

Colorado Elderberry and Apple Wassail

Courtesy of Doug Caskey, Colorado Wine Industry Development Board

Many cultures around the world serve a hot, spice drink to celebrate Christmas, the dark nights of the Solstice or to keep warm while awaiting the arrival of Sinterklaas (as in the Dutch tradition of *bisschopswijn*). Mulled wine is known as *glühwein* in Germany, *glögg* in Scandinavia, *kuhano vino/kuvano* in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *vinho quente* in Brazil, *vin brulé* in Italy, and "glintveinas" or *karštas vynas* ("hot wine") in Lithuania. The Quebecois call it *Caribou* and make it with maple syrup.

Wassail comes the Old English *was hál*, literally: *be hale* and historically was made with hard cider or mead in earlier times. This recipe incorporates the cider tradition with the flavors of elderberry and cranberry that harken back to Grandma's kitchen in the United States. The Chinese Five Spice gives it a bit of zest and the rosemary adds the aromas of holiday evergreen boughs.

NOTE: be careful not to boil the wine after mixing the ingredients, so as not to remove all of the alcohol, which is a key structural ingredient. The alcohol content will be diminished by the act of warming alone, as alcohol evaporates faster than water.

Ingredients to simmer for 20-25 minutes:

- 2 cups Big B's Apple Cider
- 1 Tbsp. [Savory Spice Shop mulling spices](#)
(Click on the link for the list of spiced included in that blend. The mace and cardamom seeds are key)
- 1 heaping cup fresh cranberries
(If you need to substitute dried cranberries, use a scant cup and try to find unsweetened dried cranberries if possible. If you can only find sweetened dried cranberries, add 1 tsp. lemon juice to the cider mixture after simmering.)
- Juice of one lime (2 Tbsp. of bottled lime juice)
- 1/8 tsp. Chinese Five Spice
- 4-8 sprigs of fresh rosemary (about 0.5-1 Tbsp. of dried rosemary)

Ingredients to combine with the strained liquids after simmering:

- One 750ml bottle of Colorado Cellars Elderberry Wine
- 2 oz. Colorado gin (Spirit Hound, Peach Street Jackalope, CapRock, to name few), more or less to taste
- 1 medium green apple, cored and cut laterally into thin slices

1. In a small heavy saucepan, combine all the ingredients EXCEPT the elderberry wine, the gin and the apple slices. Simmer for 20-25 minutes or until the cranberries have softened and burst open.
2. Strain the simmered mixture and press out all the liquid from the solids. Compost the cranberries and spice mixture to give your compost bin a unique holiday smell.
3. Pour the wine, the gin and the simmered liquid into a crock pot or back into the heavy saucepan.
4. Place the apple slices into the wine mixture and heat on low, being careful not to let it boil, until the mixture reaches a pleasantly warm temperature and the aromas fill the kitchen.
5. Have a wonderful holiday celebration. To you and all your friends and family, "Wassail! To your health."