How to make ginger beer

We’re big fans of Jane-Anne Hobbs Rayner and her awesome blog, Scrumptious. She leaves no stone unturned when it comes to testing her recipes so we’re stoked that she’s given us her fool-proof ginger beer recipe to inspire your Eat For The Earth refreshment. (Registered your Eat For The Earth lunch yet? What are you waiting for?).

A delicious taste of childhood: lemony, gingery and fizzy. It’s so refreshing and so easy to make that I have now resolved to make a batch every two days (we’ll see how long that lasts). It’s the taste of dusty summer days, burbling swimming pools, country fêtes and beaming grannies.

My mom used to make this often when I was a child: I have wonderful memories of hearing a ka-pow! as a glass bottle exploded (they were matured on the veranda for this reason) and a lovely yeasty, gingery perfume came drifting through the house.

This is my mom’s recipe, which I have altered and tweaked over several years until I’ve got the proportions to my liking. (You can tinker freely with the amount of sugar, lemon juice and ginger, according to your taste.)
It’s a great drink for kids (although it’s called ‘beer’, it’s not alcoholic because it’s not fermented for long enough). It’s packed with Vitamin C (from the lemons and ginger), Vitamin B (from the yeast). Also excellent for nausea and general queasiness.

It’s really a doddlle to make, but I have given quite detailed instructions so that your batch turns out perfectly every time.

**Ingredients (makes 5 litres):**
- Grated rind of 2 lemons
- 2 thumb-sized pieces of fresh ginger
- 250ml (1 cup) freshly squeezed lemon juice (see note 2, below)
- 3 grape-sized knobs of whole dried ginger (optional, see note 3)
- 5 or 6 raisins
- 750ml (3 cups) white sugar (if you prefer a dry beer, use 650ml)
- 5 litres water
- A 10-gram sachet of instant (dried) yeast

**Method:**
1. Using the fine teeth of a cheese grater, grate the lemon rind directly into a large, very clean plastic bucket (or a plastic bowl capable of holding 5 litres of water; see note 1, below). Be sure not to grate in any any bits of white pith, which will make the beer bitter.
2. Now grate in the fresh ginger, using the coarse teeth of the grater. Add the freshly squeezed lemon juice, the whole dried ginger (optional), the raisins, and the sugar.
3. Pour 1 litre of hot water into the bucket and stir well for about 3 minutes, or until the sugar has completely dissolved. Leave to cool for 5 minutes. Now pour another 4 litres of warm water into the bucket, keeping a finger in the bucket to monitor the temperature of the water. The mixture should be warm – but not so warm that your finger thinks it’s having a nice warm bath.
4. Sprinkle the dried yeast over the top of the water and leave for five minutes, or until it’s dissolved. Now give the bucket of liquid a good stir with a wooden spoon.
5. Cover the bucket with cling film and put it in a warmish place (not in direct sunlight). Leave for about 4-5 hours, stirring once or twice. During this time, you’ll see the raisins begin to spin in the water and the mixture will burble softly. When the raisins float to the top, the ginger beer is ready to bottle.
6. Scoop out the floating ginger pieces and lemon rind with a sieve and discard. Now strain the ginger beer, through a sieve, into a large jug with a pouring spout (you may have to do this in batches, if your jug is small). Put a towel or some newspaper on the counter while you do this, because there will be spillage.
7. Decant the strained ginger beer into clean, rinsed plastic bottles (see note 3, below), filling each bottle to about 7 centimetres from the top. Put a single raisin (taken from the raisins you added earlier) in each bottle, screw on the lids tightly, and set the bottles on a counter-top, at room temperature. They shouldn’t be in a warm place, or in direct sunlight.
8. Leave overnight (or for at least 8 hours). During this time, the mixture will develop a lovely fizz. (See note 4, below).
9. Now open each bottle very carefully: unscrew the lid gingerly (excuse the pun), in small increments, so that the gas escapes in little puffs. The liquid inside should fizz satisfyingly. When you’ve released the excess gas, screw on the lids tightly again, and put the bottles in the
fridge. (The cold will all but stop the fermentation process). Keeps well in the fridge for up to a week.

Leave to chill completely. Serve with a slice of lemon and plenty of ice. Or try it with a stiff slug of gin.

**Note 1** A 6-litre plastic bucket with pinched rim/pouring nozzle and a tight-fitting lid is perfect. You can use an ordinary bucket, or a very big bowl, but there will be a bit of splashing. **Note 2** Measure the amount of lemon juice exactly. It takes about six lemons, depending on juiciness, to make a cup of lemon juice. If you don’t feel like squeezing lemons, ask your green grocer to squeeze out a litre of fresh lemon juice on his orange-squeezing machine. You can use the rest to make lemonade or use in dressings. If you’d like a tarter ginger beer, add a teaspoon of tartaric acid along with the lemon juice. **Note 3** Dried whole ginger was used in my mom’s recipe because fresh ginger wasn’t available in the Sixties. It’s not essential, but it does add a special something to the taste of the ginger beer. You can still buy it in those little orange boxes in the supermarkets. If you can’t find it, try adding two teaspoons of powdered ginger. **Note 4** Sturdy plastic 1- or 2-litre fruit-juice bottles (supermarket fruit-juice bottles) are perfect. One- and 2-litre cool-drink and mineral-water bottles also work well, but be very careful when you open them to release the gas, because the narrow necks of the bottles almost always result in a fizzy volcano. Don’t use glass bottles (they might explode) or plastic milk bottles (the lids aren’t air-tight). **Note 5** If the ginger beer is flat and has no bubble, you will need to discard the batch and start again. There should be an audible release of gas when you open the bottle. There are two main reasons why a batch goes flat: 1. The yeast was stale, and 2. The water was either too hot, or too cold, for the yeast to thrive.

And there you have it. Old-fashioned ginger beer to give your **Eat For The Earth** lunch much cheer.

Many thanks, [Jane-Anne](mailto:).