

Mindful Mixology

A Comprehensive Guide to
No- and Low-Alcohol Cocktails

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The Brunswick Cooler shows up in old cocktail books like the 1895 *Modern American Drinks: How to Mix and Serve All Kinds of Cups and Drinks* by George J. Kappeler. It's basically a lemonade and ginger ale with the addition of the peel. But, oh, is that peel important. From the

Rickey to the Brunswick Cooler, citrus peels can add aromatics and bitterness to the drink.

Brunswick Cooler

Makes 1 drink

Serve in a highball glass

1 lemon

2 ounces lemon juice

1 ounce ginger syrup (see page 41)

½ ounce lemon syrup (see page 45)

3 ounces soda water

Cut one long spiral from the lemon and wrap around inside of highball glass. In a shaker, combine lemon juice, ginger syrup, and lemon syrup with ice and shake vigorously. Strain liquid into highball glass with spiral, add fresh ice, top with soda, and give it a gentle stir before serving.



delicious on its own or in cocktails. It's worth noting that some kombucha has alcohol but it will be labeled as such if it has over .05% ABV.

Fresh Fruit

Fresh fruit is a common ingredient in cocktails from Pisco-soaked pineapple cubes in a Pisco Punch to apple juice in a Tatanka (apple juice and bison grass vodka). In fact, it's so ubiquitous you might just overlook its tremendous value. When people criticize non-alcoholic cocktails, they often say: They're just juice. And sometimes it mostly is, but what's wrong with that? Juice is a component in hundreds if not thousands of cocktails. The Daiquiri, Margarita, Bee's Knees, etc. Don't sleep on juice.

And remember—fruit has other uses aside from being squeezed. For example, the peel. Several non-alcoholic cocktails that are Prohibition-era or before use lemon peels to intensify the flavor (the exocarp, or outside, of certain fruits is a factory of flavor compounds). Oleo saccharum is a “sweet oil” created by macerating lemon peels in sugar until they form a paste filled with intense lemon flavor. (See recipe on page 45.)

There are also purées that give more oomph to a cocktail in terms of flavor and body. Here I'm thinking about how pectin—common in all fruit—can be a thickener, adding weight and texture to a cocktail. Want more flavor and texture? Blend the fruit with sugar.

Ginger

For me, ginger is the magnum opus of roots. Used in medicine and drinks since antiquity, it's also inherent in the earliest mentions of the word cocktail, which I discussed in the last chapter. The gentle burn, or intense heat if you crank it up, is biting, as much as a strong whiskey in some cases. (Try some of the spicier ginger beers, especially Reed's Strongest Craft Ginger Beer.) That makes it ideal as an ingredient in non-alcoholic cocktails. I use it a lot. In fact, I think that having a good ginger syrup on hand is essential for making non-alcoholic cocktails.

Here's my recipe:

Ginger Syrup

Makes approximately 1 cup

1 cup white sugar

1 cup water

2 tablespoons grated unpeeled ginger root*

1 dash lemon juice

(Optional: A few dashes ginger juice)**

Simmer sugar and water together until the granules dissolve. Stir, remove from heat, and add grated ginger. Allow to cool. Add lemon juice and strain any solids. Stored in a refrigerator, this should last up to two weeks.

***Ginger root is so much easier to grate when frozen.**

**** If you prefer a hotter ginger syrup, add a few dashes of freshly squeezed ginger juice before straining.**

Vinegars

If you want the intensity of flavor and piquancy of alcohol, vinegar can do it. Vinegar is a byproduct of alcohol, so it's not surprising that it carries some of the same characteristics. Also, vinegar has been used for a long time in drinks, especially fruit shrubs—a means of preserving the fruit.

There are tons of vinegar varieties and you can play around with everything from aged oloroso Sherry to coconut vinegar. There are also artisanal local varieties, among my favorites is Lindera Farms. But, overall, I prefer a workhorse vinegar, apple cider vinegar (ACV). However, not all ACV is equal. For mixing, I use Dynamic Health Organic Raw Apple Cider Vinegar because it's so well balanced. For something a little more mellow, though pricier, try craft producer Little Apple Treats Apple Cider Vinegar.

Verjus

Verjus is the juice from unripened grapes, red or white, literally “green juice” in French. (Picture biting into a sour green grape.) It’s helpful to think of this less like wine and more like tart, fresh juice or even vinegar.

Like wine, however, the quality varies depending on the producer. You can get wonderful floral and partially sweet verjus or grapey and mouthwall-tearing verjus. One works well with cocktails, the other is better fit for salad dressing. I absolutely love Navarro Vineyards gewurztraminer. Made from gewurztraminer grapes, it embodies many of the floral and tropical notes you get from their gewurztraminer wine. In fact, it makes a great wine-replacement with a little bit of water added.

Fruit Syrups

I tell bartenders I’m training that fruit doesn’t taste like fruit without adding extra sugar. Fruit syrups are just that: fruit and sugar. I know sugar isn’t healthy for you in vast quantities, and I know that non-alcoholic drinks have a reputation for being too sweet, but sugar is still important for balance, texture, and flavor. You can always reduce the sugar and play around with alternative sweeteners, but I’ve found that products like agave syrup and honey have their own unique flavor and low-caloric sweeteners like stevia leave an aftertaste.

Fruit syrups can, as advertised, be made from just about any fruit. But some should be done through a cold infusion and others through heat. Strawberries that are heated have a very different flavor than strawberries from a cold infusion. I tend to prefer the latter and often dump sugar over a bowl of fresh sliced strawberries and let it sit until a sweet, red syrup pools at the bottom. Call me lazy. However, with persimmons I’m going to add sugar and cook them until they extract a dark, sweet syrup that pairs wonderfully with spices. Oleo saccharum (sweet oil) is a kind of syrup that uses the fruit rinds, resulting in a greater depth of flavor. It’s especially used in punch recipes.

Here are recipes for a few common syrups used throughout the book:

Lemon Oleo Saccharum

Makes approximately 1 cup

4 lemons

1 cup sugar

Wash and peel lemons into strips, making sure to avoid as much pith as possible. Place lemon peels and sugar in a mason jar or Tupperware container and pulverize. Seal and leave overnight. The next day, stir and add a small amount of lemon juice to dissolve remaining crystals. Press and strain syrup through a fine mesh strainer. Discard the peels.

Lemon Syrup

Makes approximately 1 cup

½ cup sugar

½ cup water

Zest of 3 lemons (wash before zesting)

6 ounces lemon juice

Add sugar, water, and lemon zest to a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer and simmer until sugar crystals are dissolved. Stir, remove from heat, and combine lemon juice in the mixture.

(To make lime syrup, substitute lime zest and juice in the same proportions.)

Orange Oleo Saccharum

Makes approximately 1 cup

2 oranges

1 cup sugar