

A WINTER SHRUB

It's vital that we put nutrients back into our body over the winter period. The cold weather can be enough to knock our immune systems, however when combined with less sunlight and an abundance of alcohol and sweet treats over Christmas, we can be left feeling worse for wear.

Our resident nutritionist and wellness expert Rhaya Jordan shares her favourite winter shrub recipe, a nourishing drink that can be used as a mixer for alcohol whilst giving a real health boost. Shrub syrups are traditional English drinks that were originally created as a way to preserve and enjoy ripe fruit. Typically, a standard recipe combines equal parts of fruit, sugar and vinegar to create a thick syrup that can be diluted with still or sparkling water.

Using delicious cranberries for a wonderfully festive flavour, Rhaya's winter shrub provides a real antioxidant kick and is great for detoxifying our systems once the New Year passes. Cranberries are a rich source of vitamins and minerals, honey provides beneficial enzymes and propolis, thought to reduce inflammation, and apple cider vinegar is a great source of probiotics which help to digest protein and keep blood sugar levels stable even if the mince pies and Christmas cake come your way.

MAKES 1 BOTTLE

INGREDIENTS

- 250ml water
- 235g fresh or frozen cranberries
- 100g pure honey
- 4 allspice berries, crushed
- 2 cloves
- 1 star anise (or another winter spice of your liking such as mace or cinnamon sticks)
- 1 tsp grated ginger (of desired)
- 250ml apple cider vinegar

Warm the cranberries in a saucepan with the spices until the berries burst.

Add the honey and ginger then let the mixture cool.

When it has cooled, remove the spices and blitz them in a blender before adding the apple cider vinegar.

Pour the mixture into a bottle and keep it in the fridge for up to a week.

Enjoy it as a mixer for alcoholic drinks or in place of an alcoholic drink if you'd like to give your liver a break from candy-sweet cocktails (or mocktails).

TIPS FROM RHAYA

1. If you want a more refined shrub with less cranberry bits, spend a moment straining the cooked cranberries through a mesh sieve rather than whizzing them in a blender. The result will be a beautiful jewel-coloured shrub. Or, if you're happy with a cloudy shrub and want to keep all parts of the berries in it, stick to blending it.

2. Cranberries are brilliant but their skins are tough and they don't taste very nice when raw, so you might need to cook them just enough to break them down a little. Don't worry about losing the antioxidant properties when cooking – they should survive some warming up.

3. The traditional ingredients of a shrub have been subbed with those that will benefit your health – sugar with honey and regular vinegar with apple cider vinegar – so try to stick as closely to the recipe as possible to give your body what it will love.

4. A cranberry shrub will not work without something sweet. If this is a concern, you may only want to add in a teaspoon or two of honey to your shrub; this will give it just enough sweetness and is still better for you when compared to the contents of sugary soft drinks.



COMFORTING CHICKEN BROTH WITH PEARL BARLEY, GINGER & WATERCRESS

There is little more nurturing when nursing a loved one than making them a bowl of chicken broth and the ritual involved could bear no stronger a symbol of love. Quick to prepare, this comforting chicken broth recipe from our NEW E-BOOK is a great example of a nourishing, wholesome meal which can be ready in a matter of minutes.

A good chicken broth is now known to be anti-viral while its gentle effect on the immune system and airways brings instant comfort. We use watercress here for a high dose of vitamins K and D and have chosen garlic, leeks and chilli for their antiseptic properties too. Should you prefer to make this recipe gluten free, simply swap the pearl barley for nutritious quinoa or millet.

SERVES 2

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large leek, finely sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, finely sliced
- 1 ½ inch piece of ginger, peeled and finely sliced
- 1 red chilli, de-seeded and finely sliced
- 1 litre of chicken bone broth
- 100g cooked pearl barley, quinoa or millet
- 100g cooked chicken, shredded
- Handful of parsley leaves, roughly chopped
- Juice of ½ a lemon
- 1 tbsp tamari soy sauce
- 2 handfuls watercress

Heat a little oil in a large saucepan and sweat the finely shredded leek for 3-4 minutes until wilted but still bright green. Add the garlic, ginger and chilli and cook for another minute before pouring in the CHICKEN BONE BROTH.

Bring to the boil and simmer gently for 5 minutes before adding the pearl barley, shredded chicken and parsley. Bring back to the boil and simmer for a further minute to ensure the chicken and barley have heated through.

Add the lemon juice, tamari and watercress leaves, stir and taste to check the seasoning, adding a little more lemon or tamari to taste if needed.

Serve immediately, ladled into deep bowls.



WARMING DHAL WITH BUTTERNUT SQUASH AND FRESH TURMERIC

On cold days, this is a recipe to warm and nourish the body and soul. Lentils are a fibre-rich staple for winter larders, full of the vital mineral magnesium which promotes good sleep and helps keep us calm. Combined with the anti-inflammatory properties of fresh turmeric and gentle spices a bowlful of this ancient, Ayurvedic dish will offer the body much to thank you for.

Make a big batch and enjoy for lunch the next day or alternatively this is a recipe that freezes brilliantly.

SERVES 2-3

INGREDIENTS

250g peeled butternut squash or pumpkin, cut into 2cm cubes
3 tsp olive or coconut oil, or melted ghee
1 onion, finely chopped
2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 cm piece of ginger, peeled and finely grated
1/2 tsp fresh turmeric (or 1 tsp ground turmeric), peeled and finely grated
1 medium red chilli, finely chopped
1 tsp cumin seeds
1/2 tsp ground cumin
1/2 tsp mustard seeds
1/2 tsp ground coriander
4 cardamom pods, crushed
700ml vegetable or chicken broth
185g red split lentils
sea salt and black pepper

TARKA: (OPTIONAL)

50ml olive oil, coconut oil or ghee
3 large garlic cloves, finely sliced
1/2 a chilli, finely chopped
1/2 tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp cumin seeds

TO SERVE

cooked brown rice
wilted greens

Preheat the oven to 180°C.

Place the squash in a baking tray. Drizzle over 1 teaspoon of the oil or ghee, add a pinch of salt and pepper and toss together. Roast in the oven for 15–20 minutes or until soft.

Place a saucepan over a medium heat and warm the remaining oil or ghee. Add the onion, garlic, ginger, turmeric, all the spices except the cardamom and season with salt and pepper. Sauté for 4–5 minutes until the onions are soft and the spices release their aroma. If the pan looks as though it is getting dry, add a splash of water.

Crush the cardamom pods with the back of a spoon and add them to the pan with the broth. Pour in the lentils and stir. Allow to simmer over a medium heat for 15–20 minutes until the dhal begins to thicken. The lentils will be cooked when they begin to lose their shape and break down into a creamy, thick texture.

When the lentils are almost cooked, add the squash and stir through, then continue to cook for 5–6 minutes and check the seasoning.

Meanwhile, if you're making the tarka put all of the ingredients into a pan over a medium heat and simmer gently until the garlic is beginning to turn golden brown and crispy.

When the dhal is deliciously thick, ladle it into deep bowls and top with the tarka. Serve with warm brown rice and wilted greens.

