

HOMELIFE

Homemade apple cider vinegar is liquid gold

Whether you picked 'em from your backyard tree, lugged bushels home from a nearby orchard, plucked them enthusiastically from a supermarket bin or discovered a mountain of them in your CSA farm, you're inundated with apples right now.

And who could complain? But after peeling, slicing and dicing, and pie making, do you ever wonder if there isn't some way to use the scraps? There is — make a batch of home-brewed apple cider vinegar. Fermenting will take about two months. But when you're done, it's as good as liquid gold.

Not only does apple cider vinegar kill viruses, fungi and bacteria, but it also contains most essential vitamins and nutrients, making it something of a supplement. Though apple cider vinegar starts out as acidic, it has an alkaline effect in the body, making it ideal for treating many acid-linked diseases that go hand-in-hand with the modern Western diet.

Many of its purported health benefits have been scientifically confirmed, and some are still anecdotal. Still, there are records of people as far back as Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, who have used it to treat arthritis, infections, obesity, gout, warts, allergies, leg cramps, high blood pressure and even diabetes.

Most people who take apple cider vinegar daily do so in tonic form: try drinking 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar blended with 1 tablespoon honey and 1 cup warm water.

Or use it as a beauty product. Diluted with water, it makes a hair rinse that removes buildup, enhances shine and soothes dandruff. Try it on your face, too. Use a 9:1 ratio of water to vinegar,



Courtesy MaryJane Butters

If you haven't yet treated yourself to a hand-crank apple peeler, you're missing out on the quickest, easiest way to create thin, uniform slices perfect for pies and crisps. This version can be found at www.lehmans.com.

MARYJANE BUTTERS

Everyday Organic



and apply with a cotton ball to tone dull complexions. Got a sunburn? Mix 1 tablespoon into 1 cup of cool water and dab onto fried skin.

Why make it yourself? First, it's easy and inexpensive, with a better taste and higher potency than most store-bought brands. It's also

the only way to know it's pure. Many commercial cider vinegars have been mixed with other vinegars or brewed with non-food ingredients, like wood shavings, to keep costs down.

But more to the point: you're already eating good food that's grown with care, so why waste even a bit? The humble pioneers who settled apple country would have been shocked and disappointed to see us toss out apple scraps like junk. They saved everything, stems included, and fed it to grateful animals or made vinegar. We could all stand to follow their practical good example.

And right now is the best time to start — ripe fall apples are so sweet, meaning

more sugar is available for wild yeast fermentation. Super-sweet varieties, like Fuji, Galas and Jonafrees, are especially good choices. Just remember that conventional apples are heavily sprayed with pesticides, making them one of the most important crops to buy organic. Because vinegar makes use of peels, it's especially important to avoid chemicals to ensure proper fermentation.

Besides, when it comes to your health, the rules are a lot like vinegar. Keep it clean, keep it natural and wild is best!

MaryJane Butters is the editor of *MaryJanesFarm* magazine. E-mail her at everyday-organic@maryjanesfarm.com.

Home-brewed apple cider vinegar

- » 1 large wide-mouthed glass jar or jug, sterilized (do not use metal)
- » Apple peels, cores and stems
- » Filtered water
- » Cheesecloth

Let the apple scraps sit in the open air until they've turned brown. Pile them into the jar and cover with water. Keep the pile going for several days, if you like, adding scraps as they become available. Just keep adding water to cover everything. Cover the jar with cheesecloth, secure it with a rubber band, and place it in a warm, dark place. Choose a location that doesn't drop below 60 or get hotter than 80.

After a week, you'll notice that the mixture will become thicker, and a white-ish goop will form on top. Don't panic! This is called the vinegar "mother" and it's the sign of healthy, living vinegar that's happily fermenting. Don't add any new scraps after this point. Mark the date on your calendar. You'll want to check it in one month.

After a month, taste it once a day. When it's reached your desired level of strength, scoop or strain out the apple scraps and funnel the vinegar into clean, sterilized bottles. Don't worry about removing every bit of sediment — the vinegar mother is a nutritious and pleasant reminder that your vinegar is a natural, homemade product. Store it in a cool, dark place and it will keep indefinitely.

Alternatively, you can make the apple cider vinegar from whole apples that you've cut into quarters. Fermentation will take four times as long — but if you're using the vinegar for medicinal purposes, it may be more potent, and worth the wait.

Source: MaryJane Butters

FREE FOR ALL

Greek drama

Monday and Tuesday, Oct. 11-12 » Utah Valley University presents Sophocles' "Antigone," a fierce battle between one woman and the ruler of Thebes. UVU, in cooperation with President Matthew S. Holland's Freshman Reading Program, aims to keep its production true to antiquity and resonant to modern ears. In homage to the tradition of ancient Greek dramas, UVU will stage the play outside, in a quadrangle near the Sorensen Student Center. 5 p.m., 800 W. University Parkway, Orem. Call 801-863-8434 for more information.

Free theater!



Oct. 14 » Eight Utah theater companies are part of a national program of 700 theaters in 130 cities offering free shows on Oct. 14. The effort launched by the Theatre Communications Group, an association of nonprofit theaters, is sponsored in Utah by the Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau's NowPlayingUtah.com, in partnership with the Utah Division of Arts & Museums.

Participating theaters for free Oct. 14 shows:

7:30 p.m. » Covey Center for the Arts: "War of the Worlds" and "Thriller," Provo

7:30 p.m. » The Grand Theatre's "Oliver!," Salt Lake City

7 p.m. » Pinnacle Acting Company's "Dancing at Lughnasa," Salt Lake City
7 p.m. » Plan-B Theatre's "She Was My Brother," Salt Lake City

7 p.m. » Pygmalion Productions' "The Coming Ice Age," Salt Lake City

7:30 p.m. » Tuacahn Amphitheatre's "Crazy for You," Ivins

7:30 p.m. » Salt Lake Acting Company "Angels in America," Salt Lake City

7:30 p.m. » Utah Shakespearean Festival "The Adventures of Pericles," Cedar City

Info » Reserve free tickets at www.NowPlayingUtah.com.

Please sir...

Tuesday, Oct. 12 » Michael Minch of Utah Valley University, director of UVU's Peace and Justice Studies, will hold a free lecture in conjunction with the Grand Theatre's production of "Oliver." He will discuss topics of Christian Socialism and how society should respond to the underprivileged, including homelessness, child labor and child exploitation — all themes in "Oliver." 7 p.m., The Grand Theatre, 1575 S. State St., Salt Lake City.

Potato Chip Science

Wednesday, Oct. 13 » Allen Kurzweil, author of *Potato Chip Science*, reveals an innovative new way to spark the interest of kids — with potato chips. Kurzweil will conduct experiments right in front of you and your kids. 7 p.m. at The King's English, 1511 S. 1500 East, Salt Lake City.

A civic ballet

Oct. 18 » The Utah Civic Ballet Company and the School of Ballet Arts will perform selections of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet." Sponsored by the Orem Arts Council. 7 p.m. at the Orem Public Library, 58 N. State St.

Prepared polenta makes easy, delicious lasagna

Cooking on deadline

» No need to boil noodles.

By J.M. HIRSCH

The Associated Press

For most people, the only time lasagna lands on the weeknight table is when they prepare it ahead during the weekend. Or when it comes out of a box.

Even the no-boil noodles usually are too much trouble for Monday-through-Friday cooking. That's why I like to use prepared polenta (the sort sold in shelf-stable tubes). Using polenta instead of noodles not only is faster and easier, it also produces a heartier meal.

Because the polenta is already cooked and only needs heating, all you have to do to assemble the lasagna is slice the polenta, layer it with cheese, sauce and whatever else motivates you, then pop it in the oven. Because polenta comes in a variety of flavors, it also is an effortless way to add extra flavor to the dish.

I kept this recipe pretty basic. The sauce is just pasta sauce from a jar doctored with chopped Italian-style chicken sausage. But you could easily add whatever you like, as well as add additional layers of vegetables, including thinly sliced onions, peppers, mushrooms, even roasted slices of eggplant.

Just be aware that the more you add and the deeper you make the lasagna, the longer it will take to cook.



LARRY CROWE | The Associated Press

A lasagna made with polenta is faster, easier and even heartier than its noodle-based cousin.

Quick polenta lasagna

- » 2 (18-ounce) tubes prepared polenta
- » 1 cup ricotta cheese
- » 2 cups grated mozzarella cheese, divided
- » 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- » ½ teaspoon ground pepper
- » 1 egg
- » 1½ cups prepared pasta sauce
- » 6 ounces Italian-style cooked chicken sausages, finely chopped
- » ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Heat the oven to 400 degrees. Coat a 2-quart casserole dish with cooking spray.

Slice each tube of polenta into 9 rounds. Arrange 9 rounds in a single layer over the bottom of the pan.

In a medium bowl, mix together ricotta cheese, 1 cup of mozzarella, garlic powder, pepper and egg. Spread the mixture in an even layer over the polenta.

In a small bowl, mix together pasta sauce and chopped sausage. Spread half of the mixture over the cheese. Arrange the remaining 9 rounds of polenta in a single layer over the sauce, then top with the remaining sauce.

Sprinkle Parmesan cheese and the remaining 1 cup of mozzarella over the sauce. Spray a sheet of foil with cooking spray, then use it to cover the lasagna and bake for 20 minutes. Remove foil and bake for another 15 minutes, or until the cheese is lightly browned. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving. **Servings** » 6