

How to Make Your Own Infused Vinegars

Catherine Brown, plant-based chef & culinary nutritionist at [A Seat at My Table](#)



Here's how to make your own infused vinegars:

1. Choose your receptacle. Any glad jar or bottle with a lid or cork will work. If you'd like to have multiple flavors in small quantities (and/or give some infused vinegars as gifts), single serving screw-top glass wine bottles (the kind that come in 4-packs) are perfect. Use scissors to remove the metal ring and soak the labels off in hot soapy water.
2. Sterilize your receptacles and lids. First clean them in hot soapy water, then (while still warm) scald them for ten minutes in boiling water or fill them completely with boiling water and leave them to sit for ten minutes. Allow them to air dry completely.
3. Choose your vinegar. Lots of options here in acidity, flavor and color. Distilled white vinegar is colorless but the sharpest in acidity. Rice wine is light in both color and acidity with a slightly sweet taste. Champaign and white wine vinegars are both light in color and flavor and pair well with delicate herbs. Apple cider and red wine vinegar are both more robust in flavor and darker in color - these pair well with bolder flavors.
4. Choose your flavorings - herbs, spices, fruits and vegetables. LOTS of options here. Both fresh and dried herbs can be used at a ratio of 3-4 med/large sprigs OR 3 Tbsp. dried herbs per pint of vinegar. For fresh herbs, use only the healthiest best-looking stems and leaves. Wash and pat dry. Some suggest a dip in a sanitizing bleach solution of a teaspoon of household chlorine bleach in six cups of water followed by a rinse under cold water, but I have never done this. Whole dried herbs can be used, such as peppercorns, star anise, cumin seeds, coriander seeds, cloves, cardamom pods, cinnamon bark, allspice, fennel seeds, celery seeds, caraway seeds, etc. For fresh herbs you can either bruise them slightly first (this speeds up the infusion of flavor but is best limited to woodier herbs like rosemary, lavender, thyme, winter savory, etc.).

Fruit or vegetables should be washed thoroughly, and dried - smaller pieces can be left whole, larger pieces should be cut up. Use 1-2 cups of fruit/veg per pint of vinegar. For citrus, use the peel of 1-2 fruits, exclude white pith as much as possible. Dried peppers (if small) can be left whole, larger peppers can be crumbled (wear gloves while doing this!) Garlic cloves should be peeled and can be left whole (if they fit down the neck of your bottle) or sliced.

Add your combinations to your receptacles and have your lids ready to go.

5. Heat your vinegar to just below boiling point (190-195 degrees F). Do not stick your nose over the hot pot either! Pour the hot vinegar into your bottles, leaving 1/4" headspace. If you're using slim-necked bottles a sterilized funnel makes this job easier. Wipe off the rims with a clean, damp cloth. Tightly attach the lids, corks or screw caps. Leave them to sit undisturbed until room temperature.

6. Store them in a cool, dark place for 3-4 weeks to develop the flavors. Most flavors will be noticeable after ten days and fully developed after 3-4 weeks. Start checking for strength during this time. If flavors become too strong, strain the additives and discard. Return the vinegar to the bottle and dilute with additional vinegar if needed. Infused vinegars can be stored in a cool, dark place for at least 3 months or refrigerated for 6-8 months.

Here are a few combinations to try:

- Red wine vinegar, raw garlic, French tarragon, black peppercorns
- Champaign vinegar, dill, lemon peel, mustard seeds
- Apple cider vinegar, dried pears, allspice
- Rice wine vinegar, dried mushrooms, garlic chives
- White wine vinegar, blueberries, cinnamon bark

NOTE: The acidity of vinegar can destroy bioactives in plants (including herbs), so when dressing salad greens or other raw or lightly steamed veg with a vinegar or vinaigrette, do this just before eating them.

Here's a [great document](#) from the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension if you'd like to read more about making infused vinegars.