



What is a shrub?

The man behind the beverage counter at the festival asked me if I ever had a great shrub. With questioning eyes, I imagined that beautiful green evergreen that grows outside our house. I guess he knew that I had no idea why he was asking me that question since he started to laugh as he explained that it is fruit syrup preserved with vinegar and mixed with water or alcohol to create a very refreshing drink. It seems that this is an old fashioned idea that was used to preserve seasonal fruit, creating fresh flavored syrup that can be used for beverages, salad dressings, or meat glazes.

Adding vinegar to water helped make it safe to drink for Babylonians and even Romans made a beverage like this called posca. Early colonial sailors carried those vitamin C enhanced shrubs to prevent scurvy. Many older cookbooks as well as some recent ones have recipes for shrubs.

As I researched shrub recipes, I found several different methods. Most of them involved creating fruit-flavored vinegar and adding sugar to it. The vinegar acts as the preserving agent, allowing fresh fruits to turn into flavorful syrups.

The ingredients are simple: Fresh fruit, vinegar, and sugar

Fruits - Think berries, peaches, plums, pears, cherries and many other fruits, just make sure they are wonderfully ripe and sweet. The fruits need to be washed, peeled, chopped, or lightly crushed. Some additions can be ginger, citrus peels, or even peppercorns.

Vinegar – you can use distilled white vinegar, apple cider vinegar, or even wine vinegars. Balsamic vinegar is also delightful with berries and cherries.

Sugar – I used white granulated sugar but some recipes use brown or raw sugar.

Making Shrubs Safely- Cleanliness and proper storage is important.

There Are Two Recipes Below that you can use.

Hot Preparation and Cold Preparation

How to Make Fruit Shrub Syrup Using the Hot Preparation Method

Makes 2 to 3 cups, depending on the juiciness of the fruit

What You Need

Ingredients

2 cups fruit, cleaned, peeled, seeded, and chopped (if necessary)

2 cups vinegar

1 1/2 to 2 cups sugar

Equipment

Quart-sized canning jar or other glass container with a lid or cap

Deep pot

Measuring cups (liquid and dry)

Funnels (useful, but not required)

Saucepan

Food thermometer

Clean kitchen cloth or paper towel

Fine cheesecloth or coffee filter

Instructions

1. **Sterilize the container:** Wash the canning jar in hot, soapy water and rinse thoroughly. Submerge in a pot of warm water to cover by 1 to 2 inches, bring to a boil, and boil for 10 minutes. For the lid or cap, wash it in hot, soapy water; rinse well; and scald in boiling water.
2. **Add the fruit:** Carefully remove the jar from the water using canning jar lifters or tongs and place on the counter. Transfer the prepared fruit in the container.

3. **Add the vinegar:** Place the vinegar in a saucepan and heat to just below the boiling point, or at least 190°F. Pour the vinegar over the fruit, leaving at least 1/4-inch headspace in the jar. Wipe the rim with a clean, damp cloth, and cap tightly.
4. **Let it stand:** Let the vinegar cool completely and then store the jar in a cool, dark place, such as a cupboard or the refrigerator. Let it stand at least 24 hours and up to 4 weeks until the desired flavor is reached.
5. **Strain it:** Strain the fruit from the vinegar through a damp cheesecloth or coffee filter. Do this at least once, or repeat as desired until the vinegar shows no cloudiness. Discard the fruit or save it for another purpose (it's often delicious for use in chutneys).
6. **Add the sugar:** Place the fruit-infused vinegar and sugar in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve sugar. Remove from heat and let cool. Pour into a clean, sterilized container (use the original Mason jar or other bottles; see step 1 for sterilization procedure) and cap tightly.
7. **Store:** Store the shrub syrup in the refrigerator. Tightly sealed, it can last for up to 6 months. Taste before using to make sure the flavor is still good. Discard immediately if it has mold or any signs of fermentation, such as bubbling, cloudiness, or sliminess.
8. **Serve:** To serve, mix 1 tablespoon shrub syrup into a glass of still or sparkling water. Taste and add more syrup, if desired. Shrub syrups may also be used as cocktail mixers, in salad dressings, and more.

This process was developed by Emily Ho based on historical recipes and the "Flavored Vinegars" chapter of [*So Easy to Preserve*](#) (Cooperative Extension, The University of Georgia, 2006).

<http://www.thekitchn.com/how-to-make-a-fruit-shrub-syrup-174072>

Cold Shrubs with Flavor – Directions for Using the Cold Preparation Method

Some people believe that when you cook shrub syrup, you lose some of that fresh fruit flavor. In place of this process, they macerate fresh fruit in sugar for several hours or a day, which release the fruit juice and creates syrup. Then if you strain the fruit, you can mix the syrup with vinegar. This does take a little longer but creates a purer and brighter shrub.

This method did seem to be easier. Follow these suggested details.

Wash and prepare the fruit. Most berries can be lightly crushed, even with your hands, if you prefer. Strawberries should be hulled and quartered. Stone fruit needs to be quartered and pitted.

Cover the fruit with sugar, a ratio of one part each of fruit, sugar, and vinegar. For example: 1 cup fruit, 1 cup granulated sugar. Stir to combine. Place in the refrigerator.

After several hours or a day, your fruit will be surrounded by juice and syrup.

Strain the syrup away from the solids, pressing lightly on the solids to expel any stubborn juice. If any sugar is clinging to the bowl, scrape it into the syrup.

Add the 1 cup vinegar, and whisk to combine, until sugar is dissolved.

Pour through a funnel into a very clean bottle. Cap, shake well, and refrigerate.

Check the shrub periodically. Some sugar may settle out onto the bottom of the bottle. If so, shake well to combine. Eventually, the acids in the juice and vinegar will dissolve the sugar.

Time to taste: It probably will be a little tart but it mellows with time and in a few weeks, the flavors will blend, a little tart, a little sweet, and filled with rich fruit flavor.

What to Do with Those Shrubs!

Use them in cocktails but remember they are already acidic, so if you add juice, use a light hand.

Try using a base spirit, a shrub, a complementary liqueur, and bitters—for example, rum, blackberry shrub, ginger liqueur, and lime bitters. Consider the shrub sweetness and balance your ingredients.

For a light and refreshing cocktail, pair a small amount of shrub (about half an ounce) with 2 ounces of vermouth or sherry. Top that with some seltzer or club soda.

Go natural – just combine some shrub with lots of crushed ice and ginger beer, club soda, or just water. Refreshing for any day.

For more information: About the Author: Michael Dietsch writes [A Dash of Bitters](#), Shrubs, October, 1914.

See: <http://drinks.seriousseats.com/2011/06/cocktail-101-how-to-make-shrub-syrups.html>

For some shrub recipes: See - <http://www.taitfarmfoods.com/recipes/files/fruit-shrubs/Festive-Shrub-Drinks.pdf>

For Nicki's Blackberry Shrub recipe: See her book – Southern Cooking for Company, p.5.