



One Pot of Elderberries: A Cold Season Shelf

One pot of elderberries, cooked the right way, becomes three things for the shelf: a syrup for the grown ups, gummies the kids will actually take, and an old fashioned oxymel. The same pot also gives you sore throat pops and a warm mug for the days you just feel lousy.

The method, in one breath.

Simmer the berries with warm spices until the pot is reduced by half. Strain and press. Then divide the base: some becomes syrup with raw honey, some becomes gummies set with pectin, and some becomes an oxymel with vinegar and honey. Label everything and get it on the shelf before someone starts sniffing.

Before you start: where the line is.

Elderberries are always fully cooked. Raw berries, stems, leaves and green berries can make you sick.

No honey for babies under one year old. The pops on page 4 use maple syrup for that reason.

A few small studies suggest elderberry may help shorten a cold or flu. It is not a cure. In my house it is comfort that works alongside the care our family already trusts.

If you are pregnant or nursing, have an autoimmune condition, or take medication that affects your immune system, ask your doctor before using elderberry.

A high fever, trouble breathing, or something that is not getting better after a week is a call to the doctor.

What one pot makes

	Made with	Where it lives	Keeps
Elderberry syrup	Base + raw honey	Fridge	About 2 months
Elderberry gummies	Base + pectin + sugar	Airtight tin, counter	2 to 3 weeks
Elderberry oxymel	Base + vinegar + honey	Fridge	About 2 months
Sore throat pops	Base + juice + maple	Freezer	About 3 months
The warmer	Syrup + hot cider	Made by the mug	Drink it warm





The Base: Elderberry Decoction

Makes about 4 cups (950 ml). Enough for the syrup, the gummies, the oxymel and the pops.

Ingredient	American	Metric
Dried elderberries	2 cups	about 280 g
or fresh or frozen elderberries, stems off	4 cups	about 600 g
Water	8 cups	1.9 L
Cinnamon sticks	2	2
Fresh ginger, sliced	a 3 inch piece	about 30 g
Whole cloves	1 tsp	about 2 g
Dried rose hips (optional)	2 Tbsp	about 15 g

- 1 If your berries are fresh, freeze them on the stem first. Frozen berries pop off with a fork in a fraction of the time. Every stem, leaf and green berry goes in the compost, not the pot.
- 2 Put everything in a heavy stainless pot. Elderberry stains, and acid reacts with aluminum, so stainless or enamel is the one to use.
- 3 Bring it to a boil, then turn it down and simmer uncovered for 45 minutes to an hour, until the liquid is reduced by about half.
- 4 Mash the berries against the side of the pot to get everything out of them.
- 5 Strain through a fine mesh strainer lined with cheesecloth or a nut milk bag. Once it is cool enough to handle, squeeze the cloth hard. The last of the liquid is the darkest and best.
- 6 Measure it out: 1 cup for syrup, 1 1/4 cups for gummies, 1/2 cup for oxymel, and the rest for pops.

Why it works. Simmering it down by half pulls everything out of the berries and concentrates it, so the syrup tastes like elderberry and not like purple water. It is also what makes the berries safe: they need a full, real cook, not a quick warm-up.

Elderberry Syrup

Makes about 2 cups.

Ingredient	American	Metric
Elderberry base	1 cup	240 ml
Raw honey	1 cup	about 340 g

- 1 Let the base cool until a thermometer reads under 110°F (43°C). Hot liquid cooks raw honey, and then you have paid for raw honey and lost what makes it raw.
- 2 Stir in the honey until it disappears. Funnel into a clean bottle, label it and refrigerate. A spoonful straight, or stirred into tea on the days you feel run down. Baby under one in the house? Use maple syrup instead.





Elderberry Gummies (the pâte de fruit way)

Makes one 9x5 loaf pan, about 40 to 50 squares. Weigh these. Candy is the one place a scale earns its keep.

Ingredient	American	Metric
Elderberry base, warmed	1 1/4 cups	300 g
Slow set high methoxyl pectin	about 2 3/4 tsp	8 g
Granulated sugar, mixed with the pectin	2 1/2 Tbsp	30 g
Granulated sugar	1 1/2 cups	300 g
Light corn syrup	3 Tbsp	60 g
Citric acid, dissolved in 1 tsp water	1 tsp	about 5 g
or fresh lemon juice	1 Tbsp	15 ml
Sugar for rolling	about 1/2 cup	about 100 g

- 1 Line a 9x5 loaf pan with parchment, leaving the paper hanging over two sides as handles. Do this first. Once the acid goes in, you have about a minute.
- 2 Whisk the pectin into the 30 g of sugar. Pectin clumps the second it touches liquid on its own, and the sugar keeps the grains apart.
- 3 Warm the base in a small heavy saucepan. Rain in the pectin sugar while whisking, then bring it to a boil.
- 4 Add the 300 g of sugar and the corn syrup a little at a time, letting it come back to a boil between additions.
- 5 Cook, stirring, until a candy thermometer reads 223 to 225°F (106 to 107°C).
- 6 Off the heat, stir in the citric acid and pour into the pan right away.
- 7 Leave it at room temperature until set, several hours or overnight. Do not refrigerate it.
- 8 Lift the slab out by the parchment. Cut into squares with an oiled knife or bench scraper and roll each one in sugar.

Why it works

The temperature. Under it, the gummies stay sticky. Over it, they turn hard and chewy. That narrow window is the whole trick.

The acid. This kind of pectin only sets when the mix is acidic, and elderberry on its own is not acidic enough. Skip the acid and you have syrup in a pan.

The corn syrup. It keeps the sugar from crystallizing, so the gummies stay smooth instead of grainy.

Why not molds? This pectin sets too fast to fill dozens of little cavities. One pour into a pan, then cut. If you want shapes, use a small cutter on the set slab.

Looking for the pectin? Search for "slow set high methoxyl pectin." Boxed jam pectin from the grocery store is a different product and will not set these the same way.





Elderberry Oxymel

Makes about 1 1/2 cups. Oxy means sour, mel means honey. People have been making these for a very long time.

Ingredient	American	Metric
Elderberry base	1/2 cup	120 ml
Raw apple cider vinegar	1/2 cup	120 ml
Raw honey, to taste	1/2 to 3/4 cup	170 to 255 g

- 1 Pour everything into a jar, cap it and shake until the honey dissolves.
- 2 Taste it. Add more honey if it is too sharp for you. It should be bright, tangy and sweet.
- 3 Label it and refrigerate. The base thins the vinegar, so this one lives in the fridge.

How we use it: a spoonful in hot water when your throat is scratchy, a splash in sparkling water, or whisked into a salad dressing.

Sore Throat Pops

Honey free, so they are safe for the little ones. Makes 4 to 6, depending on your molds.

Ingredient	American	Metric
Elderberry base	1/2 cup	120 ml
Apple juice or water	1 cup	240 ml
Fresh lemon juice	2 Tbsp	30 ml
Maple syrup	2 to 3 Tbsp	30 to 45 ml

- 1 Stir everything together, pour into popsicle molds and freeze until solid, at least 4 hours.

The Under the Weather Warmer

Ingredient	American	Metric
Hot apple cider	1 cup	240 ml
Elderberry syrup	1 to 2 Tbsp	15 to 30 ml
Fresh ginger	1 thin slice	

Stir the syrup into the warm (not boiling) cider, drop in the ginger, and go sit under a blanket.





Next Step: Start Your Fire Cider Jar

It steeps for four weeks, so start it now and it is ready right when cold season settles in. Makes about 1 quart.

Ingredient	American	Metric
Fresh horseradish, grated (optional)	1/2 cup	about 60 g
or plain prepared horseradish (optional)	1/4 cup	about 60 g
Garlic, chopped	1 head	1 head
Onion, chopped	1 medium	about 150 g
Fresh ginger, grated	1/4 cup	about 30 g
Hot peppers, sliced	1 to 2	1 to 2
Orange and lemon, sliced	1 each	1 each
Raw apple cider vinegar	3 to 4 cups, to cover	about 750 ml to 1 L
Raw honey, added at the end	1/4 to 1/2 cup	85 to 170 g

- 1 Pack everything except the honey into a clean quart jar and pour in vinegar until it is covered.
- 2 Put a square of parchment under the lid. Vinegar eats metal lids.
- 3 Set it somewhere cool and dark for four weeks. Give it a shake every day or two.
- 4 Strain, press, stir in honey to taste, and bottle it.

No horseradish? Leave it out and add an extra thumb of ginger and a second pepper. Plenty of fire cider is made without it.

Label It and Store It

	Keep it	How long	Notes
Syrup	Fridge	About 2 months	Shake before using
Gummies	Airtight tin, counter	2 to 3 weeks	Re-roll in sugar if they turn tacky
Oxymel	Fridge	About 2 months	The base thins the vinegar
Pops	Freezer	About 3 months	Honey free
Fire cider	Cool, dark cupboard or fridge	Several months	Once strained and sweetened

Every jar gets a label: what it is, what is in it, the date you made it, and fridge or shelf. The labels on the next page are made to fit a pint jar.





Jar Labels

Print on plain paper or sticker paper, cut along the lines, and fill in by hand.

HOMESTEAD WIFE LIFE Elderberry Syrup Made on: _____ Keep in: _____ Use by: _____	HOMESTEAD WIFE LIFE Elderberry Gummies Made on: _____ Keep in: _____ Use by: _____
HOMESTEAD WIFE LIFE Elderberry Oxymel Made on: _____ Keep in: _____ Use by: _____	HOMESTEAD WIFE LIFE Fire Cider Made on: _____ Keep in: _____ Use by: _____
HOMESTEAD WIFE LIFE Sore Throat Pops Made on: _____ Keep in: _____ Use by: _____	HOMESTEAD WIFE LIFE Elderberry Base Made on: _____ Keep in: _____ Use by: _____

