

Sima (Finnish Lemonade)



Citrus fruits are high in Vitamin C. There are a few ways that you can preserve or ferment your excess lemons and other citrus fruit. We'd like to introduce you to a refreshing, fermented drink that originates from Finland, called Sima. It is predominantly drunk on Vappu, the Finnish May Day. Sima is flavoured with lemon and is drunk before all the sugar has been consumed by the yeast cells and turned into alcohol. It should be fresh and fruity tasting, with a light sparkle. It is a pretty quick ferment (up to a week) as the goal is carbonation, not alcohol. In Finland this fizzy lemon drink is consumed by everyone, including young children.

This beverage, which has its origin somewhere in the mead family of drinks and which was, in the past, made from honey, is today most often made from white and/or brown sugar and water. Our recipe can be found below.

You will note the inclusion of a few raisins in most recipes. The raisins provide nutrients for the yeast but they also have another purpose; they will ferment alongside the brew itself and puff up. When they float up to the surface, the Sima is ready to drink.

With many backyards having a lemon tree, it would be a pity to see them go to waste, so if you order your wine or champagne yeast now you too could be drinking Sima on 1st May. Of course if you don't have lemons I'm sure limes would be equally delicious.

Ingredients:

1 litre boiling water
1/2 cup honey (or brown sugar)
Juice and grated zest of 1 lemon (or a thinly sliced whole lemon)
8 raisins
1 tiny pinch yeast (ideally wine or champagne yeast, but bread yeast will do)

Instructions:

Place the sugar/honey and lemon slices (or juice and zest) into a non-reactive (i.e. non-metallic) container or glass jug or jar. Pour near boiling water over the top. Stir to dissolve the sugar or honey. Take precautions not to crack your glass jar/jug with the boiling water (i.e. the water should not be boiling and jar should not be placed on cold surface - unless it is Pyrex the glass could shatter due to thermal shock).

Allow the mixture to cool to a 'warm' temperature, add a pinch of yeast and stir. Let the mixture stand, partially covered, in a warm spot 8 to 10 hours - or overnight, until tiny bubbles appear around the edges of the container.

Strain the liquid into two 1-quart glass jars or flip top bottles, discarding the lemon slices. Place 4 raisins in each jar. Close tightly with lids and let stand at room temperature until the raisins have swelled and risen to the top. This should take

anywhere from 8 hours to 2 days, depending on the temperature in your house (this is how you know the Sima has fermented enough).

SAFETY NOTE: Be sure to open the bottles at least once a day to release the pressure so the bottles don't burst.

Once the raisins float, your Sima is ready to be refrigerated. Seal the lids tightly and store in the refrigerator.

Allow the drink to age in the refrigerator sealed for 2-4 days to accumulate carbonation.

Open it when you're ready to consume and be sure to drink within 7 days for best results. Will keep up to one month.