



WITH ADEENA SUSSMAN AND BENNY BRIGA



Watermelon Gazoz

- Fresh lemon peel
- Shiso leaves
- Edible flowers
- Seltzer
- Ice
- Fresh watermelon
- Watermelon syrup (recipe below)
- Fermented fig and syrup (see recipe on next page)
- Rehydrated chia seeds (see Note below)

Note: Sycamore figs, a variety mentioned in the Old Testament, grow freely on trees all over Tel Aviv in late spring. Most people have no idea that the small, delicious, fragrant fruit is edible, so I take advantage of its under-the-radar status, picking and preserving them every year. Add a slice of regular fig as a replacement.

Note: For one gazoz, cover 1 teaspoon chia seeds with 2 tablespoons cold water; rehydrate for 5 minutes, drain and discard the water, and add the seeds to the glass.

WATERMELON SYRUP

Makes 1 1/2 cups (360 ml)

2.2 pounds (1 kg) ripe watermelon flesh, preferably seedless
1/2 cup (100 g) sugar
Puree the watermelon in a blender or food processor until smooth, then strain the puree through a fine-mesh strainer into a bowl; discard the pulp and seeds (or discard the seeds and use the pulp in a smoothie). Add the sugar and whisk until it has dissolved. Transfer to an airtight bottle or jar and store in the refrigerator until ready to use. It will keep for up to 2 weeks.

FLAVORED SIMPLE SYRUPS

These delicious, versatile syrups are no more complicated than a 1:1 Simple Syrup recipe, but they're infused with a variety of special ingredients. Unlike fermented spices, here the tables are turned: the simple syrup is the star. I provide three actual recipes, but the possibilities are endless and only limited by the reaches of your imagination. These syrups are meant to add a hint of flavor to a gazoz and would be equally good mixed into a cocktail, stirred into a cup of hot tea, or drizzled lightly over fresh fruit or cake.

1:1 SIMPLE SYRUP

Wherever straightforward simple syrup is called for, this is the recipe to use. I follow a very basic 1:1 ratio of sugar to water. Use it to ferment spices and mix it with fruit and vegetable juices. It plays well with anything you mix it with, is neither treacly nor watery, and can be made in less than 5 minutes. Stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator, simple syrup keeps indefinitely.

Makes 2 cups (480 ml)

- 1 1/2 cups (300 g) sugar
- 1 1/2 cups (320 ml) water

Combine the sugar and water in a small saucepan and bring to a low boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Boil just until the sugar has dissolved, then reduce the heat to very low and simmer for 1 to 2 minutes. Let cool completely, then transfer to an airtight container and store in the refrigerator until ready to use.

Continues



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Watermelon Gazoz - CONTINUED

SWEET FERMENTED FRUIT IN SYRUP

Start the fermentation process with clean, unblemished fruit of the highest quality, preferably organic, seasonal, and local. The fruit is the star of the show and should be treated as such, especially because once you're done drinking your gazoz, you will most likely lift the juicy slices of fruit out of the glass and eat them. The general rule for the fruit-to-sugar ratio is 70 percent sugar in relation to the weight of the fruit. Use that as your guide, unless otherwise indicated.

Makes 3 to 4 cups (about 1 KG) fruit with syrup

- 1 heaping tablespoon (20 g) baking soda
- 1¾ pounds (800 g) whole thin-skinned fruit (see Notes)
- Lemon juice (optional)
- 1¼ pounds (560 grams) sugar

1. Wash the fruit: Combine the baking soda with 2 quarts (2 l) cold water in a large bowl; add the fruit, rub it well with a soft cloth to clean it, then transfer it to a separate large bowl filled with ice water; let the fruit stand for 30 minutes to firm up.
2. Prepare the fruit: Slice the fruit into 1-inch (2.5 cm) wedges (remove the cores, stems, and pits); you should end up with about 1½ pounds (700 g) cut fruit. If you're

using fruits that might turn brown (such as apples, pears, quince, etc.), drop them in a bowl filled with a mixture of 90 percent water to 10 percent lemon juice as you slice them.

3. Layer some of the fruit in a roughly 1-quart (1 l) jar with a tight-fitting lid, then sprinkle with sugar. Continue to layer the fruit and sugar until the jar is filled, leaving at least 1½ inches of headroom at the top of the jar.

4. Ferment the fruit: Seal the jar tightly and let it stand on the counter until a syrup has formed and the fruit has softened and slumped slightly, 1 to 3 days, depending on the temperature of your kitchen; the sugar will dissolve more with each passing day. Open the jars daily to release any built-up pressure from fermentation, and also to check the progress of the fruit. This is the critical juncture; once you detect an aroma that is the essence of the fruit with a drop of sourness and acidity—sort of like cider—that is the time to decide if you want to let it ferment longer so it becomes more tart, or refrigerate the jar to slow fermentation. You can also dip a spoon in to taste the syrup, which will give you a good indication of what's going on in the jar.

5. When you are happy with the flavor of the fruit, transfer the jar to the refrigerator. Use the fermented fruit and its syrup within 2 weeks.

Rehydrated Chia Seeds: For one gazoz, cover 1 teaspoon chia seeds with 2 tablespoons cold water; rehydrate for 5 minutes, drain and discard the water, and add the seeds to the glass.