

Recipe: Hot Mulled Cider

A descendant of the spiced cider punch called wassail, recreate this historic drink at home.

What you will need:

- 2 quarts (1/2 gallon) of fresh, unfiltered apple cider*
- 3 cinnamon sticks
- 1 teaspoon whole allspice berries
- 1 teaspoon whole cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon of ground nutmeg
- 1 orange
- 2 tablespoons of brown sugar (optional)
- Cheesecloth and kitchen twine

**For best results, use fresh apple cider that contains no added sugar or spices, not clear apple juice, sparkling cider, or hard cider.*



Make the Hot Mulled Cider

1. Place all the spices on a double-layer of cheesecloth and fold up the edges to make a little sack. Tie the spice sack with kitchen twine. This will prevent having to strain the spices from the mulled cider mixture later.
2. Cut several thin slices from the orange.
3. Pour the cider, along with the spice sack and orange slices, into a large saucepan or pot on the stove and place on medium-high heat.
4. Bring the contents to a boil, then cover the pot and simmer the cider mixture on low heat for 20 to 30 minutes to blend the flavors.
6. Strain any residue from the spice mixture before serving.
7. Leftover cider, once it is cooled, can be stored in the refrigerator for up to three days.



The history of hot mulled cider:

Hot mulled cider is a descendant of the spiced cider punch called wassail. In its earliest form, wassail was a warm ale or mead mulled with apples and spices. It was enjoyed during Yuletide festivities to show gratitude for a bountiful apple harvest and blessings for the trees in the following year. The name comes from the Old English greeting was *hál* (“be you hale” or “to your health”), which not only toasted the well-being of the trees but the participants in the ceremony.

While the origins of this ritual go back to ancient Rome, it was popularized in medieval England and Scandinavia for Christmas Eve and Twelfth Night celebrations and eventually passed on to America. The tradition of wassailing included serving the hot mulled beverage in a large bowl that was passed around for communal drinking. By the 19th century, going from door to door singing and partaking of the wassail evolved into the Victorian practice of caroling. So as you enjoy a tasty cup of hot mulled cider, think of how this drink reflects the traditions of toasting to good health, and sharing the blessings of the holiday season!



*Old Christmas, Illustrated London News
December 24, 1842*

Here we come a-wassailing
Among the leaves so green;
Here we come a-wand'ring
So fair to be seen.
Love and joy come to you,
And to you your wassail too;
And God bless you and send you
A happy New Year.

Traditional English Christmas carol

