

Ginger Beer

From *Wild Fermentation* by Sandor Katz

This Caribbean-style soft drink uses a “ginger bug” to start the fermentation. Based on Sally Fallon’s *Nourishing Traditions*, the ginger bug is simply water, sugar, and grated ginger, which starts actively fermenting within a couple of days. This easy starter can be used as yeast in any alcohol ferment or to even start a sourdough.

This is a soft drink, fermented just enough to create carbonation but not enough to contribute any appreciable level of alcohol. If the ginger is mild, kids love it.

Timetable: 2-3 weeks

Ingredients (for 1 gallon/4 liters)

3 inches or more of fresh gingerroot

2 cups sugar

2 lemons

Water

Instructions:

1. Start the “ginger bug” by adding 2 teaspoons of grated ginger (skin and all) and 2 teaspoons of sugar to 1 cup of water. Stir well and leave in a warm spot, covered with cheesecloth to allow free circulation of air while keeping flies out. Add this amount of ginger and sugar every day or two and stir, until the bug starts bubbling – in about 2-7 days.
2. Make the ginger beer any time after the bug becomes active. If you wait more than a couple days, keep feeding the bug fresh ginger and sugar every 2 days. Boil 2 quarts of water. Add about 2 inches of grated gingerroot (for a mild ginger flavor or up to 6 inches for an intense ginger flavor) and 1 ½ cups sugar. Boil this mixture for about 15 minutes. Cool.
3. Once the ginger-sugar mixture can cooled, strain the ginger out and add the juice of the lemon and the strained ginger bug. If you intend to make this on an ongoing basis, reserve a few tablespoons of the active bug as a starter and replenish it with additional water, grated ginger and sugar. Add enough water to make 1 gallon.
4. Bottle in sealable bottles such a recycled plastic soda bottles with screw tops, rubber gasket bail-top bottles, sealable juice jugs or capped beer bottles. Leave bottles to ferment for about 2 weeks.

5. Cool before opening. When opening ginger beer, be prepared with a glass, since carbonation can be strong and force liquid to gush out of the bottle.