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Simple Chokecherry Syrup Recipe

Ingredients:

- ~4 cups chokecherries, washed and stems removed
- 2 cups or more water
- 2 cups or more granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice (optional, for flavor balance)



Instructions:

1. Prepare Chokecherries:

- Wash the chokecherries thoroughly under running water to remove any dirt or debris.
- Remove the stems from the chokecherries and discard any overripe or damaged berries.

2. Cook Chokecherries:

- In a medium-sized saucepan, combine the cleaned chokecherries enough water to cover the fruit.
- Bring the mixture to a gentle boil over medium heat.
- Reduce the heat to low and let the chokecherries simmer for about 30 minutes, or until they are soft and have released their juices.

3. Strain Chokecherries:

- Place a fine mesh strainer or cheesecloth over a bowl or another saucepan.
- Carefully pour the cooked chokecherries and liquid through the strainer to separate the liquid from the solids.
- Use a spoon to gently press the chokecherries to extract as much liquid as possible. Discard the solids.

4. Prepare Syrup:

- Measure the strained chokecherry liquid and return it to the saucepan.
- For every cup of chokecherry liquid, add 1 cup of granulated sugar to the saucepan.
- If desired, add up to 1 tablespoon of lemon juice to the mixture for a balanced flavor. Lemon juice can help enhance the tartness of the chokecherries.

5. Cook and Reduce:

- Place the saucepan over medium heat and stir until the sugar has completely dissolved.
- Allow the mixture to come to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat to low and let it simmer for about 20-30 minutes.
- Stir occasionally to prevent sticking or burning.

6. Cool and Store:

- Once the syrup has reached the desired consistency, remove it from the heat and let it cool slightly.
- Pour the chokecherry syrup into clean and sterilized glass jars or bottles.
- Seal the jars or bottles with airtight lids.
- Store the chokecherry syrup in the refrigerator for up to a few months.

Usage:

- Serve the chokecherry syrup drizzled over pancakes, waffles, French toast, ice cream, yogurt, or any other desserts.
- You can also mix the syrup with sparkling water or club soda to make a refreshing chokecherry soda.

Note:

- Make sure to correctly choke cherries and avoid any toxic plants. If you're not confident in your plant identification skills, it's best to ask someone experienced or skip this step.

Enjoy your homemade chokecherry syrup, however you decide to use it.

Staghorn Sumac Sun-Lemonade Recipe

Ingredients:

- 6-8 Staghorn sumac clusters
- 4-6 cups cold water
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup honey or sweetener of your choice (adjust to taste)
- Ice cubes
- Fresh mint leaves (optional, for garnish)



Instructions:

1. Harvest Staghorn Sumac:

- Harvest staghorn sumac bobs (torch-like clusters) when they are ripe and bright red. You can test their ripeness by rubbing your fingers on a cluster and taste them for sourness. Ensure they are free from dirt and insects by giving them a good shake.

2. Prepare Sumac Lemonade Base:

- Gently remove the fuzzy berries from the sumac clusters. You can use your fingers or a fork to do this. Avoid using the green parts, as they can be bitter.

- Place the sumac berries in a large pitcher or bowl.
 - To save time, put the staghorn cluster bits in a jelly bag, or a clean pillow case (designated for kitchen use) to act as a large tea bag for easy straining (step 4).
3. **Infuse with Cold Water:**
- Pour cold or room temperature water over the sumac berries in the pitcher. Use enough water to cover the berries and allow them to soak. Never use hot water as the resulting lemonade could be quite bitter.
 - Use a wooden spoon to lightly mash the berries in the water. This will help release their flavor.
 - Let the mixture sit at room temperature for 2-4 hours minimum. Consider letting your pitcher sit in a sunny spot to absorb the goodness of the sun and to warm up the water slightly. The water will turn pinkish-red as it absorbs the flavors.
4. **Strain the Mixture:**
- After the infusion period, if your staghorn bits are not in a “tea bag”, place a fine mesh strainer or cheesecloth over another pitcher or bowl.
 - Slowly pour the sumac-infused water through the strainer to separate the liquid from the solid parts. Gently squeeze the berries to extract as much liquid as possible.
5. **Sweeten the Lemonade:**
- Add honey, white sugar, or your preferred sweetener to the strained sumac water. Start with a smaller amount and adjust to taste.
 - Stir well until the sweetener is fully dissolved.
6. **Chill and Serve:**
- Refrigerate the sumac lemonade until it's thoroughly chilled.
 - When ready to serve, fill glasses with ice cubes and pour the chilled sumac lemonade over the ice.
 - Garnish with fresh mint leaves if desired.

Usage:

- Enjoy your Staghorn Sumac Sun-Lemonade as a refreshing and unique summer drink.
- You can adjust the sweetness and tartness levels by adding more or less sweetener and lemon slices.
- Experiment with the flavor by adding other complementary ingredients like fresh herbs or berries.

Note:

- Make sure to correctly identify staghorn sumac and avoid any toxic plants. If you're not confident in your plant identification skills, it's best to ask someone experienced or skip this step.
- It's a good idea to start with a smaller batch if you're trying this recipe for the first time.

Stay hydrated and savor the flavors of nature with your homemade Staghorn Sumac Sun-Lemonade!