

Herbal Agua Fresca

Makes 2 gallons, enough for several thirsty people.

Agua fresca is Spanish for “fresh water.” Not as sweet as bottled soda or lemon/lime ades, agua frescas are traditionally made with fresh fruit juices and served from large glass jars. This version features the addition of fresh herbs. Of course, you can experiment with different fruits and flavors. Cucumber and melon is a classic refreshing combination.

Ingredients:

3/4 - 1 cup	simple syrup
1 cup	freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 cup	freshly squeezed lime juice
2	ripe cantaloupes, peeled and seeded
2	ripe mangos, peeled and seeded, optional
1	tart apple, peeled and seeded
1 cup	mixed herbs, such as mint, lemon verbena, lemon balm, tarragon, basil, thyme and/or lavender
1	lemon, sliced, seeds removed
1	lime, sliced, seeds removed
2 2-liter	bottles club soda (can substitute plain water) ice to chill

Method:

- To make simple syru:**, In small saucepan combine 2 cups sugar and 1 cup water. Heat, stirring constantly, until sugar is completely dissolved. Bring to a boil, then remove from heat and cool. (Extra simple syrup can be stored, covered, in fridge and used to sweeten iced tea or other beverages.)
- To extract juice** from cantaloupe, mangos and apple, cut fruits into small chunks. Blend (or process in food processor) until smooth. Strain pulp through a fine mesh catching juices in a separate bow. You need about 4 cups of juice. Discard pulp soilids. (If you have an electric juicer, simply process these fruits following the manufacturer’s instructions.)
- In a large glass jar, combine 3/4 cup simple syrup, fruit juices, herbs, and lemon and lime slices. Mix with a wooden spoon, bruising herbs. The mixture can be covered and chilled at this point.
- When ready to serve, pour club soda or water into glass jar with fruit juice mixture. Add ice. Stir to combine. Taste and, if desired, add more simple syrup.
- To serve, ladle agua fresca into glasses. Garnish with fresh herb sprigs or fruit slices, if desired.