

# The Basics of Making Herbal Vinegars

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Vinegar is one of the most useful liquids – from cooking with it, to cleaning with it, and using it for health purposes – like soothing sunburn, vinegar provides a wonderful return on investment. Vinegar used today is much the same as it was in years past.

Vinegar was discovered, by chance, more than 10,000 years ago. Ancient cultures used it to preserve food and as a condiment. The Romans used it as a beverage and the Bible references using vinegar for its soothing and healing properties. According to The Vinegar Institute, vinegar is the most flexible of products to have in your home.

Vinegar can be made from a variety of products including wine, molasses, dates, sorghum, fruits, berries, melons, coconut, honey, beer, maple syrup, potatoes, beets, malt, grains and whey. “But the principle remains unchanged - fermentation of natural sugars to alcohol and then secondary fermentation to vinegar,” explains The Vinegar Institute.

Types of vinegars commonly found are: white distilled, apple cider, red and white wine, malt, barley, rice, champagne, and balsamic. Specialty vinegars are especially popular and easy to find in gourmet shops and local grocery stores. Some types of specialty vinegars are:

- **Herbal vinegars:** Wine or white distilled vinegars are sometimes flavored with the addition of herbs, spices or other seasonings. Popular flavorings are garlic, basil and tarragon - but cinnamon, clove and nutmeg flavored vinegars can be a tasty and aromatic addition to dressings.
- **Fruit vinegars:** Fruit or fruit juice can also be infused with wine or white vinegar. Raspberry flavored vinegars, for example, create a sweetened vinegar with a sweet-sour taste.
- **Balsamic vinegar:** Made from Trebbiano grapes grown in Modena, Italy. Cooked grape “must” is slowly fermented in wood casks. Other spices and flavorings are often added. Use in salad dressings, sauces, and gravies. Use on meats and fruits to add flavor and aroma. Use as a “dip” with herbs and bread.
- **Malt vinegar:** Made from fermented and distilled malt. Popular for pickling and on fish and chips
- **Raspberry red wine vinegar:** raspberry flavor is

added to red wine vinegar.

Use on fruit

salads, as a marinade for meat, or in green salads and vegetables

- **Rice Vinegar:** Is the aged and filtered product from the fermentation of sugars derived from rice. Use in salads or in stir-frys.
- **White wine vinegar:** Made from fermented white wine. Delicious on fruit, salads, vegetables, and sauces.



### Tools and Ingredients Needed

Glass or plastic measuring cups

Funnels

Coffee filters, cheesecloth or clean, unbleached muslin for filtering and straining

Aging containers like wide-mouthed glass jars with lids; wine or other bottles with tight-fitting lids; or decanters, cruets and decorative bottles

Vinegar of choice

Herbs, spices, fruit or other flavorings

Notebook or journal for documenting and saving your recipes

### Flavoring Your Favorite Vinegar

There are two processes used to flavor vinegars – cold, or uncooked, and hot, or cooked.

### Cold or Uncooked Method

Cut and rinse your herbs. Select the vinegar you wish to start with. A common ratio for this method is twice as many herbs as vinegar. For example – 2 cups of herb to 1 cup of vinegar.

Place the herbs in a clean or sterilized wide-mouth bottle. Add enough vinegar to cover the herbs. Seal the bottle. Put in a sunny location to “age” for about two weeks. Note: if using a red wine or apple cider vinegar, the color may fade. Taste-test the flavored vinegar and either age longer or remove herbs.

Once satisfied with the flavor, store your flavored vinegar in a cool dark place. Vinegar should keep for about 6 months.

## Hot or Cooked Method

Cut and rinse your herbs. Select the vinegar you wish to start with. Use twice as many herbs as vinegar. Heat vinegar to boiling and pour over herbs to cover them. Seal bottle and let steep overnight. Strain out herbs and replace with fresh herbs, if desired. Store in a cool, dark place.

Besides herbs, consider using spices, flowers, fruits and vegetables to flavor your favorite vinegar.

## Vinegar Recipes

### Vinegar Pie

4 eggs  
1-1/2 c. sugar  
1/4 c. butter or margarine, melted  
1-1/2 T. cider or white distilled vinegar  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
9-inch frozen pie shell, defrosted

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large mixing bowl, combine eggs, sugar, butter, vinegar and vanilla; mix well. Pour into pie shell. Bake until firm, about 50 minutes. Cool on a rack. Serve garnished with nuts or whipped cream, if desired.

### Basil Vinaigrette

1-1/3 c. olive oil  
2/3 c. white wine vinegar  
1/4 c. fresh basil, finely chopped  
2 green onions, finely chopped  
1 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. pepper

Combine all ingredients in a jar. Cover tightly and shake vigorously; chill. Just before serving, shake well and toss dressing with torn romaine, Bibb and red leaf lettuces. Yield: 1-1/2 cups

### Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme Vinegar

4 c. red wine vinegar  
12 sprigs fresh parsley  
2 tsp. thyme leaves  
1 tsp. rosemary leaves  
1 tsp. sage leaves

Start with clean, dry or thoroughly washed fresh herbs. In a medium saucepan, place vinegar, parsley, thyme, rosemary and sage; bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 5 minutes. Pour

mixture into a 1-quart jar; cover and set aside for 2 weeks, shaking occasionally. Strain out herbs. Pour vinegar into bottles with tight fitting covers, adding a sprig of parsley, if desired. Use in salad dressings, marinades for beef or sprinkle over vegetables.

Yield: 1 quart

### Strawberry Vinegar

2 pints fresh strawberries  
1 quart cider vinegar  
1 c. sugar

Remove stems from strawberries; halve strawberries; set 1/4 cup aside. Place remaining strawberries into a large bowl. Pour vinegar over strawberries. Cover and set aside 1 hour.

Transfer vinegar and strawberries to a large saucepot. Add sugar and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 10 minutes. Strain out strawberry mixture, pressing out as much liquid as possible.

Pour vinegar into a 1-1/2 quart jar. Add reserved strawberries. Cover tightly. A tablespoonful in a glass filled with 8 oz. of club soda and ice makes a delightfully cooling drink. Also, a creatively different basting sauce for chicken, duck or pork.

Yield: 1-1/2 quarts.

### Orange Vinegar

1 quart white vinegar  
1 c. sugar  
orange peel from 1 medium orange (orange portion only)

In a large saucepot, place vinegar, sugar and orange peel; bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 20 minutes. Transfer vinegar and orange peel to a 1-quart jar. Cover tightly. Yield: 1 quart

### Sekanjabin (Medieval thirst quencher)

Dissolve 4 cups sugar in 2-1/2 cups of water; when it comes to a boil add 1 cup wine vinegar or balsamic vinegar. Simmer 1/2 hour. Add a handful of mint, remove from heat, let cool. Dilute the resulting syrup to taste with ice water (5 to 10 parts water to 1 part syrup). The syrup stores without refrigeration. This recipe is especially good made with raspberry balsamic vinegar.

## Other Uses for Vinegar

- **Cleaning Your Home**
  - **Streakless windows:** Simply wash with a mixture of equal parts of white distilled vinegar and warm water. Dry with a soft cloth. This solution will make your windows gleam and will not leave the usual film or streaks on the glass.
  - **Deodorize the kitchen drain:** Pour a cup of white distilled vinegar down the drain once a week. Let stand 30 minutes and then flush with cold water.
  - **Cleaner Dishes and Glasses** Pour 1 ½ cup to 2 cups white distilled vinegar in the bottom of dishwasher, along with regular dishwasher soap. Wash full cycle.
  - **Bathtub film:** Bathtub film can be removed by wiping with white distilled vinegar and then with soda. Rinse clean with water.
- **Lawn and Garden Uses**
  - **Kill grass:** To kill grass on sidewalks and driveways, pour full strength white distilled vinegar on it.
  - **Plant Nutrients:** Mix vinegar and water in a ratio of 1:8. Mix a separate solution of sugar and water in a mixture of 1:8. Combine the vinegar and sugar mixtures. Add to plant as long as needed.
- **Household Misc.**
  - **Cleaner for Gold Jewelry:** Use one cup apple cider vinegar. Submerge solid gold jewelry item in vinegar for 15 minutes. Remove and dry with cloth.
  - **Blanket renewal:** Cotton and wool blankets become soft, fluffy and free of soap odor if 2 cups of white distilled vinegar are added to the rinse cycle of the wash.
  - **Deodorant stains:** Deodorant and antiperspirant stains may be removed from clothing by lightly rubbing with white distilled vinegar and laundering as usual.
- **Food Preparation**
  - **Cooking fish:** Try soaking fish in vinegar and water before cooking it. It will be sweeter, more tender and hold its shape better. When boiling or poaching fish, a tablespoon of vinegar added to the water will keep it from crumbling so easily.
  - **Boiling eggs:** When boiling an egg and it's

cracked, a little vinegar in the water will keep the white from running out.

- **Health**
  - **Relieve sunburn:** Lightly rub white distilled or cider vinegar on skin. Reapply as needed.
  - **Relieve dry and itchy skin:** Add 2 tablespoons of vinegar to your bath water.
  - **Fight dandruff:** After shampooing, rinse with a solution of ½ cup vinegar and 2 cups of warm water.

## Resources

- The Vinegar Institute - <http://www.versatilevinegar.org/>
- *Flavored Vinegars: 50 Recipes for Cooking with Infused Vinegars* – by Michael Chiarello, Penelope Wisner, and Daniel Proctor
- *Growing and Using Herbs in the Midwest* – by Rosemary Divock – ISBN 0-942495-52-7
- *Gourmet Vinegars* – How to Make and Cook with Them by Marsha Peters Johnson - ISBN 0-914667-10-6
- *Herbal Vinegar: Flavored Vinegars, Mustards, Chutneys, Preserves, Conserves, Salsas, Cosmetic Uses, Household Tips* – by Maggie Oster
- *Making Vinegar at Home* – Beer & Wine Making Supplies, Inc. – Northampton, MA