

Herbal Vinegars

We prepare these vinegars in the summer when our gardens are abundant with herbs, fruits, and vegetables. Try lots of different combinations.

I enjoy matching different herbs, fruits, and flavoring ingredients with different types of vinegars. I most often use white wine vinegar and cider vinegar (our own homemade), sometimes red wine vinegar, and occasionally brown rice vinegar. Place the flavoring ingredients in a sterilized glass jar. I use quart or half gallon mason jars, depending on how much I want for myself and to give as gifts. I generally use 1 part solid ingredients to 3 parts vinegar, perhaps stronger for milder ingredients and weaker for bold ones. Gently heat the vinegar in a pot over low heat until warm. Pour the warm vinegar into the jar over the other ingredients. If you use a metal lid it will rust, so either use plastic or place waxed or parchment paper between the lid and the jar. Label the jar. Let it steep for at least 2 weeks and up to 6 weeks. Then strain the liquid through a fine sieve or cheesecloth and pour the vinegar into decorative (and functional) jars and attach pretty labels. Try to develop new ways to use these versatile vinegars. I use different flavored vinegars in salads; on cooked vegetables; in soups, grains, and beans; on raw cut fruit; and in many other ways. Be inventive!

Some of my favorite ingredients are basil leaves (all different types of basil), calendula flowers, cilantro leaves (with lime peel and chilies), chili peppers, chive flowers, dill weed and seed, fennel greens, garlic scapes (the seed pod on top of the plant) and garlic bulblets, lavender flowers and leaves, lemon balm or lemon verbena leaves, mint (all different types), nasturtium flowers, oregano leaves, peppercorns, tarragon leaves, blueberries, blackberries, cranberries, raspberries, and strawberries.

Try mixing complementary, or contrasting, ingredients. Be adventurous and have fun!