



Food and nutrition with naturopath **SOPHIE ATKIN**

North East Natural Health Centre

Toast your health with mulled wine

As you all know, I love finding ways to use herbal medicines. I have written about kitchen herbs, and today will share one of my favorite recipes that showcases herbs — mulled wine. Traditionally herbal medicines were steeped in brandy and wines, as the alcohol helped to bring out the active properties in the plants.

This makes a much more potent medicine — known as a tincture — than a herbal tea or infusion.

Herbal tinctures are quite strong and are normally prescribed in teaspoon-sized doses a few times a day.

Mulled wine is somewhat of a combination of a tincture and an infusion, as the herbs normally only brew for a few minutes in the wine, which means you get to enjoy a glass-full.

However, the alcohol content might still be quite strong, so bear this in mind if you are thinking about a second glass.

I normally make a batch once or twice a year to enjoy on the winter solstice or just before spring.

The herbs are generally good for circulation, and they strengthen digestion.

Traditionally, mulled wine is a beverage made with red wine and various spices and fruits.

The Nordics call it *glogg* and the Germans know it as *gluhwein*.

To me, mulled wine is a great way to celebrate the end of winter and the gathering of family and friends.



BENEFITS OF HERBAL INGREDIENTS

- **Honey:** Full of beneficial bacteria (probiotics). Honey works as a natural antibiotic. Honey, like brandy, helps to activate the medicinal properties of herbal medicines.
- **Cinnamon:** brings warmth into the digestive organs and extremities. Lowers blood sugar levels and helps remove digestive parasites.
- **Orange peel:** high in vitamin C, which can improve our immune system.
- **Juniper berries:** these little berries can be difficult to find — ask your local herbalist or naturopath for a small bag to add to wine. Like all berries, junipers are high in antioxidants, and are well known to heal the bladder.
- **Cloves:** cloves are anti-parasitic and help remove worms from the gut. Cloves also improve circulation, but don't add too many or you will numb your taste buds.
- **Ginger:** a digestive tonic. Ginger improves appetite and circulation — perfect for a chilly night.
- **Cardamom:** another digestive tonic, it brings strength to the digestive tract.

MULLED WINE RECIPE

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/3 cup honey
- 1/2 cup water
- 3 cinnamon sticks
- peel of one orange
- 6 juniper berries
- 4 star anise
- 8 whole cloves
- 6 cardamom pods
- 2 cm of sliced fresh ginger
- 1/2 cup of brandy
- 1 x 750 ml bottle of good quality fruity red wine (merlot is good)

METHOD:

- Put everything except the brandy and wine into a medium saucepan.
- Stir well and heat until nearly boiling.
- Let simmer for five minutes.
- Remove from the heat and add the alcohol.
- Heat gently for five minutes, stirring often.
- Do not boil.
- Use a spoon to remove the peel, ginger and spices. Ladle into tumblers and serve. Makes 1 litre.