

Foraging for Elderflower to make Elderflower Cordial

Recommended for ages 11 – 16+years old

Outdoor lesson foraging for elderflower for our students increases their social and emotional wellbeing. The elderflower is brought back to the catering classroom for preparation, producing elderflower cordial which is served diluted with water and over ice for student and staff in hot summer days.

To forage for elderflower you will need:

- Accessible outdoor environment where elderflower grows
- Secateurs/ Scissors
- Plastic container/ bag for harvested flowers
- Dry weather preferably so the flowers are dry when picked

Step by step instructions for collecting Elderflower:

Before venturing into any form of foraging, please check these guidelines of how to do it safely and responsibly:

[Foraging Guidelines - Woodland Trust](#)

Elderflowers come from the elder tree (*Sambucus nigra*) that generally grows as a shrub or small tree.

It's abundant throughout the UK and mainland Europe in woods and along roadside hedgerows. From late May and June you'll see masses of tiny white flowers hanging in sprays which develop into purple elderberries later in the summer.

Flowers are flat-topped clusters of tiny, creamy-white flowers. To many people the fragrance is sweet and summery and it attracts masses of insects.

Leaves- compound and pinnate (feather-shaped) with five or seven leaflets. Leaflets are arranged opposite to each other with one single leaflet at the tip. The edge of each leaflet is toothed and there may be small hairs on the underside. In winter, leaf buds are purplish and spiky-scaled.

The flowers and berries are the only edible part of the plant. They are mildly toxic and have an unpleasant taste when raw. Cooking destroys the toxic chemicals. (Please note- this lesson plan is for use of elder flowers only and not elder berries!).

The stem of the flower can often be tough, therefore the use of scissors or secateurs is recommended to cut them off and minimise damage to the rest of the plant.

Elderflowers are ready around late May to mid-June. They're best picked when the buds are freshly open on a warm, dry, sunny day, well away from traffic fumes. Give them a shake to remove any insects and rinse briefly in cold water before using.

Elderflowers are best used straight after picking when they are most fragrant. If you are unable to prepare them immediately, keep them refrigerated and use as soon as possible.

Recipe for Elderflower Cordial

This recipe makes about 1.8l of cordial.

Ingredients:

- 3 unwaxed lemons
- Blossoms from 30 elderflower heads (or more if the heads are smaller)
- 1.3 litres of water
- 2kg granulated sugar
- 75g Citric acid (from the chemist)

Other equipment:

- 2 large saucepans, one with a lid
- Fine strainer and a sterilised muslin cloth
- Washed and sterilised bottles with secure tops
- Ladle

Method:

- Place the rinsed elderflowers into a large saucepan
- Wash lemons well, zest the skin and then squeeze the lemon juice
- Place the zest, lemon juice and all the lemon skins in with the flowers
- Place the water into another saucepan and bring to boil
- Turn the heat off and add the sugar, stirring until dissolved.
- Then add the citric acid and stir until dissolved
- Pour the syrup over the flowers and lemons
- Cover it and leave to infuse for 24 hours, stirring occasionally

- Wash the bottles well in soapy water using a bottle brush or in a dishwasher
- Place washed bottles in cold oven and heat on low heat (about 120C) for about 20 min
- Place the muslin cloth over the strainer and strain the cordial into a jug. Then, using a funnel, pour the strained cordial into sterilised bottles and secure with tops.
- The cordial should keep for a few months in sealed bottles. Once opened, keep refrigerated.

Serve diluted with water and over ice for extra cold, delicious cordial for hot summer days. Cheers!