

Cantaloupe Agua Fresca

Beat the heat. “Fresh water” fruit drinks are an everyday accompaniment to meals in Mexico. Using local fruits of the season, they make a refreshing sipper to wash away the dry, dusty days. Ours is a little more elaborate, sweetening with an infused simple syrup, topping off with seltzer and adding a fresh garnish. We like to be fancy. Sometimes.

Ingredients

basil-lime syrup

1 cup sugar
1 cup water
1/2 cup basil leaves
2 teaspoons finely grated lime zest

agua fresca

1 ripe cantaloupe, about 2¾ pounds, cut into 1-inch chunks and chilled
2 cups ice-cold water
1/2 to 3/4 cup basil-lime syrup (recipe above)
3 tablespoons fresh lime juice (from 1 large lime)
Pinch kosher salt
Ice
1 to 2 cups sparkling water, chilled
Fresh basil sprigs, for garnish (optional)
Lime slices, for garnish (optional)

special equipment

blender
fine mesh strainer

Directions

for the basil-lime syrup

Combine the sugar, water, basil leaves and lime zest in a small saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to maintain a simmer and stir until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat and let syrup cool completely. Strain.

for the aqua fresca

Working in batches in a blender, puree the cantaloupe with the water, 1/2 cup basil-lime syrup, lime juice and salt until smooth. Strain through a fine mesh sieve and discard the solids. Taste and add up to 1/4 cup additional basil-lime syrup if you'd like it sweeter. Transfer to a pitcher and chill, or serve right away.

Fill 6 glasses with ice. Divide the agua fresca between the glasses and top off with sparkling water. Garnish with basil sprigs and lime slices, if desired.

total time: 15 minutes

active prep: 15 minutes

serves: 6

difficulty: *easy*