

Start with 3 Vinegars

The word vinegar comes from the French “vin aigre,” or sour wine. Vinegar is a combination of acetic acid and water made by a two-step fermentation process. First, yeast feed on the sugar or starch of any liquid from a plant food such as fruits, whole grains, potatoes, or rice. This liquid ferments into alcohol. The alcohol is then exposed to oxygen and the acetic acid bacteria *Acetobacter* to ferment again over weeks or months, forming vinegar.

The history of vinegar is very ancient. Repeatedly mentioned in the Bible, traces of it have been found in a vase from pre-pharaonic Egypt, some ten thousand years old, testifying that the Egyptians, as well as the Babylonians and the Persians, knew vinegar and used it to preserve food. After all, it was only thanks to vinegar that food could be transported over long distances. But vinegar was also mixed with water to make a refreshing drink, and the farmers and travellers of antiquity made extensive use of it.

The most widespread beverage in ancient Greece was called oxycrat, the drink of the people. It was a mixture of water, vinegar and honey, and was stored in special jars (oxydes).

Although acetic acid is responsible for the tart and pungent flavors and odors we recognize, vinegar also contains trace vitamins, mineral salts, amino acids, and polyphenolic compounds.



White Vinegar - White vinegar is the most common type of vinegar used in Canada. It offers a sharp taste and harsh smell, because white vinegar is distilled from grain, which results in a crisp and clear product. The many possible culinary applications for white vinegar make it an easy sell as a kitchen staple.

While white vinegar may be too pungent for most recipes, it's a common pickling agent and can be used in zesty barbecue sauces, salad dressings, and ketchup. When used in a recipe, its strong flavor offers an ideal balance for exceptionally sweet ingredients.

Apple Cider Vinegar - One of the most common types of vinegar, apple cider vinegar is used to both flavor and preserve food. It's made by adding bacteria and yeast to the liquid of crushed and strained apples to create a fermentation process. Sugar is then added to the mixture, making the liquid alcoholic. It is this alcoholic juice that is fermented once more and converted into vinegar.

Apple cider vinegar has a golden hue and can be used to add a tart and subtle fruity flavor to marinades, salad dressings, tea, coleslaw, and chutneys.

Rice Vinegar - Rice vinegar is made from fermented rice. The sugars in rice are converted to alcohol (rice wine) and then, through a bacteria-laden second fermentation process, into the acid we know as vinegar. The result is typically far less acidic and milder than pure distilled white vinegar or those made from grape-based wine or malt, making it a subtle addition to salad dressings, pickles, marinades, or splashed lightly over sautéed vegetables.

Some of the most popular uses for vinegar are:

Pickles: When paired with pickling spices and water, white vinegar makes a great base for crafting a wide array of quick pickles, including vegetables, fruits and eggs.

Baking: vinegar can be used alongside baking soda as a leavening agent for baked goods. The acidic vinegar reacts with the alkaline baking soda and releases carbon dioxide gas that helps baked goods rise.

Cheesemaking: Some cheeses can be crafted from milk and vinegar. When added to milk, acidic vinegar alters the milk proteins, allowing the curds and whey to separate. The result is a mild, soft cheese.

Salads: A splash of vinegar can brighten up the flavor of some types of traditional and composed salads. Always start with a small amount and conduct a taste test before adding more — it's easy to go overboard and ruin the dish!

Marinades and sauces: vinegar gives an extra zing of flavor to marinades and sauces. In marinades, the acid in the vinegar also functions as a tenderizing agent for meats, seafood and vegetables.

