

Title:

Traditional Balsamic Vinegar For Oil And Vinegar Recipes And Gifts

Word Count:

696

Summary:

Traditionally, balsamic vinegar originates from Modena, Italy.

Even today, the most renown balsamic vinegar is only produced in Modena and Reggio, Italy. The first documented reference to balsamic vinegar was allegedly made in 1046.

A bottle of balsamic vinegar was a gift given by Marquess Bonifacio, Sir of the Canossa castle to the Emperor Enrico III of Franconia. It was famous as an effective disinfectant during the Middle Ages. It was also used for medicinal purposes...

Keywords:

balsamic vinegar, housewarming gift, oil and vinegar

Article Body:

Traditionally, balsamic vinegar originates from Modena, Italy.

Even today, the most renown balsamic vinegar is only produced in Modena and Reggio, Italy. The first documented reference to balsamic vinegar was allegedly made in 1046.

A bottle of balsamic vinegar was a gift given by Marquess Bonifacio, Sir of the Canossa castle to the Emperor Enrico III of Franconia. It was famous as an effective disinfectant during the Middle Ages. It was also used for medicinal purposes and known as a miracle cure for variety of problems ranging from sore throats to labor pains. Giving balsamic vinegar as a gift has continued through the centuries. Even today, it is in vogue to give gourmet balsamic vinegar as a housewarming gift.

The making of balsamic vinegar has transcended centuries of family tradition and expertise. Some believe the first batch of balsamic vinegar was made by accident, a gift of circumstance. It is presumed a small quantity of cooked grapes, or 'must,' was forgotten and found after a long period of time. Over time, it had undergone a process of natural acetification, (a process of

conversion to acetic acid or vinegar). The aged vinegar had acquired a thick consistency and a sweet and sour taste.

Today, the production process of balsamic vinegar is complex and has been perfected over years of research and scientific improvement. The 'must' (unfermented juice) of grapes is used. The Trebbiano variety is used for red and Spergola is for white sauvignon. This 'must' is cooked slowly in copper vessels over an open direct flame. It is cooked till the content is reduced to half resulting in a thick fruity syrup. 'Mother' of vinegar is sometimes added at this point. It is a slimy substance comprising of yeast and bacteria that forms over the vinegar surface. Alternatively, older aged balsamic vinegar is also added. This assists the acetification process.

The liquid is put into wooden barrels for aging. The varieties of wood permitted to be used in casks are chestnut, oak, cherry, mulberry, ash, juniper and acacia. The barrels are changed periodically so that the vinegar imbibes the flavors of the different woods into its own. In Italy, balsamic vinegar is aged for a minimum period of 12 years, to acquire the label of 'balsamic vinegar'. When choosing a balsamic vinegar to give as a gourmet gift, it is important to know the quality of the vinegar. A 12 year aged vinegar is labeled as 'Traditional' and those that have been aged for over 25 years are called Extra Vecchio. The quality is decided by a consortium governing body similar to those that label French and Italian wines. The balsamic vinegars that are available off-the-shelf without labels have usually been aged between 6 months and 1 year in stainless steel tanks. They may also have been aged in wooden casks for a period of 2 to 12 years. Numerous vinegars on the market that are not labeled 'Traditionale' are mixtures of vinegar, syrup and other additives and are not true balsamic according to Italian requirements. Many of these type vinegars appear in nominal gift baskets.

Balsamic vinaigrette recipes have become extremely popular. Given below is a recipe for a simple balsamic vinaigrette dressing to liven up your salads.

Simple Balsamic Vinaigrette Dressing

Preparation time : 15 minutes Servings : 10

Ingredients:

2 cups extra virgin olive oil
2 cloves of fresh Garlic, crushed
¼ cup aged balsamic vinegar
½ cup white wine vinegar

¼ cup chopped fresh thyme leaves
¼ cup chopped fresh basil
¼ cup fresh chives, finely chopped
¼ cup fresh tarragon, chopped
¼ cup fresh oregano, chopped

Method:

Combine the olive oil and both types of vinegar in a wide bowl and mix well. Peel and crush garlic cloves, spoon into mixture. Add the remaining ingredients and blend or whisk well. You can use a food processor to blend. Put aside in refrigerator, and let sit overnight for six hours. Serve as a vinaigrette dressing over spring salad greens or fresh sliced tomatoes.

Olive oil and aged balsamic vinegar are becoming popular gifts for occasions such as birthdays and housewarming presents. An elegant gourmet gift set can be found at a reasonable price of outstanding quality. It is an ideal gift idea for all who appreciate quality and the finer things in life.