

The background of the cover features two glasses of red soda. The glass in the foreground is filled with a vibrant red liquid, ice cubes, and a layer of white foam. Bubbles are visible throughout the liquid. The glass in the background is slightly out of focus, showing a similar drink. The overall aesthetic is fresh and refreshing.

**MAKE  
YOUR OWN**  
**soda**

**SYRUP RECIPES**  
for all-natural  
pop, floats, cocktails,  
and more

**ANTON NOCITO**  
FOUNDER OF P&H SODA CO.  
with Lynn Marie Hulsman

# MAKE YOUR OWN SODA

**Syrup Recipes for All-Natural Pop,  
Floats, Cocktails, and More**

**ANTON NOCITO** FOUNDER OF P&H SODA CO.  
WITH LYNN MARIE HULSMAN



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This book is dedicated to my wife, Erica, and my son, Aidan

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# INTRODUCTION

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I'm a small-batch soda artisan on a mission. I want America to enjoy satisfying, all-natural sodas with flavors so sensational that one taste will blow your mind. No preservatives, no corn syrup, no artificial colors. I founded P&H Soda Co. on the idea that people want to travel back to a simpler time, when the seltzer man delivered to your home, a movie cost pocket change, and enjoying soda was a way for people of all ages to kick back and celebrate.

In soda's early days, in the nineteenth century, a glassful was a tonic for what ailed you. It was used as a health food, in many ways. People would blend seltzer with herbs, fruits, and other natural flavors into a delicious, refreshing drink. But over the years, as big business took over, soda became a different thing altogether: chemicals swimming in sugar water, too-sweet fake flavors guzzled down with no thought. But now—with increased interest in taking foods back to a simpler, fresher, more natural state—I'm taking soda back.

Some of my fondest memories are of going to Ruplemeyer's—an ice cream parlor that used to be on Central Park South, in Manhattan—with my dad and brother before a ballet or a Broadway show. We'd get so excited to indulge in a scoop of ice cream with a triangular *pizzele*-style cookie perched at the edge or to dig a long silver spoon into a tall glass to scoop out the first frothy mouthful of a creamy, bubbly ice cream soda. Deciding on my soda flavor was exquisite torture. The waiter would stand patiently by while I considered wild combos like pistachio ice cream with strawberry syrup, or orange sherbet with cherry syrup. More often than not, I chose the classic black and white, bubbling with rich chocolate and fragrant vanilla. I'd alternate between slurping the chocolatey beverage through my straw and digging into the melty vanilla scoop floating and bobbing in my glass. And I remember sitting at a soda-fountain counter with my grandpa Anthony, a jokester with a legendary sweet tooth. We'd sip on sodas while watching the ritual of the soda jerk pulling the gleaming silver handles, pouring syrups into fluted glasses with all the flair of a serious mixologist.



## FOUNTAIN FACT

**The use of the term “soda water” first occurred in 1798, probably referring to natural mineral water. But it wasn't until 1810 that a patent was filed for a method of making the fizzy stuff artificially.**

Soda is so much more than just cola, lemon-lime, and orange. This book shares inspired flavors like [Coffee Syrup](#), with its rich-roasted smoky smoothness; [Concord Grape Syrup](#), which explodes

in the mouth with ripe, rich fruit; and fresh [Lemon Verbena Syrup](#), with a clean herbal edge that could cut glass. With these recipes, you'll have your family and guests rethinking carbonated beverages.

## SHOW NO FEAR!

**"Fear nothing!" is one thing I stress to the home cooks in my kitchen classroom. Some of the greatest accomplishments come to us through the gift of mistakes. No one ever succeeded by trying not to fail. Experiment. What's the worst that can happen? So you take a sip of some crazy concoction like rosewater and pink peppercorn soda with a dash of spruce oil and you decide it's not for you. No big deal: it's cooking, not brain surgery. Try to take something away from the batches that aren't grand slams, and notice what you learn about texture, balance, and taste.**

The other great thing about making your own soda syrups is how easy they are and how many different kinds of drinks and treats you can make using them. Homemade soda syrups are basic infusions, meaning you steep fruits, herbs, aromatics (like rose petals), or other ingredients in a simple syrup. Then, you just stir it into basic carbonated water, and you have a fresh soda! Add some ice cream to that soda, and you have a unique [ice cream float](#). Or you can use the syrups to [flavor hot beverages](#) and [cocktails](#). For those who remember going to real soda fountains, where a soda jerk would make to order a classic phosphate or lactart, I've included notes about how to recreate those familiar flavors—and I've shared my tried-and-true method for the most authentic egg cream. Finally, all along the way, I'll share interesting facts about soda and soda fountains.

We're a nation of soda drinkers. Call it soda, pop, soft drink, tonic, or "coke," we have a love affair with fizzy beverages. I hope that you'll be inspired by how easy and delicious homemade sodas are, and what a treat real soda can be. With these recipes, you can make [Cream Soda](#) that tastes of nothing but caramelized sugar and the most aromatic vanilla; [Hibiscus Syrup](#) that's the stuff of dreams, a jewel-toned syrup born of actual blooms, equally at home in cold seltzer or a glass of Champagne; and [Ginger Syrup](#) with a peppery bite that will perk you right up.

## MATERIA PRIMA: SIMPLY THE BEST

**Aristotle said, "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." And I agree, partly. The sodas and drinks I serve are phenomenal. Pure pleasure in a glass, they're an amazing treat. But they owe their greatness to their ingredients, which I am passionate about. I like to know where things come from and how they were cared for before they came to me. No sad, subpar, or out-of-season foods are allowed into my pots, bowls, or bottles.**

***Materia Prima*, poetically translated, means "essence above all." That's the guiding principle for all I do. I like things to be easy to understand. When you look at a P&H Soda label, you'll see it says fresh, organic ginger, and organic spices—and you know what it is. You know what's in there**

**With the recipes in this book, you can make sodas that are this simple—this fresh and real—to**

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Making your own soda, with the best of the best ingredients, really is easy when you use the simple techniques and suggestions found in this book. It's smart, it's economical, and it lets you decide the flavors and sweetness levels that are right for you. I'm glad you're on board for this exciting soda revolution!

# GETTING STARTED

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## THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Investing in a few basic tools will save you time and labor. For most of the drinks in this book, the following tools are all you need to make the job a breeze. Chances are, you probably already own most of them.

### VEGETABLE PEELER:



I don't know why we leave fruit out of the name of this handy gadget, but one tool will do the job for vegetables and fruits alike. Choose a top-mounted or side-mounted blade on a handle, or the rotating apple or potato peeler that removes the skin in one long spiral.

---

### MICROPLANE ZESTER:

Sometimes called a Microplane grater, the common denominator for this useful tool is very small holes coupled with a very sharp surface.

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### POTATO MASHER:

Nylon or metal, a flat circle with holes or a zigzag of loops, the effect is the same—nicely smashed ingredients. I like to use my grand-mother's, which is heavy and sturdy.

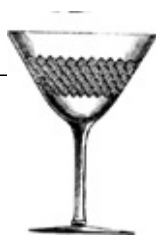
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### BLENDER/IMMERSION BLENDER:

A regular blender with a glass or plastic carafe is probably all any home cook needs. An immersion, or "stick," blender is nice when you want to limit mess and keep your ingredients in one container.

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### COCKTAIL SHAKER:



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The three most common types of cocktail shaker are the Boston Shaker, the Cobbler Shaker, and the French Shaker. For the Boston, a metal top is used in conjunction with a glass or plastic cup, and a separate strainer is necessary. The Cobbler is a three-piece apparatus with the strainer built in and a cap that doubles as a jigger measure. The French is a simple model with a metal top and bottom and needs a separate strainer. In a pinch, you can always use a plastic cup and glasses of two different sizes, each with a mouth wider than its base, and strain through a fine-mesh strainer.

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### **FINE-MESH STRAINER:**

A regular, bowl-shaped fine-mesh strainer on a handle is perfect for straining syrups that have been steeped with spices or fruits.

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### **CHEESECLOTH/COFFEE FILTERS:**

Cheesecloth is inexpensive and a handy thing to keep in your kitchen. Coffee filters will also work well when straining syrups that have fine sediment to extract.

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### **SODA SIPHON OR OTHER HOME CARBONATING DEVICE:**

If you're keen on carbonating your own water, there are plenty of tools to get the job done. You can use the old-fashioned glass model you inherited from your great-aunt or picked up at an antiques mall, or one of the snazzy new types that use canisters delivered to your door. Bottled seltzer from the supermarket works perfectly well, too.

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## **A CARBONATION PRIMER**

Carbonated water—water in which pressurized carbon dioxide has been dissolved—goes by many nicknames: sparkling water, club soda, bubble water, two cents plain, fizzy water, soda water, mineral water, and even seltzer, a proprietary eponym linked to a German town boasting natural mineral springs, after which Alka-Seltzer was also named.

For home use, the “aerosol” bottle, an early soda siphon, was introduced in France, and changed the way people drank hard spirits, allowing them to lighten up a glass of booze, making drinking more socially acceptable, especially for the ladies. The Victorian English followed with their invention of the gasogene, a blown-glass bottle made up of two globes on top of one another, encased in wire mesh or woven twine, as they had a tendency to explode.

In Europe, chemists invented and perfected methods of imitating naturally carbonated water by infusing it with sulfuric acid and chalk, allowing for large amounts to be produced commercially. The demand was high, as belief in its health-giving properties was widespread. Europeans trotted off to Spa in Belgium, Vichy in France, and Baden-Baden in Germany to “take the waters.” The idea translated to the United States, making places like New York’s Saratoga Springs and Arkansas’s Hot Springs popular vacation destinations.

Now a mainstream drink, seltzer is readily available in restaurants, where it is dispensed from large tanks hidden behind the bar, and easily purchased in recyclable bottles from supermarkets. There are even great devices on the market for producing your own carbonated water at home. The most popular is the SodaStream, which very quickly and effortlessly carbonates a single bottle of cold water at a time.



## FOUNTAIN FACT

**In 1676, the Compagnie de Limonadiers of Paris produced the first cited (noncarbonated) soft drinks. An all-natural drink made with water, lemon juice, and honey, it was sold by the cup from tanks carried on vendors’ backs.**

## BUYING THE BEST PRODUCE

Simply put, the better the produce, the better the soda. Using what’s in season just makes sense—produce is not only at its best when it’s growing with the rhythm of the seasons, but also at its most plentiful, and therefore cheapest.

Here are a few suggestions for what to buy when. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but what’s truly seasonal will vary from place to place, depending on where you call home. The surest way to find what’s seasonal is to ask the local growers themselves, as they stand at market stalls in front of what they recently plucked from a tree or pulled from the ground. Your supermarket produce manager can also steer you in the right direction.

### JANUARY:

apples, grapefruits, kiwi, kumquats, Meyer lemons, Minneola tangelos, oranges, pomegranates, rose hips, Seville oranges, tangerines

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### FEBRUARY:

apples, clementines, oranges, pomegranates, Seville oranges, tangerines

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### **MARCH:**

apples, clementines, mangoes, oranges, tangerines

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### **APRIL:**

apples, edible flowers, lemongrass, mangoes, tangerines

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### **MAY:**

apples, blackberries, edible flowers, lemon verbena, lemongrass, mangoes, mint, parsley

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### **JUNE:**

apples, apricots, bananas, basil, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cherries, currants, edible flowers, huckleberries, lemon verbena, lemongrass, mangoes, mint, nectarines, peaches, raspberries, sour cherries, strawberries

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### **JULY:**

apples, apricots, bananas, basil, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cherries, currants, edible flowers, figs, huckleberries, lemongrass, mangoes, marionberries, mint, nectarines, peaches, raspberries, strawberries

---

### **AUGUST:**

apples, apricots, bananas, basil, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, chiles, Concord grapes, currants, edible flowers, elderberries, fennel, figs, finger limes (caviar limes), grapes, huckleberries, lemongrass, mangoes, melons, mint, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, raspberries, sumac, strawberries, watermelon

---

### **SEPTEMBER:**

apples, asian pears, bananas, basil, blackberries, blueberries, chiles, Concord grapes, cranberries, edible flowers, elderberries, fennel, finger limes (caviar limes), grapes, huckleberries, kiwi, lemon verbena, lemongrass, mangoes, melons, mint, nectarines, pears, plums, sumac, watermelon

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## OCTOBER:

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apples, asian pears, bananas, basil, Concord grapes, cranberries, finger limes (caviar limes), grapes, kiwi, lemon verbena, lemongrass, mint, oranges, parsley, pears, persimmons, pomegranates, quinces, tangerines

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## NOVEMBER:

apples, asian pears, basil, cranberries, finger limes (caviar limes), kiwi, mint, oranges, pears, persimmons, pomegranates, rose hips, tangerines

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## DECEMBER:

apples, mint, oranges, pears, persimmons, pomegranates, rose hips, Seville oranges, tangerines

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## MIXING A BALANCED SODA: SWEET AND SOUR FLAVORS

The best sodas have a great balance of sweetness and sourness. Understanding the ingredients that add sweet and sour will help you learn how to craft the flavor you're looking for.

Everyone's palate is different, and you can tweak your soda's sweetness and sourness to the exact note for you. On the sweet side, if you want to add a creaminess to your soda, honey may be to your taste. For a lingering sweetness that stays on the tongue, like the kind you get with a bottled Malt, give sorghum a try. For a clean, dry finish with an herbal freshness, stevia will do the trick. If you want more tartness, up the citrus quotient with lemon or lime juice. For a drink with the depth and quality of ginger ale, squeeze in a couple of drops of lactic acid. Here's a basic summary to demystify some of the most common elements used to perfectly balance your soda.

### Sweet

In the United States, our taste buds have been skewed to crave heavy sweetness, since lots of processed goods contain added corn syrup and white sugar. I think of soda as a sweet treat, and I don't always love the cloying sweetness of an artificial-tasting soda. Sugar is the first ingredient you think of as a sweetener. Other great sweeteners include:

### MAPLE SYRUP:

Made from the sap of the sugar maple, red maple, or black maple tree, it is classified into three grades, with several color classes. With a higher concentration of minerals than honey, maple syrup of any grade or class has an earthiness that cuts through the sweetness. The flavor ranges



from delicate in the Grade A Light Amber variety, to almost buttery-sweet in the Grade A Light, to more bitter, with coffee undertones in the Grade A Dark Amber, to a dark honey, grassy maple flavor in the Grade B. In general, I recommend the lighter maple syrups for pale-colored soda syrups and the Grade A or B dark maple syrups for soda-syrup ingredients that can hold up to the stronger flavorings.

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## MAPLE SUGAR:



The solid by-product of the process of manufacturing maple syrup and maple taffy, maple sugar is hard to make, as it's very easy to burn at the high temperatures needed to produce it. It's about twice as sweet as white granulated sugar, and can be thought of and used like natural cane sugar. Once found only in the northeastern United States or from the catalogs of sugar shacks, this sweetener is gaining popularity with the natural-foods crowd and is showing up in gourmet markets, specialty stores, and natural-foods markets.

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## HONEY:

Richer than white sugar, it comes in many grades. The region where it was produced affects the flavor, as the bees that make it have access to varying kinds of flowers, and the color and potency can vary wildly. In general, use paler and more delicate honeys with less bold soda-syrup ingredients and the dark, rich honeys with fruits and herbs that can stand up to them.

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## SORGHUM:

Sorghum is a traditional sweetener that comes from a cereal crop that thrives in harsh environments. Often used in the Deep South of the United States, this sweetener is golden in color and tastes a bit like molasses, but is sweeter, milder, and doesn't have the mineral aftertaste. It has an herbal lightness similar to that of wild honey.

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## AGAVE:

Produced from a succulent plant, this super-sweet syrup is all-natural and dissolves easily in colliquids, making it an ideal beverage sweetener. Think of it like honey without the strong flavor.

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## COCONUT SUGAR:

With a large grain and slightly tropical flavor, coconut sugar should be used only when a distinct taste is desired, as it adds depth and a creamy, nutty flavor, as well as sweetness, to your recipe.

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## STEVIA:



A lot of people like this natural, low- or no-calorie sweetener that's available in both liquid and powdered form. Derived from a shrub in the sunflower family, it takes longer to perceive its taste than sugar and is longer lasting. Some people notice a licorice-like aftertaste if a lot is used.

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## Sour

People love the taste of sourness in beverages, especially when it cuts through pure sugar sweetness. Delicious commercial sour drinks include Schweppes Lemon Sour, Apple Slice, and plain old club soda. Even Diet Coke devotees like to cut the sweet with a lemon wedge served on the edge of the icy glass in restaurants. It's easy to brighten sodas by adding an acidic sourness. Here's a list of common ingredients that impart a sour flavor:

## LEMON JUICE:

Nice and tart in flavor, often added to sweetened tea to balance the sweetness.

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## LIME JUICE:

Similar to lemon juice, lime juice is sweeter, and many people think of it as a more tropical flavor.

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## VINEGAR:

I agree that it's not the sexiest ingredient in your kitchen cabinet, but vinegar is an inexpensive, old-fashioned way to add a bit of pucker to your drinks. Its acidic taste offers a less fruity alternative to the traditional lemon and lime of many sour drinks.

Early settlers and farmhands loved to drink shrubs—a vinegar-based soft drink, usually made with cooked fruit—as a cooling beverage during summer days spent in the hot sun, doing hard labor. Sharp and pungent, there is no mistaking the distinctive vinegar flavor and it cuts through sweetness like a knife. With the different varieties, including apple, red wine, white wine, rice,

sherry, and malt, you can try lighter or richer vinegars with different soda ingredients to find your favorite combo.

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### ACID PHOSPHATE:

This chemical compound is partially neutralized phosphoric acid. Pure phosphoric acid has gotten a bad reputation in the natural community since it's very inexpensive to produce and is widely used in commercial soft drinks. Acid phosphate isn't as pure as citric acid and lactic acid (or vinegar and citrus juice, for that matter), but it is great when you want a sour note without adding a new flavor. It's less tart than citric acid, and it offers a nice tingle. That quality was sought after by early soda jerks in an attempt to replicate natural mineral waters, was a base for early flavored sodas made in the home, and later was added to bottled Victorian beverages. I like this acid best with darker, richer syrup flavors like [Concord Grape Syrup](#) and [Sour Cherry Syrup](#). You can purchase acid phosphate from Darcy O'Neil's Art of Drink website (see [Sources](#)), and from other Internet sites and wholesalers.

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### CITRIC ACID SOLUTION:

This very weak organic acid is ideal for brightening a drink without adding the flavor of lemon juice or vinegar. You can purchase citric acid (sour salt) on the Internet and through home-brewing suppliers, and make your own solution (see below). You can also find premixed solutions in different concentrations from specialty companies through the Internet.

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### LACTIC ACID:

This acid occurs naturally and is refined from sour milk. The taste is reminiscent of something fermented, and has an alkaline quality like that of grapefruit. Lactic acid is the best tart additive to use with lighter-colored soda syrups like ginger and pineapple if you want an alternative to traditional citrus juices. Lactic acid can be found at craft-brew suppliers, at wholesale beverage-making companies on the Internet, or on Darcy O'Neil's Art of Drink website (see [Sources](#)).

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### MAKE CITRIC ACID SOLUTION AT HOME

**To make ½ cup of citric acid solution, stir 1 teaspoon of citric acid into ½ cup of warm water until the citric acid is dissolved. Store in the refrigerator in a covered glass container for up to 14 days.**

### A WORD ABOUT SUGAR

I like using the highest grade of organic sugar I can find. Many supermarkets and health-food stores carry organic sugar in many forms, such as in large crystals or as granulated sugar, caster sugar, and superfine sugar. In some recipes, I prefer to use caster sugar because it dissolves easily. Make your own fine-grind sugar by buzzing larger-grained varieties in your (very dry!) blender or food processor.

Don't be fooled by confectioners' sugar. Some say it melts quickly and easily because it's powder, but it has added cornstarch. All in all, it doesn't work well and has a distinct flavor, so skip it.

## STORING SYRUPS

For the recipes in this book, I recommend storing your finished syrups in the refrigerator, which extends shelf life and retards the growth of any harmful bacteria. Just a few extra precautions will ensure that they'll keep as long and as safely as possible.

- **Always remember to use clean storage containers; and when bottling soda syrups, make sure that the lids or tops are spotless as well as the glass or plastic bottles. The best way to sterilize is to put the containers and lids in a large pot, cover completely with water, and bring to a boil.**
- **Cover all bottles and jars tightly before refrigerating. If for any reason your food takes on an off color or smell over time, discard it. You can always make more!**


## RAW EGGS—SAFE OR NOT?

It's said that raw egg yolks taste of vanilla and that eating them enhances your health. But it's also known that some raw eggs can carry the salmonella bacteria. In most cases, salmonella exists only on the shell, and some people feel comfortable simply washing the eggs or scalding them in boiling water for 5 seconds before cracking them open.

Since there is no way to guarantee that your eggs are 100 percent safe, you'll have to make the decision that's right for you. I recommend skipping them if you're in a high-risk group for salmonella infections, like pregnant women or people with compromised immune systems. I'll go ahead and say that I eat them regularly in egg shakes, holiday egg nog, on steak tartare, and in salad dressings. If you find a good source for fresh eggs and use smart kitchen hygiene, you should be fine.

## SASSAFRAS

In the 1960s, there was a ban on food-grade sassafras plant components in the United States, based on some tests done on lab animals and a few case reports on people. Safrole, a chemical found in the plant, was linked to liver damage with extreme doses and heavy, long-term use. In 1994, the ban was reversed, allowing the sale of root extracts that don't contain safrole or from which the compound was removed.



**SODA  
SYRUPS  
FROM THE  
FARM**



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# GRAPEFRUIT SYRUP

Tart and tangy, the flavor of grapefruit wakes the senses, and a soda made with this syrup is wonderful served as a bright, eye-opening breakfast treat. I like to balance the flavor with a little sugar and a small amount of salt to make a refreshing soda that tastes sunny and sophisticated.

**MAKES ABOUT 2½ CUPS**

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**2 cups water**

**Pinch of salt**

**1½ cups sugar**

**Zest of 2 grapefruits**

**¾ cup fresh grapefruit juice**

In a medium saucepan set over medium heat, bring the water, salt, and sugar to a boil. Add the zest and remove the pan from the heat. Cover the pan and steep for 20 minutes.

Add the juice to the pan and stir. Strain the syrup through a clean piece of cheesecloth and let cool. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 7 days.

## GRAPEFRUIT SODA

For one drink, fill a tall glass with ice. Add 3 tablespoons of the Grapefruit Syrup, top with seltzer, and mix gently.

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# SEVILLE ORANGE SYRUP

Also known as a sour orange or a bitter orange, the Seville orange is traditionally used in marmalade. The thick, deeply colored peel is valued for its fragrant oil, used widely in perfumes. When tempered with sweetness, the bold flavor of this exotic citrus fruit is amazing. Sodas made with this syrup are definitely not Fanta Orange. **MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS**

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**1½ cups water**

**1 cup sugar**

**Zest of 4 Seville oranges**

**½ cup fresh orange juice (if not making a phosphate)**

In a medium saucepan set over medium heat, bring the water and sugar to a boil. Turn off the heat, add the zest, cover the pan, and steep for 30 minutes.

Add the orange juice and stir, strain the syrup through a fine-mesh strainer, and let cool. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 7 days.

## SEVILLE ORANGE SODA

For one drink, fill a tall glass with ice. Add 3 table-spoons of the Seville Orange Syrup, top with seltzer, and mix gently.

## STEP IT UP

- **For a fizzy variation on the classic Screwdriver, add 1 ounce of vodka to the soda recipe.**
- **Make a version of this syrup to use in a classic orange phosphate by skipping the addition of the orange juice and adding a few drops of acid phosphate to the soda recipe.**



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