

Enjoying the Fruits of Your Garden in New Ways - Simple Syrups and Shrubs

Celeste Huber - April 21, 2018

Recipes:

Simple Syrup

1 cup sugar
1 cup water

Combine water and sugar in a small pot. Stir to dissolve the sugar and bring to a simmer. Allow to simmer and reduce for 4-5 minutes. Remove from heat and cool.

Lavender Lemonade - Makes 6 cups

1 cup of lavender-infused simple syrup*
1 cup fresh lemon juice
4 cups of water

*Make syrup using 1 cup water and 1 cup sugar. Combine water and sugar in a small pot. Stir to dissolve the sugar and bring to a simmer. Add ½ tablespoon dried lavender buds. Allow to steep and reduce for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and strain liquid into a bowl. Cool.

Combine 1 cup syrup, juice and water into a pitcher. Add purple food coloring if desired.

Basil Infused Limeade - Makes 6 cups

½ cup fresh basil leaves
1 cup simple syrup*, cooled
1 cup fresh lime juice
4 cups cold water

*Make syrup using 1 cup water and 1 cup sugar. Combine water and sugar in a small pot. Stir to dissolve the sugar and bring to a simmer for 5 minutes to reduce. Cool.

Pour 1 cup syrup and basil into a blender, puree. Add lime juice. Mix. Strain out basil and pulp. Pour basil-syrup-lime juice into a pitcher, add water and stir.

Blackberry Shrub

1 cup blackberries
1 cup sugar
1 cup apple cider vinegar or white wine vinegar

Place cleaned berries into a bowl. Mash lightly. Add sugar and mix. Cover and store in the refrigerator for 2-3 days until juice is extracted. Pour berries, sugar and juice into a bowl through a fine sieve. Pour vinegar on top to melt the sugar. Press berries to remove the juice. Stir mixture and put into a bottle. Label and keep in the refrigerator for at least 3 weeks to mellow, shaking the bottle to stir up the sugar at the bottom. Use with seltzer or ginger ale.

Lavender Lemon Drop Martini

Serves 2

4 ounces vodka (or gin)
2 ounces Limoncello
2 ounces lavender simple syrup*
1 ounce fresh lemon juice
citrus sugar**

In a martini shaker filled with ice add the ingredients (except citrus sugar). Shake well and strain into two prepared glasses. Garnish with a lemon slice. (I usually triple the recipe to use most of the simple syrup.)

*1 cup sugar, 1 cup water, ½ tablespoon dried lavender. Mix water and sugar. Simmer to dissolve sugar. Add lavender buds and steep for 4-5 minutes. Remove from heat and strain out lavender. Add purple food coloring if you wish.

**zest of 1 lemon, 1/4 cup sugar. Mash together. Place on shallow plate. Wet rim of martini glass with lemon juice and dip into sugar mixture.

Minted Iced Tea

Makes 4 cups

6-8 sprigs of fresh mint*, 12 inches long
4 cups water

Wash mint and then liquify in the blender with the water. Let set 30 minutes; strain the tea into a pitcher. Sweeten with simple syrup and enjoy.

*May use spearmint, apple mint, orange mint, lemon balm, or peppermint.

Iced Lavender-Mint Tea Punch

Serves 6

6 teaspoons dried mint*
6 cups water, boiling
1 tablespoon dried lavender blossoms*
1-liter bottle ginger ale
1 cup purple grape juice
Ice cubes, with a fresh mint leaf frozen in each

*If fresh herbs are available, use twice as many as you would of the dried.

Brew the mint in the water in a teapot for 10 minutes. Add the lavender blossoms to the pot. Allow tea to cool. Strain the tea into a bowl, and add the ginger ale, grape juice, and ice cubes. If serving in a punch bowl, float lavender bud and mint sprigs on top.

Ruby-Red Rhubarb Punch

Serves 8

2 pounds rhubarb
3 cups water
2 lemons, sliced thin
1 3/4 cups sugar
1 cup orange juice
1 large square ice
2 quarts carbonated water

Wash and cut rhubarb in inch-long pieces, cook with the water and lemon slices about 20 minutes. Strain liquid into bowl and add sugar; stir until dissolved. When chilled, add orange juice. Place ice in punch bowl. Combine punch and carbonated water over ice. Serve. Colorful and sparkling.

Rosemary Fruit Punch

Makes about 11 cups

46-ounce can pineapple juice
1/2 cup sugar
5 teaspoons fresh rosemary (or 2 1/2 teaspoons dried)
1 1/2 cups lemon juice
2 cups water
1-liter bottle pale-dry ginger ale
Fresh lemon slices
Fresh springs of rosemary

Make a concentrate by bringing to a boil 1 cup of the pineapple juice, the sugar, and rosemary. Decrease heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Strain liquid into bowl and cool.

To serve, add the concentrate to the remaining pineapple juice, the lemon juice, and the water. Pour into a punch bowl over ice and add the ginger ale. Float fresh lemon slices and rosemary sprigs on top.

Dandelion Wine

1 gallon dandelion blossoms
1 gallon boiling water
3 lemons
1 orange
3 tablespoons sugar
3 tablespoons dry yeast

Put blossoms into the boiling water and let stand 24 hours. Cut lemons and orange in thin slices and add to blossom liquid. Add sugar and yeast, then let stand 10 days. Strain the liquid and put into jugs, but not airtight.

May Bowl

Serves 25-30 punch cups

1 handful woodruff blossoms and leaves (gently but thoroughly washed) or ½ ounce dried woodruff*

1 cup super-fine granulated sugar

2 quarts Moselle or Rhine wine

6 ounces brandy

1 whole orange, quartered

1 bottle champagne (4/5 quart), chilled

1 ice ring with woodruff flowers

Place blossoms, sugar, wine, brandy and orange in a large bowl. Refrigerate for 5-6 hours or more. If using dried woodruff, strain liquid into a bowl. Make an ice ring in a ring mold with some blossoms and a few leaves placed in the water.

To serve, put ice ring in punch bowl, add all ingredients including the champagne.

*Most recipes say that dried woodruff has a better flavor.

Drying Herbs in the Microwave

Scatter 2 cups of loosely packed, washed and dried herb leaves or sprigs in an even layer on a 1 sheet double layer of paper toweling. Do not cover. Cook for 4 minutes at 100%. The color and fragrance are the next best thing to fresh. Keep tightly covered.