Kielbasa Soup

If you're new to kale, don't be alarmed at how much room it takes up when it's raw. Once cooked, it will reduce significantly, like spinach. All of the dicing of the vegetables (except the kale) and sausage should be small and spoon-sized.

- 2 quarts chicken stock (or 1 quart stock and 1 quart water)
- 1 (14-ounce) can diced or whole tomatoes
- 2 onions, diced
- 4 carrots, diced
- 3 celery stalks, diced
- 2 large potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 bunch kale, stems removed, rinsed and chopped (large pieces are fine)
- 1½ pounds kielbasa (or other sausage), cooked and diced
- salt and pepper
- grated Parmesan cheese

1. In a large stockpot, add the stock and tomatoes, and bring to a simmer. Add the onions, carrots, and celery, and bring to a light boil. Simmer covered until the carrots are partially cooked through, approximately 10 minutes.
2. Add the potatoes, and simmer covered for 5 minutes.
3. Add the chopped kale, and simmer covered until all of the vegetables are cooked through.
4. Add the cooked sausage, bring to a simmer, and season to taste with salt and pepper.
5. Serve with grated Parmesan.

Yield: 6–8 servings

SIDE DISHES AND MAIN COURSES

VINEGAR IS OFTEN overlooked as an added ingredient for side dishes and main courses. Cooks often think that vinegar is only used on salads and a few entrees. By expanding its uses to other parts of the meal, you can open up a world of new recipes.

Baked Beans

While less sweet than many canned beans, these baked beans are a perfect pair with smoked meats. Great northern beans are a good choice.

- 8 ounces bacon
- 1 small onion, diced
- 4 (15-ounce) cans white beans
- 1 cup ketchup
- ½ cup molasses
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon brown mustard

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Cook the bacon in a Dutch oven or small stockpot. Remove the bacon and set aside. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons of the bacon drippings. When cool, chop it into ½-inch pieces.
3. Sauté the onion, and add the beans, ketchup, molasses, vinegar, mustard, and bacon.
4. Bake in the oven (covered) or simmer on the stove top for 1 hour. If simmering, stir occasionally to prevent sticking.

Yield: 8–10 servings

Beef Short Ribs

The balsamic vinegar and orange zest pair well with this hearty beef dish. The meat will fall right off, so you can serve this with or without the bones.

- 2 tablespoons canola oil for browning
- 4–5 pounds beef short ribs
- 2 onions, sliced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup minced garlic
- 1 cup red wine
- 1 cup orange juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup balsamic vinegar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ketchup
- 2 tablespoons grainy mustard
- 2 cups (approximately) beef stock
- zest of 1 orange
- salt and pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 300°F.
2. Heat oil in a large ovenproof skillet or stockpot over medium-high heat, and then brown the ribs. Remove from the pan when they're browned on all sides. You'll probably have to do this in multiple batches.
3. Remove all but 2 tablespoons of the fat from the pan and reduce the heat to medium. Sauté the onions for 10 to 15 minutes until they are translucent and barely crunchy. Stir in the garlic. Add the wine, orange juice, vinegar, ketchup, and mustard. Bring to a simmer. Add the meat and enough stock to bring the liquid halfway up the side of the ribs. Bring to a simmer, and remove any scum from the surface. Cover with foil and a lid.

4. After 1 hour, add the orange zest. Continue to cook until the meat is tender, for a total of 1½ to 2 hours. Remove the ribs and place on a serving plate.
5. Put the sauce on the stove, over medium-high heat, and bring to a simmer. Simmer to reduce the sauce to your liking and to intensify its flavor. After the sauce is reduced, season to taste with salt and pepper and pour over the ribs.

Yield: 4–6 servings

Marinated Flank Steak

If flank steak is unavailable, a London broil cut works well, too.

- ¼ cup olive oil
- ⅓ cup red wine
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons honey
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 pounds flank steak

1. Combine the olive oil, red wine, vinegar, garlic, soy sauce, honey, and pepper. Add the steak, and marinate for 2 to 8 hours (covered, in the refrigerator).
2. To cook: Grill, broil, or pan-fry (in a cast iron skillet, if possible) for 4 to 5 minutes per side. Note that flank steak is best served between rare and medium. If it's well done, it'll probably be very tough and chewy.

Yield: 4–5 servings

Sauerbraten

Sauerbraten is the classic German pot roast. Translated into English, it means “sour roast meat.” The secret to sauerbraten’s unique flavor is to marinate the meat for at least one day (three days is preferable). The vinegar will help make the meat incredibly tender and flavorful.

- 2 cups water
- 1 cup cider vinegar
- 1 cup red wine vinegar
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 large carrot, chopped
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 bay leaves
- 6 cloves
- 12 juniper berries
- 4 pounds pot roast (chuck, round, etc.)
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ stick butter
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup crushed gingersnap cookies
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup brown sugar

1. In a large saucepan, over high heat, combine the water, cider vinegar, red wine vinegar, onion, carrot, salt, pepper, bay leaves, cloves, and juniper berries. Cover and bring to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Set aside to cool.

2. Pat the beef dry. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat, and then brown the meat on all sides.
3. When the marinade has cooled, place the meat in a nonreactive bowl, stockpot, or meat-cooking bag and pour over the marinade. Place in the refrigerator and let marinate for 1 to 3 days. If the meat is not completely submerged in the liquid, turn it over once a day.
4. After the meat has marinated, preheat the oven to 325°F.
5. Add the granulated sugar to the meat and marinade, cover, place on the middle rack of the oven, and roast until tender, about 4 hours.
6. Remove the meat from the pan and keep warm. Strain the liquid to remove the solids. Keep the liquid warm.
7. In a separate pan, melt the butter and add the flour. This is called a roux. Stir and cook for 10 minutes. Slowly whisk in the reserved cooked marinade.
8. While the sauce is simmering, add the crushed cookies and brown sugar. Adjust the flavor with salt, pepper, and extra cider vinegar as desired.
9. Slice the beef, and serve with the sauce.

Yield: 6–8 servings

Asian Beef with Orange

Rice vinegar rather than balsamic is usually associated with Asian cuisine. But it's the balsamic vinegar's sweetness and color that make this dish stand out.

- 1½ pounds steak tips, or flank steak
- ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons sherry
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar, packed
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 3 scallions, sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon minced peeled fresh ginger
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1 broccoli crown, cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and chopped
- 1 onion, sliced
- zest from ½ orange
- oil for stir-frying

1. Slice the beef and set aside. Combine the ½ cup soy sauce, 2 tablespoons of the sherry, the brown sugar, and cornstarch in a large bowl. Add the beef, coat each piece, and set aside.
2. Combine the scallions, garlic, and ginger in a small bowl. Set aside.

3. In another bowl, combine the stock, vinegar, granulated sugar, remaining 1 tablespoon sherry, and remaining 2 tablespoons soy sauce. Set aside.
4. Heat a wok or large skillet over medium-high heat, and add half of the beef (with no marinade), cook both sides, and remove. Repeat with the other half, and remove from the pan. Set aside.
5. Add a teaspoon of oil to the wok, and sauté the scallion mixture for 20 to 30 seconds.
6. Add the stock mixture and beef marinade to the pan, and simmer for 2 minutes. Add the broccoli, bell pepper, and onion, and cook for 3 to 5 minutes, until the vegetables are cooked through.
7. Add the beef back into the pan with the orange zest. Heat through, and serve.

Yield: 4 servings

Braised Lamb Shanks

Lamb shanks used to be in the less-desirable category of “cheap cuts of meat” because they are tough. But by simmering these cuts in this process called braising, they will become very tender and flavorful.

- 2–4 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 onions, sliced
- 2 cups red wine
- ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons mustard
- 1 cup (approximately) chicken stock
- 1½ teaspoons dried rosemary
- 1 teaspoon salt, plus more to taste
- ½ teaspoon black pepper, plus more to taste
- 2–4 lamb shanks

1. Preheat the oven to 300°F.
2. Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a deep ovenproof skillet or stockpot over medium heat and sauté the onions until they’re cooked through and caramelized, but not very browned. Lower the heat if the onions start to brown. Remove from the skillet when they’re cooked. This can take 30 minutes or longer and can be done a day ahead. Set aside.
3. While the onions are cooking, combine the wine, vinegar, mustard, chicken stock, rosemary, salt, and pepper in a separate bowl. Set aside.

4. Set the heat to high and add 1 tablespoon of the remaining oil to the skillet you cooked the onions in. Brown the lamb shanks on all sides, in two batches if necessary, adding more oil as needed.
5. When the lamb is browned, add the wine mixture and cooked onions to the skillet. Make sure the liquid comes at least half-way to two-thirds up the side of the lamb. If it doesn't, add more wine or chicken stock. Cover with a lid and place in the oven for 2 to 2½ hours, or until the lamb is cooked through and tender. Remove the lamb from the skillet, and cover with foil to keep warm.
6. Put the skillet with the sauce on the stove over medium-high heat, and bring to a light boil. Reduce the heat to medium, and simmer to reduce the sauce and intensify its flavor. This could take 5 to 15 minutes. Don't add more salt until the sauce is reduced. If you add salt earlier, this could make the sauce too salty. Once the sauce is the flavor and consistency that you'd like, season to taste with salt and pepper.
7. If you're preparing this at least a day in advance, refrigerate the sauce and meat. The fat will congeal on the surface. Skim it off before reheating and serving the sauce and lamb.

Yield: 4 servings

DESSERTS

ADDING VINEGAR TO A DESSERT may seem to contradict the primary function of vinegar, that is, to give the food a bit more of a zippy taste. The good news is that adding vinegar to a dessert will neither give it a zippy flavor nor make it less sweet. Its role in the baking is purely scientific and doesn't affect the flavor of the food. The reason it's in baked goods is to be a leavening agent, which is what helps baked goods rise (eggs, yeast, and baking soda/baking powder are more commonly used). As a visual comparison, think back to your childhood in elementary school. Whether it was you, or a classmate, someone always made a volcano for a science project. And they would make the volcano's erupting lava with vinegar and baking soda. No, this is not how chocolate lava cakes are made. But the bubbling of the science class lava and the rising of baked goods with vinegar and baking soda are scientifically similar. And I guarantee that the baked goods will taste much better than science class lava!

Vinegar Butter Cookies

You can't taste the vinegar, but it does help these cookies attain body and lightness.

- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease two cookie sheets.
2. In a large bowl, cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the vinegar and vanilla.
3. Combine the flour and baking soda in a separate bowl. Add to the butter mixture and mix well.
4. Scoop or roll the dough into 1-inch balls. Place 2 inches apart on the prepared cookie sheets and flatten to a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thickness.
5. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until the edges are lightly browned. Cool for 1 minute before removing from pans to cooling racks.

Yield: 3½ dozen cookies

Wacky Cake

By most accounts, wacky cake was created on the home front during World War II when eggs and butter weren't always available. The variations on wacky cake are abundant. Everyone has a favorite. For a mocha flavor, use 1 cup of cold coffee instead of water; or for an orange-chocolate flavor, add the zest of one orange to the flour mixture.

- 1½ cups flour
- 4 tablespoons cocoa powder, sifted
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup cold water

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease and flour an 8- by 8-inch pan and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, cocoa, baking soda, sugar, and salt.
3. Make three wells in the flour mixture. Pour the oil into one well, the vinegar into another, and the vanilla into the third.

4. Pour the cold water over the whole mixture and combine with a wooden spoon until the mixture is smooth and there are no traces of unblended flour. Pour the mixture into the prepared pan.
5. Bake for 30 minutes, or until a toothpick or cake tester inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean.
6. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pan, but this also does well served right from the pan. For a niftier look, sprinkle confectioners' sugar over the cake before serving.

Yield: 10–12 servings



King Arthur's Chocolate Chip Cookies

For a slightly more intense flavor, lightly sprinkle some sea salt over the cookies before baking. Take these cookies out of the oven when the sides are barely golden brown and rest them in their pans for 5 minutes before placing them on cooling racks. This will give you a moist, chewy cookie.

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup light brown sugar, firmly packed
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cold or at room temperature
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable shortening
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon almond extract (optional)
- 1 teaspoon vinegar, cider or distilled white
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 large egg
- 2 cups King Arthur unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 cups semisweet chocolate chips

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Lightly grease (or line with parchment) two cookie sheets.
2. In a large bowl, combine the sugars, butter, shortening, salt, vanilla, almond extract, if using, vinegar, and baking soda, beating until smooth and creamy. Beat in the egg until smooth. Scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl with a spatula to make sure everything is thoroughly combined.

3. Mix in the flour, then the chips.
4. Use a spoon (or a tablespoon-sized cookie scoop) to scoop 1¼-inch balls of dough onto the prepared cookie sheets, leaving 2 inches between them on all sides.
5. Bake the cookies for 11 to 12 minutes until their edges are chestnut brown and their tops are barely a light golden brown, almost blonde. Remove them from the oven and cool in their pans until they've set enough to move without breaking, approximately 5 minutes.

Yield: approximately 3 dozen cookies

RESOURCES

Beyond supermarkets, specialty stores, and online, olive oil and vinegar taprooms are arriving across the United States. These are shops where you can go in, sample, and buy many oils and vinegars, infused and noninfused, plus much more. It was at Cardenas Oil and Vinegar Taproom in Philadelphia where I sampled and bought the most amazing vinegar I've ever tasted: the Fynbos Vinegar from Rozendal. If you go to one of these taprooms, you'll definitely discover new flavors that you'll want to bring home. The Internet is also a great resource for vinegar-making supplies. Here are some of my favorite places to visit, both online and in person:

Ariston Specialties LLC

860-224-7184

www.aristonoliveoil.com

Bragg Live Foods, Inc.

800-446-1990

www.bragg.com

Fresh Preserving

Jarden Home Brands

800-240-3340

www.freshpreserving.com

Cardenas Oil & Vinegar Taproom

267-928-3690

www.cardenastaproom.com

The Crushed Olive

info@thecrushedolive.com

www.thecrushedolive.com

The Gourmet Olive Branch

336-546-8439

www.thegourmetolivebranch.com

Northampton Beer and Winemaking

800-473-2739

www.beer-winemaking.com

Rozendal

+27-0-21-887-5612

<http://rozendal.co.za>

Sapores Oil & Vinegar, Inc.

202-544-4133

www.saporeoliveandvinegar.com

Seasons Olive Oil & Vinegar Taproom

www.seasonstaproom.com

The Tubby Olive

www.thetubbyolive.com

VSOP Olive Oil & Vinegar Taproom

678-795-2002

www.vsoptaproom.com

Metric Conversion Chart

Unless you have finely calibrated measuring equipment, conversions between U.S. and metric measurements will be somewhat inexact. It's important to convert the measurements for all of the ingredients in a recipe to maintain the same proportions as the original.

General Formula for Metric Conversion

Ounces to grams	multiply ounces by 28.35
Grams to ounces	multiply grams by 0.035
Pounds to grams	multiply pounds by 453.5
Pounds to kilograms	multiply pounds by 0.45
Cups to liters	multiply cups by 0.24
Fahrenheit to Celsius	subtract 32 from Fahrenheit temperature, multiply by 5, then divide by 9
Celsius to Fahrenheit	multiply Celsius temperature by 9, divide by 5, then add 32

Approximate Equivalent by Volume

U.S.	METRIC	U.S.	METRIC
1 teaspoon	5 milliliters	2 cups	460 milliliters
1 tablespoon	15 milliliters	4 cups (1 quart)	0.95 liter
½ cup	120 milliliters	1.06 quarts	1 liter
1 cup	230 milliliters		

Approximate Equivalent by Weight

U.S.	METRIC	METRIC	U.S.
½ ounce	14 grams	1 gram	0.035 ounce
1 ounce	28 grams	50 grams	1.75 ounces
1½ ounces	40 grams	100 grams	3.5 ounces
2½ ounces	70 grams	250 grams	8.75 ounces
4 ounces	112 grams	500 grams	1.1 pounds
8 ounces	228 grams	1 kilogram	2.2 pounds
16 ounces (1 pound)	454 grams		

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