

STRAWBERRY-BALSAMIC SHRUB (AND BLUEBERRY VARIATION)



Last year the local blueberry patches had an amazing year, and I picked more berries than even I knew what to do with. To use up some of them, I learned about a very old method of making a drink called a shrub — you mix fruit with vinegar to make concentrated syrup, which you then mix with water, club soda or in a cocktail for a delightfully tart and refreshing drink.

Recently a friend introduced me to this combo of strawberries and balsamic vinegar and I just can't get enough of it. Once you try this, you will be all over the internet looking for other combinations. Cherries, which are not berries but rather a stone fruit related to peaches, are also excellent with the balsamic vinegar.

(To further explore the balsamic vinegar/berry taste combo, look online for Barbara Kingsolver's recipe for Basil Blackberry Crumble. For an easy summer cobbler-type dish it cannot be beat and you can mix and match all kinds of fruit in it.)

- 1 cup strawberries (or 1 cup blueberries for the variation)
- 1 cup sugar ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar for blueberry variation)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup apple cider vinegar (1 cup for blueberry variation)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup balsamic vinegar (2-inch piece of fresh ginger, coarsely grated, for blueberry variation)

Remove the stems from the strawberries and cut them in quarters.

Combine the strawberries and sugar, and mash them together with a potato masher to release some of the juice.

For Blueberry-Ginger version, combine berries and sugar in a glass jar, and gently mash on the berries to break them up. Add the ginger.

Store the mixture(s) in the fridge overnight. Add the vinegar(s), and give a stir. Leave the mixture(s) in sealed jar(s) in the fridge for a few days.

Strain out the fruit and store the syrup in a glass jar or bottle. Try not to let a metal lid come in contact with the vinegar, as it may rust.

Combine the shrub syrup with soda water (vodka is nice too) to taste. Serve over ice. I use about 3 tablespoons of syrup to 12 ounces of soda but play with it and see what you like.

SOURCE: <http://www.ediblecommunities.com/louisville/june-july-2014/strawberry-balsamic-shrub-and-blueberry-variation.htm>