

Elderflower champagne

4 litres hot water

700g sugar

Juice and zest of four lemons

2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

About 15 elderflower heads, in full bloom

A pinch of dried yeast (you may not need this)

1. Put the hot water and sugar into a large container (a spotlessly clean bucket is good) and stir until the sugar dissolves, then top up with cold water so you have 6 litres of liquid in total.

2. Add the lemon juice and zest, the vinegar and the flower heads and stir gently. (It is quite easy to gently pull the flowers from the stalks – the less green stalk the better)

3. Cover with clean muslin and leave to ferment in a cool, airy place for a couple of days (You can add a **very** small pinch of yeast now, to ensure fermentation takes place).

4. Leave the mixture to ferment, again covered with muslin, for a further four days. Strain the liquid through a sieve lined with muslin and decant into sterilised screw-top plastic bottles (a good deal of pressure builds up inside the bottle as the fermenting brew produces carbon dioxide, so empty sparkling water bottles or empty carbonated drink bottles are ideal).

5. Tighten the cap and leave to ferment in the bottles for at least a week before serving, chilled. The champagne should keep in the bottles for several months. Store the bottles in a cool, dry place.

I recommend that you check the bottles on a weekly basis. If they are starting to expand, unscrew the cap to reduce the pressure and then tighten again.