

Syrup



Syrups are combinations of water and sugar that are used in a variety of drinks from cocktails to sodas. The most basic syrup is [simple syrup](#), which is equal parts white sugar and water that is heated until the sugar dissolves. Simple syrups are a great way to add sweetness to cocktails and drinks without having the graininess of sugar in them.

Placing flavoring agents in the water when making simple syrup allows you to create strongly flavored syrups that are wonderful additions to drinks. Most traditional flavored syrups are infused during the syrup making process but with the sous vide or whipping siphon techniques you can add the flavors after the syrup has been made. This technique can be used for both simple syrups and other syrups like maple or agave syrup.

These syrups can be used as a sweetener for cocktails and drinks or for the base of sodas like root beer or ginger ale.

Cream And Milk

Cream and milk can be easily infused with the sous vide or whipping siphon methods. They readily take on the flavors of herbs, spices, fruits, and berries as well as cookies and candy. They can also be infused with the traditional hot infusion method, by slowly heating the cream and flavoring agents to a simmer and then letting it cool.

The resulting infusions are great when used in milk shakes or gelled into custards and panna cottas. Cream can also be used in caramel making, providing wonderful background flavors.

Food

Infusing foods is a great way to expand on the flavor profile of existing foods, create whimsical dishes, and turn the usually discarded trimming from fruits and vegetables into flavorful garnishes.

The vacuum infusion method is the quickest and most effective way to infuse foods, though the whipping siphon and other methods also work well in some cases.

Infusion Methods

Section Two

Traditional Infusions



Traditional infusions have been around almost as long as cooking has. They cover a wide range of drinks from hot herbal infusions such as tea to traditional alcoholic infusions like limoncello.

Infusion Process

There are several methods used in traditional infusions. One is a cold, time based infusion, and the other two are quicker, hot infusions.

Making a traditional cold infusion is a very easy process. Just fill a Mason jar or bottle with flavorful herbs, spices, food, or other flavoring agents. Then add enough alcohol, vinegar, or oil to cover it. Seal the container and place it in a dark location to sit for anywhere from overnight to several weeks, shaking it every few days. Once the liquid has infused, just strain out the solids and the infusion is ready to be used.

Infusions can also be made more quickly by heating them. This is very common for infused oils, vinegars, or water-based infusions.

For infusions using hot liquids, there are two main methods. The first method entails bringing the liquid to a boil by itself and then pouring the hot liquid over the flavoring agents. The flavoring agents are allowed to steep anywhere from a few minutes to about an hour before being strained and used. Most teas fall into this category, as well as vinegar -based "quick pickles" and many other vinegar infusions.

The second hot infusion method is to combine the liquid and flavoring agents in a pot and bring them to a simmer. They are simmered for anywhere from a few minutes up to an hour. I'll often do this in an oven for convenience. The liquid is then cooled and strained before being used. Many syrups and some vinegar infusions are done this way, as are most oil infusions.

Advantages And Disadvantages

Traditional infusions only require a bottle, a liquid, some flavoring agents, and time. Because of this, many people have done variations on them and you can find many, many recipes for different infusions in cookbooks and online. There are also many classic infusions that are easy to replicate at home.

However, these infusions do take time to prepare. You can make a traditional limoncello in a few weeks, a sous vide limoncello in a few hours, and a whipping siphon limoncello in a few minutes. If you are in a hurry for an infusion or are impatient to try it out, then the traditional method might not be your best bet.

That said, the traditional cold infusion method is really the only reliable way to fully replicate the flavor profile of the classical infusions. Sous vide and the whipping siphon will speed up the process but they also result in slightly different infusions, sometimes in desirable ways. But if you're trying to replicate a classical infusion, you can't go wrong with the traditional method.

The longer time frames also allow you a much wider window where you can stop the infusion. As long as you taste it as it is infusing, you can remove the flavoring agents once it has taken on the flavors you desire.

Another benefit is as the infusions sit, the flavors of the liquid will mellow, resulting in a softer tasting final product, especially for alcohol and vinegar infusions.

Tips And Tricks

Always keep your infusions in a cool, dark place. The light is bad for the infusions, normally both the liquid and the flavoring agents, because it can break the flavors down. The location just has to be cool, not cold, so a dark cabinet works fine.

When infusing alcohol, the higher the proof the better. The higher alcohol content will pull out more flavors much more quickly.

Converting Other Infusion Recipes

The traditional infusion method can be used to make infusions from most other methods. You can get a good feel for converting a recipe by looking at a recipe in the Traditional Infusions chapter similar to the one you are converting.

If converting a whipping siphon recipe, the amount of flavoring agents can usually be reduced by 10-20%. If it is a sous vide recipe, you can add a little more flavoring agents if you want, though it should be pretty close already.

I'll start most cold traditional alcohol or vinegar based infusions at 3 to 6 days. If the infusion is mainly delicate herbs it may be done after a day or two. For more woody spices or barks, it might need another week. Don't be scared to open your infusion and taste it to see if it is done or not.

For oil based infusions I'll usually use the hot method and bring the oil and flavoring agents to a simmer in a pot or oven. After 30 minutes or so I'll let them cool then strain them. I will also use this method for milk or cream based infusions, or for other liquids that go bad after a time.

Infused Alcohols

Traditionally infused alcohols usually take anywhere from 3 to 6 days to fully infuse. The flavors will continue to develop though and some people like to let them infuse for several weeks. I highly recommend tasting the infusion as it ages so you can strain the flavoring agents out when it obtains the flavor profile you desire. Using a high- or overproof alcohol will pull out more flavors, much more quickly. Neutral spirits such as vodka, Everclear, or white rum will allow the flavors of the infusion to shine. Bold spirits like bourbon, spiced rum, and tequila need to be flavored with complementary flavoring agents.

Blackberry Basil Rum

The sweet and tart flavor of blackberries pairs wonderfully with the slightly spicy and herbal basil. The resulting infusion is a fruity, flavorful addition to many cocktails and

is especially tasty in rum punch or as a [liqueur](#). For a refreshing summer drink I will fill a glass with club soda, add a few ounces of the infused rum, and top it off with a few basil leaves.



Ingredients

For the Blackberry Basil Rum

1/2 lime

1.5 cups blackberries

1 bunch basil, about 10 sprigs

1.5 cups rum, preferably overproof

Directions

For the Blackberry Basil Rum

Lightly scrub the outside of the lime then remove the zest with a vegetable peeler or zester. Make sure little to no pith came off as well, using a paring knife to remove any.

Put the lime zest, blackberries and basil in a Mason jar. Pour the rum over the top, making sure everything is covered by the rum. Seal the jar and place in a cupboard or cabinet and let sit for at least 3 to 6 days or up to a few weeks, shaking the bottle every day or two. Strain the rum before using.

Thai Infused Rum

Many Thai dishes have the flavorful combination of lemon grass, basil, lime, and coconut. Infusing these flavors into a rum makes for a tasty, savory drink. I really like to use this rum in a fun take on [pina coladas](#).

Ingredients

For the Thai Infused Rum

- 1 lime
- 1/2 stalk lemongrass, coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup shredded or flaked coconut
- 6 basil leaves
- 2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger
- 1.5 cups rum, preferably overproof

Directions

For the Thai Infused Rum

Lightly scrub the outside of the lime then remove the zest with a vegetable peeler or zester. Make sure little to no pith came off as well, using a paring knife to remove any.

Put all the ingredients into a bottle or Mason jar, make sure everything is covered by the rum. Seal the jar and place in a cupboard or cabinet and let sit for at least 3 to 6 days or up to a few weeks, shaking the bottle every day or two. Strain the rum before using.

Dried Chile Pepper Tequila

Is tequila a little too tame for you? Then you'll love this spiced up version! It takes on a spicy, fruity, smokey flavor that is a great way to add complexity to different cocktails. I really like it in a [paloma](#) or [Bloody Mary](#). I give my recommendations for what chile peppers to use but you can substitute any you have on hand. If you prefer a spicier tequila you can add more chipotle peppers, or upgrade to something further along the Scoville scale.



Ingredients

For the Chile Pepper Tequila

- 1 dried ancho chile pepper, coarsely chopped
- 2 dried Aji Panca chile peppers, coarsely chopped
- 1 dried Guajillo chile pepper, coarsely chopped
- 1 dried chipotle chile pepper, coarsely chopped
- 1.5 cups tequila

Directions

For the Chile Pepper Tequila

Put all the ingredients into a bottle or Mason jar, make sure everything is covered by the tequila. Seal the jar and place in a cupboard or cabinet and let sit for at least 3 to 6 days or up to a few weeks, shaking the bottle every day or two. Strain the tequila before using.

Moscow Mule Vodka

My wife is a big fan of Moscow Mules so I often try to make fun variations of them to mix it up. It's normally made with vodka, lime juice, and ginger beer that is combined and then served over ice. I like to take the ginger and lime flavors and infuse them directly into the vodka for a spicy, citrusy infusion that can be mixed into cocktails or sipped as a flavored martini.



Ingredients

For the Moscow Mule Vodka

2 limes

5" knob fresh ginger, thinly sliced (125mm)

1.5 cups vodka, preferably overproof

Directions

For the Moscow Mule Vodka

Lightly scrub the outside of the limes then remove the zest with a vegetable peeler or zester. Make sure little to no pith came off as well, using a paring knife to remove any.

Put the lime zest and ginger in a Mason jar. Pour the vodka over the top, making sure everything is covered by the vodka. Seal the jar and place in a cupboard or cabinet and let sit for at least 3 to 6 days or up to a few weeks, shaking the bottle every day or two. Strain the vodka before using.

Bushmills Hot Toddy

A hot toddy is a classic cold- and flu-killing drink consisting of hot water and whiskey flavored with lemon and cloves. This infusion might not cure you of your sickness but it sure tastes great!

I like the milder flavor of Bushmills but you can use any whiskey, Scotch or bourbon you like. The infusion is great on its own but for a classic hot toddy just combine the infused whiskey with some boiling water, sugar, and maybe a slice of lemon. I usually use 2 oz of the infusion with 4 oz hot water and 1 tablespoon of honey.



Ingredients

For the Bushmills Hot Toddy

2 lemons

1 tablespoon whole cloves

1 cinnamon stick

1.5 cups Bushmills Irish Whiskey

Directions

For the Bushmills Hot Toddy

Lightly scrub the outside of the lemons then remove the zest with a vegetable peeler or zester. Make sure little to no pith came off as well, using a paring knife to remove any.

Combine the lemon zest, cloves, cinnamon and Bushmills in a Mason jar or glass bottle then seal. Place in a cupboard or cabinet and let sit for at least 3 to 6 days or up to a few weeks, shaking the bottle every day or two. Strain the whiskey before using.

Orange Lavender Gin

Orange and lavender work surprisingly well together, especially when combined in gin with its already herbal flavor notes. This infusion isn't too strong, so be sure to use a gin you enjoy drinking plain because its nuances will come through in the final product.

The infused gin is great in a simple cold martini garnished with some lavender buds to highlight the delicate flavors.

Ingredients

For the Orange Lavender Gin

1 orange

1.5 cups gin

1 tablespoon dried lavender buds

Directions

For the Orange Lavender Gin

Lightly scrub the outside of the orange then remove the zest with a vegetable peeler or zester. Make sure little to no pith came off as well, using a paring knife to remove any.

Combine the orange zest and gin in a Mason jar or glass bottle then seal. Place in a cupboard or cabinet and let sit for at least 3 to 6 days or up to a few weeks, shaking the bottle every day or two.

One or two days before the infusion is done add the dried lavender to it. Let it continue to infuse for another day.

Strain the gin before using.

Apricot Brandy

The tart, fruity, and sweet flavor of apricots is a great addition to brandy. Soaking dried apricots for several days transfers the flavor to the liquor, resulting in a great sipping drink or liqueur base. The quality of the brandy used will have a big impact on the final infusion quality. The apricots will also absorb a good amount of the brandy, resulting in flavorful garnishes you can use later.

Ingredients

For the Apricot Brandy

1 cup coarsely chopped dried apricots

1.5 cups brandy

Directions

For the Apricot Brandy

Combine all the ingredients in a Mason jar or glass bottle then seal. Place in a cupboard or cabinet and let sit for at least 3 to 6 days or up to a few weeks, shaking the bottle every day or two.

Strain the brandy before using.

Barrel Aged Alaska Cocktail

Barrel aging is the process that gives whiskey, dark rum, and aged tequila their flavor, as well as many types of wine. While the process usually involves a large barrel of around 55 gallons, you can replicate most of the process at home using a Mason jar and toasted oak chips. I like to barrel age various cocktails and this recipe is for the Alaska Cocktail.



Ingredients

For the Barrel Aged Alaska

1/2 orange

1/2 cup toasted oak chips or Jack Daniels Smoking Chips

1 cup dry gin

1/3 cup yellow Chartreuse

6 dashes bitters

Directions

For the Barrel Aged Alaska Cocktail

Lightly scrub the outside of the orange then remove the zest with a vegetable peeler or zester. Make sure little to no pith came off as well, using a paring knife to remove any.

Lightly rinse the oak chips to remove any sawdust or grit.

Combine the zest with the remaining ingredients in a Mason jar with then seal. Place in a cupboard or cabinet and let sit for at least 3 weeks and up to 6 weeks, shaking the bottle every few days. Taste the cocktail as it ages until it takes on the flavor you desire. Then strain the cocktail and store in a sealed container until using.

Infused Vinegars

Traditionally infused vinegars are similar to alcohol infusions and usually take 3 to 6 days to fully infuse. They do infuse a little more slowly and an extra day or two can definitely make a difference in some cases. I recommend tasting the vinegar as it infuses so you know when it has reached the flavor you are looking for.

Strawberry Rhubarb Vinegar

Rhubarb is one of those fruits that you get a whole lot of all at once, which makes it a great candidate for using in infusions. The addition of some strawberries helps to mellow the flavor and add some sweetness while the mint contributes a background freshness.

Oh, and for the fruit versus veggie purists, rhubarb is normally considered a vegetable but a New York court declared it a fruit in 1947, so in the US it is handled as a fruit.



Ingredients

For the Strawberry Rhubarb Vinegar

1.5 cups coarsely chopped rhubarb
1 cup coarsely chopped strawberries
2 mint sprigs
1.5 cups white wine vinegar

Directions

For the Strawberry Rhubarb Vinegar

Combine all the ingredients in a Mason jar or glass bottle then seal. Place in a cupboard or cabinet and let sit for at least 3 to 6 days or up to a few weeks, shaking the bottle every day or two. Strain the vinegar before using.

Roasted Beet Vinegar

Roasting beets brings out a deep, well rounded flavor. Infusing the roasted beets transfers that flavor to the vinegar, resulting in a rich and versatile vinegar. The spices are also toasted to add more flavor to the infusion. For a lighter, fresher take you can make the infusion with raw beets and spices that haven't been toasted.

Beets stain so be sure to cover your cutting board with parchment paper or plastic wrap. I also wear plastic gloves to save my hands from turning red.



Ingredients

For the Roasted Beet Vinegar

3 beets

Olive oil

Salt and pepper

1 shallot, minced

1/2 teaspoon cumin seed

1/2 teaspoon coriander

1/2 teaspoon cracked peppercorns

1.5 cups apple cider vinegar