

Keeping Healthy with Fire Cider

From Rosemary Gladstar

"In the midst of the madness of our world, hearts are breaking open, people are blossoming, and the golden soul of humanity is rising up. Never doubt it for an instant. Seek it out and nurture it." ~ Rivera Sun

Keeping healthy and happy these days is, perhaps, more challenging than ever for most people, especially as we drag into our second year of the worst pandemic of our lifetimes. But there are simple things that people have been doing for centuries to keep their immune systems healthy and their spirits high! Playing and working with herbs is certainly one way, gardening, spending time in nature, and being around people that inspire and lift you, so you can lift others up are also helpful.

What can we do to keep our spirits high in a time of mass hysteria and fear?

Don't buy into the fear. We can wake up each morning and give thanks for another day of living. Even when it seems particularly difficult or challenging, giving thanks and gratitude evokes gratitude. I believe keeping our spirits high and our hands and minds busy is another way to build immunity. In fact, science has proven this to be true, but I knew it to be true even before science agreed with me ~ *it just made sense*. Don't listen to the news too often if it depresses you (and how couldn't it?). Listen to those podcasts and shows that are uplifting to you, that bring you joy, that make you laugh. Spend as much time in nature as you possibly can; breathing in fresh air, feeling the wind on your face, talk to the trees and the plants, walk on the sweet earth... all of these things fill us with life and light and help us to move through or face whatever challenges are in front of us ~ and there are a lot right now. Nature heals.

One of my elder teachers who has long since passed ~ Bryce Buchanan, aka the Wild Weed Woman of the West ~ used to say to me, "in an emergency situation there are three basic rules: 1) Don't Panic; 2) Don't Panic; 3) Don't Panic". This is most definitely an emergency situation. How do we remain calm and centered when the world seems to be falling apart around us?

While there are many herbs and herbal recipes we can and should be taking to keep our immune systems healthy and our spirits up, I wanted to share a favorite recipe, Fire Cider, that I've found to be especially helpful. I knew there was a reason Fire Cider took center stage in the herbal community just when it did: it was meant for these times. This wonderful recipe is rich with immune enhancing and respiratory supporting herbs: garlic, onion, ginger, horseradish, lemon, turmeric, and cayenne. Add a big handful of fresh rosemary, thyme, oregano and sage to your batches and you have a super tonic for the times. It is also very zesty, warming to the soul, fun to make, and easy enough that anyone can make it from common ingredients one finds in the supermarket. While the recipe is very basic and simple, there are hundreds of variations on it. If you really want to get creative, check out the delightful fun book, ***Fire Cider, 101 Zesty Recipes for Health-Boosting Remedies*** (published by Storey Book). But the original recipe, simple and basic as it is, is still my favorite Fire Cider recipe.

Fire Cider

Please note, all proportions are approximate, not exact. If you're like me, you can throw away the measuring cup and just guesstimate. Also, this recipe changes a little each time I make it! So get chopping and have fun ~

Ingredients

- ½ cup grated fresh horseradish root
- ½ cup or more fresh chopped onions
- 1/2 cup or more chopped garlic
- ¼ cup or more grated ginger
- Apple Cider Vinegar (raw, unpasteurized preferred so that the enzymes that make ACV so good for us are still active and alive)
- Honey to taste: usually 1 – 1 1/2 cups but is very dependent on taste
- Chopped fresh or dried cayenne pepper 'to taste'. Can be whole or powdered, though the powdered cayenne tends to clump. Also, try smoked peppers like smoked chipotle for an interesting flavor. 'To Taste' means, the flavor should be hot, but not so hot you can't tolerate it. Better to make it a little milder than to hot; you can always add more pepper later if necessary. Some people prefer adding the pepper at the same time the honey is added, as they can control the heat a little more.
- Optional ingredients; Turmeric, Echinacea, Elderberry, smoked peppers, cinnamon, etc.

To Make

1. Place herbs in a half-gallon canning jar and cover with enough raw unpasteurized apple cider vinegar to cover the herbs by about two to three inches (more or less is fine). Cover tightly with a tight fitting lid. If using a metal lid, line with wax paper.
2. Place the jar in a warm place and let sit for three to four weeks. Best to shake every day to help in the maceration process.
3. After three to four weeks, strain out the herbs, and reserve the liquid.
4. Add honey 'to taste'. Warm the honey first so it mixes in well. "To Taste" means your Fire Cider should taste hot, spicy, pungent and sweet. "A little bit of honey helps the medicine go down..." and it will definitely help this medicine go down!!!
5. Rebottle and enjoy! Fire Cider will keep for several months unrefrigerated if stored in a cool pantry. But it's better to store in the refrigerator if you've room.

A small shot glass daily serves as an excellent daily tonic or taken by the teaspoonful every ½ hour or so if you feel a cold or flu coming on. Taken in smaller doses more frequently, Fire Cider helps your immune system do battle. But I prefer fire cider as a daily tonic, taking a shot glass, usually diluted with a little water or apple juice as I find it quite strong 'straight up'.

Please note: while Fire Cider is a safe remedy and is composed of herbs and spices that are considered 'kitchen herbs' and 'safe for everyone', it is a **very** hot remedy. Not everyone tolerates hot fiery foods. So start out slow and easy. Dilute with water or apple juice. If it causes gastric upset, discontinue use.

Fire Cider Chutney

Do you, like me, find it hard to toss all those beautiful vinegar saturated herbs away after you've strained your fire cider? So long as you've not let the herbs sit overly long in the vinegar and they are still crunchy, tasty, and somewhat firm, you can turn them into a fabulous condiment ~ Fire Cider Chutney!

To make Fire Cider Chutney:

Method #1: Strain the herbs (the mark) from the Fire Cider after 4 weeks. The herbs should still be somewhat firm and flavorful. Add the herbs to a Cuisinart or blender, and grind into a coarse paste. If too dry, add a little of the Fire Cider Vinegar to the mix. Add a little more honey to taste. Your finished Fire Cider Chutney should be sweet but not too sweet, hot but not too hot, pungent but not too pungent, and just right for your pleasure taste! This delicious chutney is great on toast, mixed with rice, veggie dishes, is a favorable addition to soups, or enjoyed right from the spoon. It's the perfect winter condiment!

Method #2: Finely grate and chop all the ingredients in Fire Cider (see Fire Cider Recipe above). Place in a food processor with a small amount of vinegar; just enough to blend smoothly. Add vinegar as needed to blend it into a paste. Add honey to taste so that the finished product tastes hot, pungent, sour and sweet!

Blend ingredients until a nice smooth consistency with a little bit of 'chunk' in it to add interest.

* Optional: For added interest and even more deliciousness, add dates (seeded, of course), walnuts and/or raisins or cranberries, which add a sweet nutty flavor to the chutney.

To Make Honey Onion Syrup w/ Fire Cider Chutney

My husband got the 'grunge' one winter while I was away with my mother on a little holiday to Mexico! My Mother was 90 at the time and still loved to travel. By the time I arrived home, Robert had a pretty bad cough, sore throat and a flu that had lodged in his lungs. I have a number of favorite recipes I knew would do the trick, but one that I always fall back on for sore throats is Onion Honey Syrup.

- Slice yellow onions into thin half moons and place in a heavy stainless steel or cast iron pot.
- Just barely cover the onions with honey, and with the lid slightly ajar (just enough to let a little of the steam out) slowly heat the onions and syrup. The heat should be low enough so that honey is warm, but not simmering or boiling.
- Cook for about 45 minutes or longer over low heat, until the onions are very soft and the honey is deeply infused with onion juice.

This makes a very tasty syrup that is very effective for deep bronchial coughs. You can further enhance by adding garlic with the onion for even stronger syrup (but it doesn't taste quite as good in my humble opinion).

For Added Punch, add Fire Cider Chutney to your Syrup ~

However, the syrup was a little too sweet for Robert. Since I had just finished straining the Fire Cider and had made my first batch of Fire Cider Chutney, I decided to try adding some of it to the onion syrup. To make a nicer syrup consistency, I blended the Chutney into a finer paste, and then added the finely blended paste to the onion syrup. It was divine!!! Sweet and soothing, with just enough fire and spark to make it elegantly delicious and healing.

... And for those of you who are unaware of the story of how Fire Cider ended up in Federal Court and won a precedent setting case, please visit the Free Fire Cider website: <https://freefirecider.com/> It's a pretty exciting story and well worth the read for every herbal enthusiast.



The Fire Cider Three (Nicole Telkes, Mary Blue, and Kathy Langelier) with Rosemary Gladstar

Quick & Easy Rose Hip Jam

Another quick, fun, and easy recipe to make is this No Cook Rose Hip Jam. It's delicious and so easy to make. It's fun to make this recipe with children as they can easily make it themselves, and it's so very good for them, too.

- Dried seedless rose hips (I purchase seedless rosehip now a days, as I discovered long ago, though a wonderful past time to split open and deseed a thousand rosehips, it's also a very timely process)
- Apple juice or cider, preferably raw and unfiltered.
- Wide mouth pint size canning jar

Place enough rosehips in the jar to fill the jar to the halfway mark (you can use a smaller or larger size jar)

Pour the apple juice nearly to the top of the jar, leaving about an inch on the top.

Put the lid on loosely and let the rosehips and apple juice sit at room temperature overnight. In the morning, the rosehips will have absorbed all of the apple juice and turned into a delicious sweet uncooked jam. Because it's uncooked and doesn't have any sweetener other than apple juice, this rose hip jam will need to be stored in the refrigerator and should be used within 2-3 weeks.

*“Watching gardeners label their plants
I vow with all beings
To practice the old horticulture
And let plants identify me.”
~ Robert Aitken*

*Rosemary Gladstar has been practicing, living, learning, teaching and writing about herbs for over 50 years. She is the author of twelve books including the popular home study course, **The Science & Art of Herbalism**. Rosemary was awarded an Honorary Doctorate for her life work from the National University of Naturopathic Medicine. She is the co-founder and former director of both The International Herb Symposium and The New England Women's Herbal Conference, the Founding President of United Plant Savers, and the co-founder and original formulator of Traditional Medicinal Tea Company. <https://scienceandartofherbalism.com>*