

Mulled Wine Syrup

Gift Idea:

Pair the syrup with a special bottle of wine or a collection of spices—whole cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, star anise and peppercorns.

Kathy's Note:

This recipe comes from my friend Joe Yonan, food and travel editor of the Washington Post. The recipe comes from his book, *Serve Yourself: Nightly Adventures in Cooking for One* (Ten Speed Press, 2011).

This is the perfect use of leftover wine — or even partial bottles of multiple wines left over from a holiday party — and it makes a striking, ruby-colored gift. It's delicious on ice cream, yogurt, or even duck, venison or other game. Make a parfait by drizzling it in between layers of Greek yogurt, blood orange slices, and almonds. My favorite spice combination is this one, but you can feel free to use whatever spices strike your fancy — whole cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, and/or allspice are all contenders.

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups red wine of any variety

1/2 cup sugar

2 whole star anise

1 teaspoon pink peppercorns

1 vanilla bean, split

Combine the wine, sugar, star anise, and peppercorns in a wide pot or skillet over medium-high heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Scrape the seeds from the vanilla bean into the mixture, and add the pods.

Bring to a boil, then decrease the heat to medium; cook until the liquid becomes syrup and has reduced by about two-thirds, about 10 minutes or longer, depending on the size of your pot.

Use a fine-mesh strainer to strain the syrup into a small container; discard the spices and let cool. Pour into a decorative bottle, and refrigerate. (Tell the recipient that the syrup is best refrigerated for long-term storage, but can be kept at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.)

Variation: Use white wine instead of red, and use 1 vanilla bean and five 1/4-inch slices of fresh ginger instead of the other spices.

Makes: 1/2 cup.