

Honeysuckle Syrup

HONEYSUCKLE, ALSO KNOWN AS WOODBINE (*LONICERA JAPONICA*), SPORTS sweetly scented flowers that aren't just pretty: they're also powerfully antiviral and antibacterial. Used in China for centuries to help fight colds and flu, the flowers can soothe an inflamed sore throat and cool down an overheated body on a scorching summer day. Try adding a splash of this delicately flavored syrup to lemonade, fizzy water, Champagne, or hot tea, or drizzle it on fresh berries. (I recommend using sugar, not honey, in this recipe, because honey can overwhelm honeysuckle's flavor. If you do want to try it, though, choose a mild varietal, such as a light clover honey or your local wildflower honey.)

1 cup (20 g) fresh honeysuckle flowers or ½ cup (10 g) dried

1¼ cups (295 ml) water

About 1 cup (200 g) sugar

Gently shake the honeysuckle flowers to remove any dirt or insects. Separate the flowers from the stems and discard any leaves and berries, which can be poisonous in large amounts. Place the flowers in a heat-proof ceramic or glass container. Bring the water to a boil. Pour it over the flowers and cover the container. Let the mixture stand at room temperature for 12 to 24 hours. Strain through a fine-mesh strainer; discard the solids.

Measure the liquid; you should have about 1 cup (235 ml). Combine the liquid and an equal volume of sugar (about 1 cup, or 200 g) in a saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium-low heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Simmer for another minute. Remove from the heat and let cool. Store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

YIELD: ABOUT 1 CUP (235 ML)

Variation: This recipe also works well with fresh nasturtium flowers (*Tropaeolum majus*): the result is a golden, peppery syrup.

Honeysuckle Blackberry Cocktail

IF YOU'RE USING HONEYSUCKLE SYRUP IN COCKTAILS, YOU WANT TO highlight its delicate floral flavor, not overpower it. That's why mixing it with vodka works so well: it's a clean, neutral spirit. Honeysuckle flowers typically bloom between spring and summer, so I like to enhance this drink with fresh, seasonal ingredients, like succulent blackberries. Muddle a few berries in your cocktail shaker and they'll infuse the drink with sweet, tart flavors, plus a shot of color (and maybe a few antioxidants to boot). *Voilà*: an easy, refreshing drink that's perfect for brunches, garden parties, or summery afternoon gatherings.

4 blackberries

$\frac{3}{4}$ ounce (23 ml) Honeysuckle Syrup (page 74)

$\frac{3}{4}$ ounce (23 ml) freshly squeezed lemon juice

2 ounces (60 ml) vodka

Ice cubes

Honeysuckle flowers or mint sprig, for garnish

Muddle the blackberries with the Honeysuckle Syrup and lemon juice in the bottom of a cocktail shaker. Add the vodka and ice and shake well. Pour into a cocktail glass without straining. Garnish with the honeysuckle flowers.

YIELD: 1 SERVING