

# 1800s American West Non Alcoholic Wassail

## Ingredients

- 1 gallon apple cider
- 2 oranges, one for slicing, one for studding with cloves
- 12–15 whole cloves
- 4 cinnamon sticks
- 1/2 tsp ground ginger
- 1/4 tsp grated nutmeg
- 1/4 cup honey or brown sugar (optional, to taste)
- 1/4 tsp ground cardamom, if available

### *AUTHOR's NOTE:*

*My family enjoys this every Christmas. We add pineapple and cranberry juice left over from our homemade cranberry relish. Leaving it at low heat on the stove makes the entire house smell like Christmas.*

## Instructions

1. **Prepare the fruit and spices.** Insert the whole cloves into one of the oranges, pushing them into the rind. Slice the second orange into rounds. For easier cleanup, place the cinnamon sticks, the clove-studded orange, and any loose cloves into a cheesecloth bag and tie it tightly with kitchen twine.
2. **Combine and heat.** In a large pot or slow cooker, combine the apple cider, sliced orange, and the spice bag. Add the ginger, nutmeg, and honey or brown sugar (if using) and stir to combine.
3. **Simmer to infuse.** Heat the mixture over low to medium heat on the stovetop until it reaches a gentle simmer. Do not let it come to a full rolling boil. If using a slow cooker, cook on low for 4–6 hours.

4. **Serve.** After simmering, remove the spice bag and the clove-studded orange. Ladle the warm wassail into mugs. You can garnish with a fresh orange slice or a cinnamon stick.

## Recipe notes and historical context

- **Juice accessibility:** Fruit juices in the 1800s American West were not as readily available as today. A pioneer family would have relied on preserved items like dried apples, which could be rehydrated to make a spiced cider.
- **Citrus source:** Oranges and lemons were expensive luxury goods during this period. For those on a wagon train or living remotely, citrus may have been unavailable. The recipe could be made with only dried apples and spices.
- **Adaptations for the time:** To make this recipe more authentically "western," you can
  - **Substitute dried apples** for apple cider. Rehydrate the dried apples with water and simmer to create a base for your wassail.
  - **Use dried cranberries or cherries** instead of oranges for a tart flavor, as preserved berries were more common in many areas of the West.
  - **Leave out the sugar** or use less. Sugar was a costly commodity, and natural sweeteners like honey or molasses would have been more common.