

Elderberry Syrup & Cordial

The plant used is Sambucus nigra/the Common Elder. The elder tree produces flowers in early summer and these powerful anti-viral berries in the autumn. You don't need to learn to identify and find the fresh berries because you can buy dried elderberries or elderberry juice and use these to make the cordial.

Uses:

- To relieve colds & flu by helping the body's immune system to fight viruses.
- As an immune-boosting preventative winter tonic.

Fresh or dried fruit?:

- Can be made with fresh or dried elderberries
- If using dried fruit, then double the volume of water that you soak the fruit in because it will require more liquid to re-hydrate.
- Dried elderberries are available from specialist herb suppliers
e.g. Baldwins (UK) <https://www.baldwins.co.uk/baldwins-elderberries>

Is it Syrup or Cordial?:

- The concentrated extract is a syrup. This is the liquid that is bottled and stored.
- To make a cordial, pour out a dose of the syrup (see **DOSAGE** instructions below) and dilute this with hot or cold water.

Ingredients:

- Fresh, ripe elderberries or dried elderberries
- Water
- Cinnamon stick
- Cloves
- A few slices of ginger
- Lemon
- Sugar (brown or muscavado sugar are especially good in this because they have a rich flavour and this compliments the berries).

Method:

Safety note: Don't be tempted to eat raw elderberries or to juice them cold without cooking them this way in water. Uncooked elderberries tend to cause an upset stomach. You'd only make this mistake once.

Make the Elderberry Syrup

- Pick elderberries when ripe (don't use the berries if they're not quite ripe: you'll get an upset tummy) and remove in unripe berries (they are pale green or red).
- Place the ripe berries in a pan.
- Cover with half their volume of water.
- If you are using dried berries instead then cover them with water and leave them for 30 mins to rehydrate and absorb some of the water.
- Gently simmer and stir for 20 mins.
- Allow to cool.
- Strain through muslin into a measuring jug, squeezing out every last drop.
- Note the volume of elderberry juice.
- For every 500ml, add 250g sugar, a stick of cinnamon, a few cloves and a few slices of lemon and ginger.
- Simmer for a further 20 mins.
- Strain through a clean, dry stainless-steel sieve (a plastic one might melt and aluminium tends to leach).
- Pour into prepared clean & dry glass bottles [see notes below on **PACKAGING, STORAGE & SHELF-LIFE**].
- Leave to cool.
- When completely cool put on the lids.
- Label with name and date.
- Store in the fridge or in another suitable way [see notes below on **PACKAGING, STORAGE & SHELF-LIFE**].
- **To use the syrup:** Dilute some of the syrup in a cup and top up with warm or cold water [see detailed DOSAGE instructions below]. This diluted drink is the elderberry cordial.

PACKAGING TIPS:

- Correctly packaging and storing the elderberry syrup is important otherwise it will grow mould and go off quickly.
- This is because it is made with water and anything containing water either needs to be used within 24 hours or properly preserved. In this recipe, the sugar is the preservative (that's why it's so important that you don't reduce the amount of sugar in the recipe).
- Water contains bacteria and this will cause mould to grow and/or the syrup to ferment (and possibly explode!) and go off rapidly.

PREPARING THE BOTTLES FOR SYRUPS:

- You will need to use bottles that have been properly cleaned and dried otherwise your syrup will go off very quickly.
- For making syrups, it is better to use several small bottles rather than one large one. This is because sealed bottles protect the syrup from the air and help to prevent the syrup going off. If you have your syrup in several small bottles, then you open each one only as you need it. If your syrup is in a large bottle, then it will be opened numerous times and this exposure to air over and over again is very likely to cause mould to grow.
- If you are using new bottles, wash them in a hot wash (60 - 75 degrees Celsius) and rinse them out with clean hot water. If you are re-using bottles, then do the same but also use a bottle brush to clean them out thoroughly. Any remaining residue from what was in the bottle before will cause bacteria and mould to grow.
- **To dry the bottles:** put the oven on at about 120 degrees Celsius. Put the bottles on a clean tray or rack. Check after 20 mins. They should be drying well. Using oven gloves, turn them over so that they lie on their opposite side. This is to get rid of the drips of water that will have gathered there. Check again after 10 minutes. They should be totally dry. If they are not, then rotate them again to get rid of the drips of water and leave them in the oven for another 10 mins. When totally dry, turn off the oven and leave the bottles in there. You want them to be still warm when you pour the elderberry syrup into them [hot syrup poured into cold glass is very likely to crack the glass and break the bottle].
- Pour the freshly-made elderberry syrups into the bottles. When cool, put on the lids and label with the name and date made.
- These bottles must be stored in the fridge to prevent mould growing. They will go off at room temperature rapidly.

OTHER PACKAGING OPTIONS:

If bottles are too much work or you don't have room in the fridge to store lots of bottles they you can freeze this tonic instead.

To do this:

- Dilute the syrup into cordial [see DOSAGE INSTRUCTIONS].
- Pour the cordial into ice-cubes trays or ice-lolly moulds.
- Pop these in the freezer (label them so that you know what they are).
- To use: pop out an ice-cube of cordial and mix with some hot water, stir to dissolve and drink this as required.
- NOTE: The cordial freezes very well. The undiluted syrup doesn't freeze well due to the high sugar content: this tends to make it go very mushy and not freeze properly.

STORAGE & BEST BEFORE:

- A well-made syrup packaged in a bottle will usually keep unopened in the fridge for 1 year.
- However, I usually have guzzled all my annual stock of this within a few months.
- The frozen cordial should keep well and safely in the freezer for a year too.
- Make up a fresh batch of syrup every year, discarding any that hasn't been used.

Dilution and Dosages:

To use:

This tonic can be taken neat as a syrup or diluted to a cordial and taken as a tonic drink. Whichever method you prefer. The cordial method is more suitable for younger children. Please see the dilutions and dosages for various age ranges.

About measurements: When I refer to cups I don't mean the USA baking measurement. Instead, I mean the size of a standard teacup. This holds approx. 200ml liquid.

Dilution and Dosages cont.:

Adults & children over age 12 years.

- **As a preventative tonic:** Can take 1 tsp (5ml) of the neat syrup or dissolve 1 tsp in one cup of hot or cold water to make a cordial and drink 1 cup every day.
- **To fight a cold or flu:** Can take 1 tsp of the neat syrup every 1-2 hours or dilute 2 tsp in a cup of hot or cold water to make cordial and try to drink this every 2-3 hours.
- **NOTE:** High doses of elderberry can cause loose stools. If bowel movements become loose then cut back on the dosage.

Children aged 6 years – 12 years:

- **As a preventative tonic:** Can take 1 tsp (5ml) of the neat syrup or dissolve 1 tsp in one cup of hot or cold water to make a cordial and drink 1 cup every day.
- **To fight a cold or flu:** Can take 1/2 tsp (2.5ml) of the neat syrup every 2 hours or dilute 1 tsp in a cup of hot or cold water to make cordial and try to drink this every 2-3 hours.
- **NOTE:** High doses of elderberry can cause loose stools. If bowel movements become loose then cut back on the dosage.

Children aged 1 year to 6 years

- For ages 1 - 6 years: dilute ½ tsp (2.5 ml) for younger children and up to 1 tsp (5ml) of the syrup in warm water and put it in the child's beaker or a cup. Allow your child to sip at this as he/she wants to over the course of the day. If the flavour is too strong for them, then dilute it with more warm water. Older children might finish the beakerful, younger children will probably just have a little. This is fine. Take one dose as a daily tonic or if the child is ill, give (or for younger children, offer) this dose twice daily.
- **NOTE:** High doses of elderberry can cause loose stools. If bowel movements become loose then cut back on the dosage. For younger children check nappies and stay aware of any signs of griping or digestive discomfort. This is very unlikely to occur unless you go way over the recommended dosages.

