

Matt's Mulled Wine *(recipe for 1.5 litres)*

Ingredients:

The dry spices

(To be added first, and quickly roasted in bottom of dry pan (see below))

12 whole cloves

½ tsp whole black peppercorns

½ tsp whole coriander

½ tsp whole allspice

and break these next ones up with a hammer or by hitting with a big pan on counter:

3 long cinnamon sticks (3" each, so, basically 9" of cinnamon)

2 whole nutmegs

Then add:

Stripped zest from 1 orange and 1 lemon (plus more zest for garnish if you're fancy)

¾ cup fresh orange juice

¼ cup fresh lemon juice

¾ cup of sugar

some of the wine from below

After boiling that lot for 5 minutes, add the rest of:

2 bottles (each 750ml) dry red wine

(or 1 1.5 litre bottle Frontera Cabernet/Merlot mix, \$7.99 at Costco)

Directions:

In a large non-aluminum pot, roast the dry spices in the bottom of the hot pan over medium heat for 30-60 seconds. This is going to smell great. Then douse them with some of the wine and add the lemon and orange juice, the zests and the sugar. Stir this stuff in. The idea here is to only use some of the wine and bring it to a boil and let it boil for 4-5 minutes, stirring enough to get the sugar all dissolved. You do not want to boil the entire recipe of wine as it boils off the alcohol. The recipe where this idea comes from suggests letting it go until it's reduced to more of a syrup, but I don't go that far.

After the 5 minute boil, go ahead and add the rest of the wine. I bring the whole batch up to 150°F over 20-30 minutes and then turn off the heat. By this point, a lot of the stuff you've got in there will rise to the surface for easy removal. Also, the boiling temperature of ethanol is around 170°F, so you're safely under the boiling point.

I like to skim out as much of the spices etc. as I can using a big strainer. You could pour from one container to another through a screen or filter, but I don't normally go that far.

That's it; you're ready to serve! Enjoy!

Further notes:

- Make sure the spices are fresh. In 2013 we had some cinnamon sticks that were maybe 3 years old and they had no cinnamon smell at all. Spices lose potency over time, so for the best mulled wine and to enhance your other cooking, keep your spices current (and date them when you buy them!)
- Break up that cinnamon and bust up those nutmegs before doing the roasting step. You can bang them with a nice pan on your expensive granite countertops, but this feels bad to me, so I run down in the basement with the spices in waxed paper or a Ziploc and pound them with a hammer on the workbench.
- The heating of spices in the bottom of the pan helps make the flavors more accessible. This and the boiling of the spices in just a portion the final recipe help in flavor extraction.
- The zest of the citrus is just the very outer surface of the fruit scraped off. You don't want to zest off a bunch of rind, which is really bitter. We have a Microplane zester which works great and makes fast work of this task.
- The wine I like to use is the Frontera Cabernet/Merlot mix from Chile, available at Costco for \$7.99 per 1.5l bottle in 2013. In the past, I've tried cheaper wines (as low as \$9.99 for 3 litres) and the results have been mixed. My rule of thumb for many years was to use the second-cheapest jug wine, but over time they vary in quality and with all the work and spices you're putting into this that Frontera seems like a decent compromise and makes excellent mulled wine.
- If you're feeling experimental, some recipes add bruised cardamom pods and/or full anise stars to the wine. Watch it with the anise unless you and your guests really like licorice.
- This recipe was worked out from several sources and trials for 2013 Festival of Lessons and Carols at St. Christopher's Episcopal Church after the Williams Sonoma mulling spices used in the past became too expensive. I've always been somewhat leery of using packaged products in recipes because they can change or disappear. Going back to base spices makes the recipe replicable for anyone.
- This recipe multiplies really well. You just need a bigger pot. I made 12 litres for the Lessons and Carols.