

VINAGRE DE PIÑA

PINEAPPLE VINEGAR

While the pineapple is perhaps forever linked in popular culture to Hawaii, in fact it originated in Brazil and Paraguay. Indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica were responsible for its spread through the tropical Americas and into the Caribbean well before the arrival of Europeans, and only in the 1600s did the Spanish introduce it to the South Pacific. Vinegar dates to some 5000 years B.C. in Babylon, and by the time of the Roman Empire early Spaniards of Iberia were using it as a pickling and flavoring agent. As a preservative, vinegar was useful for foods that the Spanish took with them on their long journeys to the Americas. It was not long before they created new vinegar flavors by incorporating New World foods such as pineapple during the fermentation process. *Vinagre de Piña* is a particularly Mexican concoction, and is wonderful used in any recipe that calls for white vinegar.

YIELD: 2 LITERS

☞ STEEP THE PINEAPPLE ☞

- **One large ripe pineapple**, crown removed, skin intact, sliced into thick rounds
- **8 cups (2 liters) cider vinegar**

STEP 1 PLACE PINEAPPLE IN A LARGE, non-reactive container; add vinegar and press down pineapples to submerge completely. Cover; allow to rest in a cool, dark place for one or two weeks. (Taste the vinegar periodically; longer steeping will result in a more flavorful vinegar.)

☞ FINISH THE VINEGAR ☞

- **1 cone piloncillo** (Substitute: 1 cup brown sugar)

STEP 2 TRANSFER PINEAPPLE MIXTURE to a large stock pot. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. As it simmers, use a potato masher to mash pineapples until thoroughly broken up. Add *piloncillo* and return to a boil. Continue boiling for 10 minutes, checking to make certain sugar has dissolved. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly.

STEP 3 IN A MEDIUM STOCK POT, strain mixture through a fine sieve lined with two layers of cheesecloth. Press pineapple to extract as much vinegar as possible.

STEP 4 RETURN TO HEAT; bring to a boil and skim off any foam that appears. Remove from heat and allow to cool completely.

STEP 5 POUR INTO STORAGE BOTTLES or jars and refrigerate. The refrigerated vinegar will keep indefinitely.