

Luscious Liqueurs of the Mediterranean

By Billi J. Parus

BASICS:

Liqueur making is as easy as *steep, sweeten, and "age"*. It is similar to making tea; you steep the herb, roots, flowers/leaves, fruit, nut, or spice in a base alcohol. After a designated time, usually from 2 weeks to a month, the liquid is strained and the sweetener added. Finally an aging period of a few weeks to a couple of months allows the liqueur to mellow, and the full flavor to come forth.

EQUIPMENT:

- Jars for steeping and aging - canning jars, wide mouthed is easier
 - always wash & sterilize in dishwasher, or pour boiling water inside
 - sterilize the lids also
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Sieve with filter materials - cheesecloth, coffee filters
- Decorative glass bottles with covers or corks
- Sauce pan in which to cook sugar syrup
- Funnel

ALCOHOL BASE:

Several alcohol bases are used: grain alcohol, vodka, rum, brandy, champagne, gin and whiskey.

- **Vodka** - 80 proof - perhaps the favorite alcohol used. It has no flavor of its own so is an excellent carrier for the flavors you have steeped into it. Do not use the cheapest you can find, nor the most expensive.
- **Rum** - these are distilled with sugar and molasses. This is most often used as the base for citrus flavors and fruit liqueurs.
- **Brandy** - avoid fruit flavored brandies. Pick a good tasting 80 proof brandy.
- **Champagne, Gin & Whiskey** - additional base alcohols used as a recipe indicates.
- **Grain alcohol** is the best because there is no flavoring in the alcohol so it is an excellent carrier for the flavors you have added to it. However, grain is difficult to find and requires double and triple the amount of time before you get a finished product. When it is used it should be diluted half and half with water.

SWEETENER:

The main sweetener used is a sugar syrup which is made from 2 parts sugar to 1 part water. This is boiled for five minutes and then brought back to room temperature before mixing with the alcohol. One cup sugar syrup added to 3 cups of alcohol is the usual blend for the liqueurs. If you want the liqueur to have the thicker, "*creme de*" consistency, or sweeter taste, double the amount of sugar syrup the recipe calls for. Sugar syrup should be adjusted to personal taste.

FYI The greater the amount of sugar syrup added, the lower the alcoholic content of the liqueur:

1 cup sugar syrup added to 3 cups 80 proof vodka = produces 60 proof liqueur.

2 cups sugar syrup added to 3 cups 80 proof vodka = produces 48 proof liqueur.

Glycerine is used by the commercial liqueur makers to give a thicker consistency to the liqueur. If you want a thicker consistency, 1-2 teaspoons of glycerine to your bottle of liqueur.

RESOURCES:

CORDIALLY YOURS, The Herb Society of America - Wisconsin Unit, 1990.

MAKING CORDIALS & LIQUEURS at HOME, John P. Farrell.

MAKING LIQUEURS for GIFTS, by Mimi Freid, Storey Publication Bulletin A-101.

HOMEMADE LIQUEURS, by Dona & Mel Meilach.

CLASSIC LIQUEURS, Cheryl Long & Heather Kibbey.

The Internet.