



# Natural Sodas at Home

# Easy-Peasy Instructions and Ideas

Lacto-fermentation is a timeless practice that uses the naturally occurring lactobacillus (a member of the lactic acid bacteria group) to ferment food and beverages. Lactobacillus is one of the most scientifically studied probiotics. It is naturally present on most fruits and vegetables and is beneficial to humans. That means it will help you be healthy AND keep bad pathogens in check.

In comparison to commercial sodas, naturally fermented sodas contain this and other beneficial bacteria, as well as minerals and nutrients. Commercial soda has HFCS, additives, artificial dyes, and many other chemicals without a milligram of nutrient value. There really is no comparison at all!

Natural sodas have been around for countless generations. There is no one way to make them. You can use any number of things as a starter (or none), you can use anything as a flavor (such as fruit, vegetables, or herbs), and you can use almost anything as a sweetener (cane sugar, honey, molasses, etc.).

1. Use the best quality ingredients you are able to. Don't be intimidated. You do want to use the best that you can with what you've got, and then run with it!
2. **ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS** make sure your equipment, hands, and work area are clean *and thoroughly rinsed!* Any soap or other antibacterial agent will kill the bacteria you are cultivating and could harm your culture.
3. Some metals can be reactive with the cultures, so use glass or ceramic and cloth when dealing with your ferments. I sometimes use a metal strainer after my second ferment but try to keep metals away from my culture always, including taking off my rings before working with them.
4. Never pour hot syrup (or anything else) in with your culture. Heat will kill your bacteria and you will need to start over.
5. If you get fuzzy mold on top, throw everything out, sanitize, and start over. Otherwise, whatever is going on is most likely just fine. Relax and be creative!

# now let's get started:

For this example, you will need (per 2 quarts of soda):

- glass fermentation vessel (half gallon mason jar works)
- ~ 4 cups of your chosen fruit (you want to end up with about 2 cups of juice)
- $\frac{3}{4}$  - 1 cup of sugar (or other sweetener, more or less depending on your taste)
- 2 quarts of filtered water
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of whey (or other starter)

**\*\*A note about whey:** For whey to be a viable starter, it must contain live cultures. That means you have to get your whey from raw dairy products, yogurt, or milk kefir. Commercial milk is a dead food and will not provide you with proper whey.

**Make** sure all of your materials are clean and thoroughly rinsed to remove any soap residue.

**Juice** your fruit of choice. You can use a juicer or blender to get the juice, then you will need to strain out the pulp. This can take a while, so be patient, or expect to have to do some additional straining pre-bottling. You can use a tight-weave strainer or cheesecloth. There is no culture at this point, so if a metal strainer is all you have, go for it. Then set your juice aside.

**Heat** about half of your water to a boil. Then stir in the sugar until dissolved and remove from heat. This is your syrup. Set it aside to cool. If you pour your hot syrup into your vessel, be careful not to go too fast and cause cracks.

**Alternate Method:** You can also put your fruit or berries in the water to simmer for 20-30 minutes, add the sugar until dissolved, then strain the fruit and cool.

**Pour** your cooled syrup into whatever clean glass or ceramic container you will be using to ferment. Add the whey or other culture, juice, and additional water as needed to mostly fill the jar.

**Cover** the top of the jar with the lid or a clean, dry cloth secured with a rubber band. This ferment can be aerobic or anaerobic, so either way will work. If you use the lid, remember to "burp" your ferment as needed. Let ferment 3-10 days, depending on the level of sweetness you like. Transfer to sealed bottles and enjoy! Once fermented to your liking, you will need to refrigerate to slow the fermentation.

**Feel** free to taste it every couple of days to familiarize yourself with the process. It's done when it is bubbly and tastes good. Once you bottle it, you can let it sit out for an extra day or two to increase carbonation.

Experiment with different methods, experiment with different flavors. You can use fruits, roots, and herbs to make all sorts of delicious drinks!

Here are some examples you might like to try:

### **Fermented Raspberry Soda**

Author: Craig Fear (on MommyPotamus)

Serves: about 2 quarts (follow instructions above)

- 4 cups organic raspberries
- 1 cup organic cane sugar, dehydrated cane juice or sucanat
- ½ cup whey (there are other options – any starter works)
- 2 quarts filtered water

### **Wild Fruity Kvass**

Author: Michelle Pfennighaus (Find Your Balance)

Serves: 2-3 cups

- Fill quart jar 1/3-1/2 with chopped fruits or veggies
- Add 1 Tbsp raw honey
- Fill with water, leaving 1" at the top
- Cover with lid and leave for 3 days

### **Root Beer**

Author: Wellness Mama

Recipe type: Beverage

Ingredients

- ½ cup Sassafras Root Bark
- ½ teaspoon wintergreen leaf
- 1 cup unrefined organic cane sugar like rapadura
- ¼ cup molasses
- 1 cinnamon stick or 1 tiny dash of ground cinnamon (optional)
- dash each of coriander and allspice (optional)
- 2 teaspoons of natural vanilla extract
- 3 quarts filtered water
- ¼ cup lime juice (optional but good for flavor)
- ¾ cup homemade ginger bug or other starter culture like whey or vegetable starter

Instructions

1. Put the sassafras and wintergreen in a large pot. Add cinnamon, coriander and allspice if using.

2. Add 3 quarts of filtered water and turn on high heat.
3. Bring to a boil and then reduce to a simmer for 15-20 minutes.
4. Strain through a fine mesh strainer to remove herbs.
5. While still warm, add sugar and molasses. Stir until dissolved.
6. Let cool until warm but not hot and add the lime juice and then culture and stir well.
7. Transfer to bottles or jars with tight fitting lids and allow to ferment for several days at room temperature.
8. Check after two days for carbonation and when desired carbonation is reached, transfer to refrigerator and store until use.

## Favorite Recipes

Cultural Revivalists is a collaborative effort between Leslie Bobb of Real Simple Health and Lyndsay Gutierrez of Cooking Up Your Best Life. Leslie and Lyndsay are both certified integrative health coaches with a passion for traditional foods in general, and ferments in particular. Their combined training includes psychology, culinary arts, nutrition therapy, fitness nutrition, herbal medicine, integrative health, personal coaching, and public health. Cultural Revivalists can be found “reviving the cultures of traditional cultures” through teaching fermentation and “real foods” classes and workshops around the mid-Atlantic region. They are launching a children’s book series to introduce kids to the world of traditional foods.

Follow them on social media at:  
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