

# Playful Springboards: ELDER

## Cooking with Elder

Cooking with elder flowers and berries can be messy but fun. Elder is considered to be full of health-giving properties and has been used medicinally for centuries. Search on-line for more recipes, for example from [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

## Elderflower fritters

Ingredients:  
2 large Eggs, 100g Plain Flour, 300ml of milk, fresh elderflower heads cleaned, icing sugar, butter, lemon

### Method:

Make an ordinary pancake batter whisking the milk, eggs and flour together. Heat butter in a pan. Dip a flour head in the batter and fry the flowers head down in the pan, holding by the stalk. Serve by the stalk, sprinkled with icing sugar and a squeeze of lemon.

## Elderflower cordial

### Ingredients:

2.5 Kg white sugar, 2 unwaxed lemons, 20 fresh elderflower heads, 85g citric acid from chemist

### Method:

Put the sugar and 1.5 litres/2½ pints water into a large saucepan. Gently heat, without boiling, until the sugar has dissolved. Give it a stir every now and again. Pare the zest from the lemons using a potato peeler, then slice the lemons into rounds.

Once the sugar has dissolved, bring the pan of syrup to the boil, then turn off the heat. Fill a washing up bowl with cold water. Give the flowers a gentle swish around to loosen any dirt or bugs. Lift flowers out, gently shake and transfer to the syrup along with the lemon zest and citric acid, then stir well. Cover the pan and leave to infuse for 24 hours. Line a colander with a clean tea towel, then sit it over a large bowl or pan. Ladle in the syrup – let it drip slowly through.

Discard the bits left in the towel.

Use a funnel and a ladle to fill sterilised bottles (run glass bottles through the dishwasher, or wash well with soapy water).

Rinse, then leave to dry in a low oven). The cordial is ready to drink straight away and will keep in the fridge for up to 6 weeks.

*Recipe from BBC Good Food online*

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## Elderberry jam

### Ingredients:

500g of elderberries, 400g of jam sugar, 1 tbsp of lemon juice

### Instructions:

Begin by putting a plate in the freezer. This will help you test whether the jam is ready later on. Remove the berries from their stems with a fork and wash thoroughly to remove any bits of leaf and stalk.

Place the elderberries in a heavy-based pan and gently crush with a potato masher, just enough to release some of the juices, but retain some texture. Add the sugar and lemon juice to the pan and leave to simmer on a low heat. Keep stirring to prevent the jam sticking to the bottom of the pan. Cook down for around 20 minutes, skimming off and discarding any scum which rises to the surface. To test if the jam is at the right consistency, remove the plate from the freezer, and place a small dollop of the jam on the plate. Put the plate in the fridge for a few minutes; if the jam forms a skin it is ready. If it's not, return to the heat and keep repeating the test every 5–10 minutes until ready.

Spoon the jam into sterilised jars and once fully cooled seal the jar and label with the date of production.

The jam will keep in a cool dark place for 1 year.

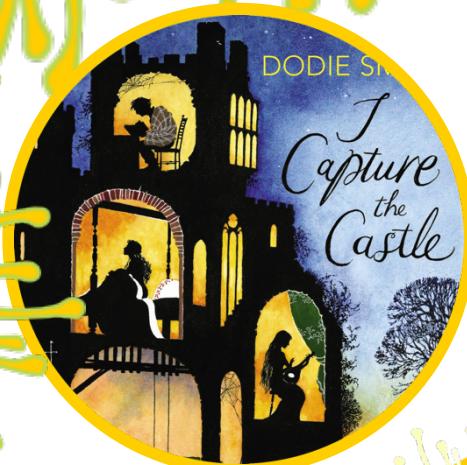
Once opened, keep in the fridge.

## 'I Capture the Castle' midsummer ceremony and cake

Towards the end of the book by Dodie Smith, Cassandra celebrates midsummer, makes a garland of flowers, burns salt and herbs, lights a bonfire and eats a ceremonial cake. Try inventing a cake recipe that uses elderflower cordial as a flavouring ingredient, and perhaps elderflower jam in the middle.



Elderflower cake



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## Elder myths and tales

"Elder is deeply connected with the realms of faery.

Sitting under, or more riskily sleeping under, an elder at midsummer was said to enable one to see the faeries or even see them going to their midsummer feast. The danger was being transported into the Underworld and not being able to escape.

Elder is certainly associated with a spirit being, or Queen, who is a guardian of the Underworld, where faeries and spirits of the dead reside. Elder is often planted in graveyards and crosses of elder used to be placed on new graves, presumably to help the spirits cross over."

*Incredible Edible Todmorden*

In JK Rowling's Harry Potter series, the most powerful wand in the wizarding world was made from elder, and as one of the three 'Deathly Hallows' was said to have been made by Death himself.

Research elder myths and tales, and use them as springboards for spontaneous storytelling and crafts.



Elder tree myths



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## Using Elder

Elder is a very versatile material. For making simple craft items such as puppets, wands, whistles and fire pipes. It is easy to cut and the pith can be extracted to make a hollow tube that can be used in many ways – see below for just one idea.



Elder crafts

## Elder Beads

This is a straightforward task and very satisfying.

Use secateurs or a hacksaw to cut long straight lengths of elder (about the thickness of your fingers). Peel or whittle the bark off - or leave it on for a more natural look.

Then cut the sticks into smaller, bead sized pieces. Poke out the soft pith in the middle using a tent peg or a bamboo kebab stick.

After Spring, the bark on new growth thickens and can be carved into patterns. Thread the beads onto strings to make necklaces, bracelets or decorative hangings.

