

Wassail

Traditional Wassail recipe with warm spices, apple cider, and citrus. Perfect holiday drink with medieval origins. Easy make-ahead beverage for festive gatherings.

10 min

PREP

2h

COOK

2h 10min

TOTAL

4

SERVINGS

Easy

DIFFICULTY

Wassail

Ingredients

- 2 cup orange juice
- 1 cup fresh lemon juice
- 12 clove
- 4 cinnamon stick
- 1 apple
- 1 orange
- 1 fresh root ginger
- 1 nutmeg

Instructions

- 1 Prepare the liquid base**

Pour 2 cups apple cider, 1 cup orange juice, and 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice into a large pot or Dutch oven.
- 2 Add spices and aromatics**

Add 12 whole cloves, 4 cinnamon sticks, 1 whole nutmeg (lightly cracked with the back of a knife), and 1 inch fresh ginger (sliced into rounds). Add apple and orange slices for extra flavor.
- 3 Begin gentle simmering**

Heat the mixture over medium-low heat until it begins to steam and tiny bubbles form around the edges, about 10-15 minutes. Reduce heat to low to maintain a gentle simmer without boiling.
- 4 Infuse the flavors**

Simmer gently for 1-2 hours, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon. The liquid should barely bubble and steam should rise consistently from the surface.
- 5 Add alcohol if desired**

Remove pot from heat if adding alcohol. Stir in 2-4 tablespoons rum or brandy and let stand for 2-3 minutes to preserve the alcohol flavor.
- 6 Strain and serve**

Ladle the hot wassail through a fine mesh strainer into serving mugs, removing all whole spices and fruit pieces.
- 7 Garnish and serve**

Garnish each mug with a fresh cinnamon stick, apple slice, or orange wheel. Serve immediately while steaming hot.

Tips

Use fresh, unfiltered apple cider for the most authentic and flavorful base—avoid regular apple juice which lacks complexity.

Tie whole spices in cheesecloth for easy removal before serving, preventing guests from encountering whole cloves or cinnamon bark.

Simmer on very low heat to extract maximum flavor from spices without creating bitterness from boiling.

Add alcohol just before serving to preserve its potency and prevent it from cooking off during the long simmering process.

Taste and adjust sweetness gradually—different ciders have varying sugar content, so start with less sweetener.

Float thin apple or orange slices as garnish for beautiful presentation and added flavor in each cup.

Make wassail 1-2 days ahead for deeper flavors, storing covered in the refrigerator and reheating gently before serving.

Keep warm in a slow cooker on low setting for parties, allowing guests to serve themselves throughout the event.