

Swedish Glögg

Makes about 1 gallon

1.5 litre bottle of dry red wine

1.5 litre bottle of American port

1 bottle of brandy or aquavit

10 inches of stick cinnamon

1 Tablespoon cardamom seeds (DO NOT USE POWDER)

2 dozen whole cloves

Peel of one orange

1/2 cup raisins

1 cup blanched almonds

2 cups sugar

Garnish with the peel of another orange

Notes

There is no need to invest in expensive wine or brandy because the spices are going to preempt any innate complexity of a fine wine, but don't use anything too cheap.

Remember, the sum will be no better than the parts. Do not use an aluminum or copper pot since these metals interact chemically with the wine and brandy and impart a metallic taste. Use stainless steel or porcelain.

Cardamom comes in three forms: pods, seeds, and powder. Do not use powder. If you can only find the pods (they look like orange seeds), take about 2 dozen and pop them open to extract the seeds.

Assembly

Pour the red wine and port into a covered stainless steel or porcelain kettle. Add the cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, orange peel, raisins, and almonds. Warm gently, but do not boil. Boiling will burn off the alcohol.

Put the sugar in a pan and soak it with half the bottle of brandy. Warm the sugar and brandy slurry over a low flame. The sugar will melt and bubble until it becomes a clear golden syrup of caramelized sugar. If you wish, you can speed up the process a bit and create quite a show by flaming the brandy. Flaming will create a 2 foot high blue flame, so be sure there is nothing above the stove that can catch on fire. Then, stand back and light the brandy. Turn out the kitchen lights and watch it burn! This caramelization is crucial to developing complexity.

Add the caramelized sugar to the spiced wine mix. Cover and let it mull for an hour. Just before serving, strain to remove the spices, and add brandy to taste (about 1/2 pint). You can serve it immediately, or let it age for a month or two. If you are going to age it, make sure the bottle is filled as high as possible and sealed tight.

To serve glögg, warm it gently over a low flame or in a crockpot, and serve it in a mug. Garnish it with a fresh orange peel, twisted over the mug to release the oils.