

INTRODUCTION

Judging from the hoopla vinegar is getting in culinary and health-care circles these days, you'd think it was a brand-new product. But this versatile megastar has been pleasing people's palates and curing their ills since before the dawn of recorded history. This book combines both of those talents into a collection of recipes that will delight even the most finicky foodies—while delivering dynamic nutrition that can help alleviate or prevent a whole lot of common ailments.

We'll start in Chapter One with fabulous, foolproof formulas for making your very own vinegar, beginning with apple cider vinegar—or ACV, as it's known to natural health care gurus from coast to coast. From there, your health-giving hit parade continues with how to craft ultra-simple versions of wine, malt, and rice vinegars that stand head and shoulders above anything you'll find in your local supermarket.

But that's not all! You'll also learn easier-than-pie techniques for infusing vinegar with herbs, spices, fruits, and vegetables. These vivacious blends can turn a run-of-the-mill recipe into a dynamite dish worthy of a five-star restaurant. The additives also give the vinegar some health-giving “muscle power.” Depending on the “infusables” you use, these potent potions can fend off cold and flu viruses (see page 27), help keep your ticker in tip-top shape (page 17), and do much, much more.

You'll find even more homemade health in the form of fortified vinegars (page 25), which are thickened, ready-in-a-flash blends of vinegar mixed with herbs, spices, fruits, and/or vegetables. You whip 'em up in a blender or food processor and use them as nutritious (and delicious) dips, salad dressings, or toppings for anything from meat, pasta, and baked potatoes to your favorite desserts. Tip: If, like most folks these days, you and your family aren't getting all the fruits and vegetables you need to maintain your daily quota, these yummy concoctions are just what the doctor ordered to up your intake the fast, fun, and easy Jerry Baker way!

Beginning in Chapter Two and continuing through Chapter Ten, you’ll discover how to put the astounding healing power of vinegar to work in simple-to-make, scrumptious recipes that literally run the culinary gamut from soup to nuts. Just to whet your appetite, here’s a sampling of the body- and mind-boosting treats we have in store for you:

A sensational salad dressing that can help support your immune system, maintain healthy blood pressure, and relieve respiratory disorders (*Maple-Balsamic Vinaigrette*, page 36).

A sweet and simple salad that delivers a load of benefits for your lungs, liver, blood, and digestive system—and can help protect your skin from sun damage (*French Carrot Salad*, page 72).

Dandy DIY pickles that’ll cool you down fast when the weather turns steamy—plus help boost brain function and enhance your body’s ability to lose weight (*Pickled Chard Coolers*, page 114).

A champ of a chili that supports eye health, weight-loss efforts, and a healthy nervous system (*Mango Chicken Chili*, page 177).

A bracing vegetable blend that can ease joint pain by fighting inflammation and help maintain a healthy gastrointestinal system (*Veggie Bake Casserole*, page 203).

A cheery chicken sandwich that shores up your defenses against colds and seasonal allergies; boosts heart health; and encourages deep, restful sleep (*Open-Face Gruyère Chicken Melt*, page 233).

A dilly of a dip that can help your heart health, keep you hydrated, and lower anxiety (*Avocado-Cucumber Salsa*, page 268).

A delicious drink that tastes just like apple pie—and can boost your digestion and battle dangerous free radicals throughout your body (*Apple Pie Power Drink*, page 327).

A peach of a peach cake that supports healthy skin, provides a potent load of antioxidants, and can give a big boost to your immune system (*Balsamic Peach Bundt Cake*, page 350).

But wait—there’s more! In each chapter, you’ll also find **Culinary Q & As**, which provide answers to nutritional questions and food-prep dilemmas of all kinds. For example, you’ll learn a guaranteed way to ease muscle cramps using mustard (page 133), and you’ll discover the secret for getting the most from dried herbs and spices (page 13).

CULINARY Q & A



Kitchen Capers give you nifty nuggets of wisdom that (for instance) will stop onion tears in their tracks (page 84) and keep cottage cheese fresh longer (page 274). You’ll also learn a simple trick for adding instant elegance, delicious flavor—and health-giving goodness—to everything from meat to desserts (page 233).

Instant Gratification offers ready-in-a-flash recipes for dishes that are as good for you as they are easy. To whet your appetite, *Super Food—Super Fast* (page 71) puts the nutritional firepower of kale to work in minutes. And *A Honey of a Honey Mustard* (page 132) creates a condiment better than anything you can get at your local deli!



Cure It Quick recipes taste great and deliver targeted health benefits for your body and your mind. The delicious *Joint-Soothing Nectar* on page 4 promotes blessed relief from arthritis aches. The *Fast-Acting Headache Relief* recipe lives up to its promise (see page 38), and *Dandy Dandelion Detox Salad* (page 74) works its magic by supporting your liver.



A+ Ingredients list select benefits you can gain from each recipe. For instance, see the box at right for the health-giving ingredients in *Salt & Vinegar Potatoes with Yogurt-Scallion Dip* on page 293.

Bear in mind that the recipes in this book can’t do anything on their own. The key to good health is to eat a varied, well-balanced diet with all the nutrients the human body needs. It’s also crucial to couple healthy eating habits with sound sleep and regular exercise.

With all this terrific food ahead of you, time’s a wastin’. So let’s hit the kitchen and discover how these vinegar-enhanced recipes can lead to good health and a long life!



COMING TO TERMS WITH VINEGAR

Vinegar can be made from any substance that’s sweet enough to ferment (when the sugar content changes to alcohol). Once that happens, a second fermentation turns the alcohol to acetic acid (a.k.a. vinegar). Here’s a rundown of some of the most popular types of vinegar:

Apple cider vinegar is mild with just a slight flavor of (surprise!) apple. It’s the vinegar of choice for most health- and beauty-care purposes. But it’s also highly versatile in the kitchen and makes a fine recipe stand-in for just about any other kind of vinegar. You can make your own ACV by following the simple instructions on page 4.

Distilled white vinegar (a.k.a. white vinegar) is made from grain alcohol. It’s the vinegar of choice for pickles, and, in small amounts, for many of the food-related tips and tricks throughout this book. However, beware of using white vinegar in large quantities in recipes because its sour, harsh taste can overpower more delicate flavors.

Wine vinegars come in red, white, sherry, and champagne varieties. They’re the most versatile vinegars for recipes. While you can buy some excellent wine vinegars, home-made versions are generally far superior. The do-it-yourself process is simple—and fun (see *DIY Wine Vinegar* on page 5 for the ultra-easy directions).

Balsamic vinegar is made from the unfermented juice of Trebbiano and Lambrusco grapes, which grow only in the Modena and Reggio areas of Italy. The juice is boiled down to a sweet, fruity syrup and then aged in wooden barrels for many years. Fortunately, modern producers have found ways to speed up the process, making prices affordable.

Malt vinegar, which is made from barley and other grains, is mild and sweet. While it’s best known as a condiment for fish and chips, you can substitute it for other types of vinegar in almost any dish. But because it’s so mild, you may want to add a little more than the recipe calls for. To make your own, see *Merry Malt Vinegar* on page 7.

Rice vinegar is made from rice wine. Japanese varieties have a delicate, subtle flavor, while Chinese versions tend to be sweet and sour. While rice vinegar is an essential ingredient in Asian cuisine, it can also add zip to standard American fare. For one easy-does-it version, see *Nice Rice Vinegar* on page 6.

Infused vinegars are made by immersing herbs, fruits, vegetables (or combinations thereof) in vinegar and letting them steep for anywhere from a week to several months. You can buy excellent commercial versions, but it’s a snap to make your own for a lot less money. You’ll find a sampling of customizable formulas in Chapter One.