History of Fire Cider

Fire cider has a history rooted in ancient herbal vinegar remedies, with the modern version popularized by herbalist Rosemary Gladstar in the late 1970's. She developed the recipe, which includes ingredients like garlic, ginger, horseradish, onions, and hot peppers infused in apple cider vinegar and sweetened with honey.

She initially shared it freely with her students as a folk medicine and kitchen tradition. A legal battle in 2012 to trademark the name resulted in a 2019 ruling that established "fire cider" as a public domain term, ensuring it remains accessible as a community-based herbal remedy.

Ancient roots

- **Oxymel:** The origins of fire cider can be traced back to oxymel, a mixture of honey and vinegar used by ancient civilizations like the Greeks and Romans for medicinal purposes.
- **Four Thieves Vinegar:** By the Middle Ages, recipes like the "Four Thieves Vinegar" incorporated more herbs into the honey-vinegar base, evolving the tradition.

Modern development

- **Rosemary Gladstar:** In the late 1970s, herbalist Rosemary Gladstar created the specific "fire cider" recipe while teaching at the California School of Herbal Studies.
- **Recipe and sharing:** The original recipe includes: horseradish, ginger, garlic, onion, and cayenne pepper steeped in apple cider vinegar and finished with honey. Gladstar freely taught and distributed the recipe, intending for it to be an accessible, homemade remedy.

Method of making fire cider

Making fire cider is a simple **infusion method** that involves soaking potent ingredients in apple cider vinegar for several weeks to create a spicy, healthful tonic.

Equipment

- A clean glass jar (quart or half-gallon size is common)
- A non-reactive lid (plastic is best; if using a metal lid, line it with parchment or wax paper to prevent corrosion by the vinegar)
- Cheesecloth or a fine mesh strainer

Ingredients

The core ingredients are typically adjusted to personal preference, but generally include:

- **Pungent roots:** Fresh ginger, horseradish, and turmeric roots
- **Alliums:** Onion and garlic
- **Heat:** Fresh hot peppers (like jalapeños or habaneros) or cayenne powder
- **Citrus:** Lemon and/or orange (sliced)
- **Base liquid:** Raw, unfiltered apple cider vinegar (with "the mother")
- **Optional additions:** Fresh herbs (rosemary, thyme, sage), black peppercorns, cinnamon sticks, or star anise
- **Sweetener (added later):** Raw honey to taste

Instructions

1. **Prepare ingredients:** Chop or grate all the fruits, vegetables, and roots. There is generally no need to peel organic ingredients.
2. **Fill the jar:** Pack the prepared ingredients tightly into your clean glass jar, filling it about three-quarters of the way full.
3. **Add vinegar:** Pour the apple cider vinegar over the ingredients, ensuring everything is fully submerged and leaving about an inch of headspace at the top of the jar.
4. **Seal and store:** Seal the jar tightly with a non-reactive lid. Place the jar in a cool, dark place at room temperature.
5. **Infuse (steep):** Let the mixture infuse for at least **2-4 weeks** (a month is best for maximum potency). Shake the jar daily to help the ingredients steep and prevent any floating solids from molding.

6. **Strain:** After the infusion period, strain the liquid through a fine mesh strainer or cheesecloth into a clean bowl or jar. Squeeze the solids well to get all the beneficial liquid out, then discard or compost the solids.
7. **Add honey (optional):** Stir raw honey into the strained liquid to taste. The honey balances the pungent flavor and adds its own benefits.
8. **Bottle and store:** Pour the finished fire cider into clean bottles and seal them tightly. Store it in a cool, dark place or the refrigerator. It can last for a year or longer.

Fire cider is typically taken by the spoonful or as a shot, or incorporated into salad dressings and marinades.