

Green Ketchup, Anyone?

They're about to start making green ketchup. How dare anyone mess with an American icon?

Actually, ketchup — or catsup, or even catchup — has gone through a variety of evolutions over the years. The word itself is a derivation of the Chinese ketsiap, a spicy pickled-fish condiment that, legend has it, British sailors liked so much that they brought it home, possibly from Malaysia or Indonesia, in the 1700s.

Since then, ketchup has been made with everything from oysters, blueberries, mushrooms, anchovies, walnuts, grapes, plums or almost any assortment of fruits. Even today, British catsup is a spicy liquid made with a

base of mushrooms, unripe walnuts or oysters that's used primarily as a seasoning for cooking. Americans are credited with first trying tomatoes as a base for the sauce, and H.J. Heinz is said to have perfected the recipe and popularized the product as early as 1876. So, if anyone can "mess with" ketchup, that company can.

In the United States, you can call it ketchup, catsup or catchup, but if you do, it must be made from tomato concentrate, puree, pulp or similar product, vinegar, sweetener such as sugar or corn syrup, and spices and other flavorings. Compare the ingredients on your favorite brands

and you'll see some variations, but not a whole lot of them.

The standards for ketchup don't end at ingredients, either. Food and Drug Administration regulations demand that manufacturers test for the product's consistency: Its flow cannot be faster than 1 centimeter in 30 seconds at 20 degrees Celsius (that's 68 degrees Fahrenheit), using a piece of equipment known as a Bostwick Consistometer. While such details may seem picky, they're exactly what prevent you from getting something the consistency of, say, Worcestershire sauce when you open a bottle of ketchup.

Obviously, ketchup can be used on a wide variety of foods, including burgers, fries, meatloaf, and eggs. (The new Heinz ketchup just may give new meaning to the Dr. Seuss classic, "Green Eggs and Ham.") A tablespoon of ketchup has about 15 calories and 180 milligrams of sodium. Low-sodium varieties contain only 3 grams of sodium in a tablespoon. Just a note: A packet of ketchup contains a little over a teaspoon.

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Making Flavored Vinegars

Fruited or herbed vinegars are easy to make at home. A few precautions are important to have a safe product:

- Use glass containers that have been sterilized 10 minutes in boiling water.
- Scald lids and caps. If using cork, use new pre-sterilized corks.
- Use high quality herbs. Wash gently; blot dry on paper towels.
- Herbs can be dipped in a sanitizing solution of 1-teaspoon household chlorine bleach in 6 cups water then rinsed and patted dry.
- Thoroughly wash fruits in clean water. Leave small fruits whole.
- Allow 1-2 cups of fruit per pint of vinegar.
- Be aware that wine and rice vinegars contain some protein that provides an excellent medium for bacterial growth.
- Store flavored vinegars in the refrigerator for best retention

of flavor and freshness.

• Vinegars should keep for up to three months in cool storage and six-eight months refrigerated.

• If mold, bubbling, cloudiness, or sliminess develop, throw it away without using or tasting.

• Vinegars displayed on the window sill or shelf as a decoration for more than a few weeks should be considered permanent decorations and not used in foods.

RASPBERRY VINEGAR

2 cups fresh raspberries

3 cups white wine vinegar

Wash raspberries gently, bruise slightly with the back of a spoon. Place in sterilized quart canning jar. Heat vinegar to just below boiling; pour over raspberries. Cap tightly and allow to stand for 2-3 weeks in a cool dark place. Strain through damp cheesecloth and discard fruit. Pour into clean, sterilized glass jars. Seal tightly. Store in the refrigerator.

Vinegar Variations

Infused with fruits, flavored vinegars look beautiful enough just used as decorations or given as gifts in pretty canning jars with decorator lids. More important, they are easy to create and use in your own kitchen.

Start with the best ingredients. Each kind of vinegar has distinctive characteristics. Distilled vinegar is the least expensive and most versatile of all vinegars. It is best when you want added sour.

Cider vinegar adds a sour apple flavor as well as the sour. It is best for adding zip to a stew, chili or your favorite pickle recipe.

Rice vinegar has a smooth sour flavor with less of an edge than distilled vinegar.

Increasingly popular balsamic vinegar has an intense fruity, spicy, sour flavor that ma-

tures over time as it is stored in wooden barrels.

Made from grapes and aged to a delicate flavor, wine vinegar is the best foundation for fruit infused flavored vinegars.

Use these sparkling vinegars with salads and vegetables. A basic vinaigrette can be prepared with two parts oil to one part fruited vinegar for a milder flavor — one to one for more tartness.

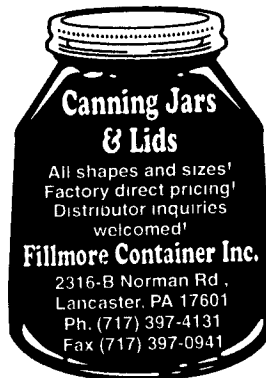
Add your favorite mustard, lemon juice, fresh herbs, salt, pepper, honey or jam in whatever proportion suits your culinary mood.

Try sprinkling vinegar on steamed vegetables, fresh salad greens like Swiss chard or spinach, or broiled fish.

For an unusual fruit dip, mix fruited vinegar with yogurt and honey.

Drizzle berry flavored vinegar over pears poached with brown sugar for a sweet-tart dessert.

For a refreshing summer quencher, prepare a syrup of ¼ cup raspberry vinegar and 6 Tablespoons sugar, boil one minute, chill and add to 8 cups seltzer water. However you use them, flavored vinegars add elegance and excitement to special dishes.



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