

Tzitzibira - Τζιτζιμπίρα (tzitzibira)



A popular Greek soft drink similar to cola, with a unique flavor.

SERVES	PREP	COOK	TOTAL	CUISINE
Makes about 2 litres	20 minutes	10 minutes	1-2 days (mostly fermenting)	Greek

Ingredients

- 50 g (1¾ oz) fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated
- 2 unwaxed lemons, zest and juice
- 200 g (7 oz) caster sugar
- 2 litres (3½ pints) water
- ¼ tsp active dried yeast
- 1 tbsp cream of tartar (optional, traditional)

Method

1. Put the grated ginger, lemon zest, sugar, cream of tartar (if using) and 500 ml of the water into a saucepan. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat and cook for 5–10 minutes, until the sugar has dissolved and the mixture is fragrant.
2. Off the heat, stir in the remaining 1.5 litres cold water and the lemon juice. Leave to cool to lukewarm, below 30°C (86°F), so the heat will not kill the yeast.
3. Once lukewarm, sprinkle over the yeast and stir gently to combine.



4. Cover the container loosely with a clean cloth and leave at cool room temperature for 24–48 hours, until small bubbles form and the drink tastes lightly tart and gently fizzy.
5. Strain through a fine sieve or muslin into clean PLASTIC (PET) bottles — not glass, which can shatter under pressure — filling each to leave at least 4 cm (1½ in) of headspace, then close the caps.
6. Leave at cool room temperature for 12 to 24 hours to build a gentle sparkle, and "burp" each bottle once or twice a day by briefly loosening the cap to release the built-up gas. A PET bottle should feel firm when squeezed but never rock-hard; if it hardens, release the pressure at once. As soon as it is lightly fizzy, move the bottles to the refrigerator.
7. The drink stays under pressure, so always open it slowly over a sink with the bottle pointed away from your face. Refrigeration only slows the fermentation, so serve ice-cold and drink within 3 to 4 days, keeping the bottles refrigerated throughout; discard any bottle that has become very hard or is bulging.

To serve

Serve very cold over ice with a slice of lemon on a hot day. A refreshing low-alcohol alternative to soft drinks, it pairs well with grilled meats and a meze table.

