

Elderflower Champagne

Warmer, longer days bring the anticipation of the scent of spring flowers. One flower not to be missed is elderflower. Here is a favourite recipe for elderflower champagne.

Ingredients

- 4 large elderflower blossoms
- 8 pints (4.5 litres) cold water, filtered if possible
- 1 1/2 lb (675g) sugar
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 1 large lemon, juice and finely pared rind

Method

Tips on Gathering elderflower blossoms:

Pinch a floret and check the scent. The flowers should be lightly scented and fragrant. Some elderflower has the scent of cat pee - this is not what you want. A rule of thumb is to look for flowers on the trees with darker green leaves. If the leaves are pale, don't choose these flowers.

Gathering the blossoms should be done on a dry, sunny day when the blossom is fully open and the yellow pollen is open to the sunshine.

Hold the blossoms upside down by their stalk and give them a good shake which removes any little insects. Then give the blossoms a visual check while you are handling them.

Strip or snip the florets from their stems.

Put the sugar in a large bowl with the water and stir until dissolved.

Stir in the vinegar, lemon juice and rind. Add the elderflower blossoms and gently move them through the syrup.

Cover with a clean cloth and leave to stand in a cool place for 48 hours.

Strain through a super-clean (scalded) muslin and pour into clean screw-top bottles.

Leave the champagne to stand for 3 weeks or longer, when it will be ready to drink. and very bubbly.