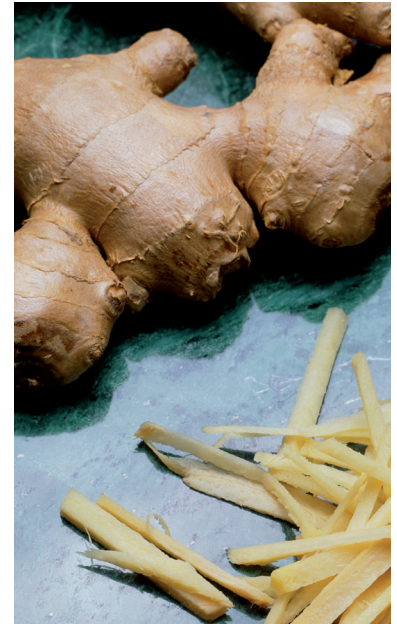


# Microbiology online

## GINGER BEER - A very refreshing old-fashioned fermented drink

Ginger beer originated in England, in the mid-1700s, where it became the favourite drink for over 150 years. The forerunners of ginger beer were mead and metheglin, which is mead flavoured with herbs or spices. Mead is a yeast-fermented honey and water drink and has been around for a very long time. Records show that the Celts were drinking it as long ago as 500 AD. It is reputed to be one of the oldest recorded fermented beverages. Ginger beer also uses yeast for fermentation and is sweetened with honey, molasses or cane sugar. The yeast converts the sugar into ethanol (alcohol) and carbon dioxide (gas). Other ingredients include fresh whole ginger although in Libby's recipe this has been replaced with ground ginger and lemons or lemon juice. The yeast is also said to add a special flavour to the beer, which is similar to that of home-baked bread. In England and Canada, the popularity of ginger beer peaked in 1935. The USA had 300 breweries, Canada had over 1,000 and England had 3,000!



### Libby Riley's recipe for ginger beer - This recipe makes 5 litres (9 pts)

#### Ingredients

25g (1 oz) fresh yeast or 15 g (1/2 oz) of dried yeast  
 1 kg (2 1/4 lb) sugar  
 40ml (8 tsp) ground ginger  
 Juice of 2 lemons  
 Water

#### Method

##### Starter 'plant'

Put the yeast into a large clean jar. Pour in 275 ml (10 fl oz) warm water. Stir in 10 ml (2 tsp) sugar and 10ml (2 tsp) ground ginger. Cover and leave in a warm place for 24 hours. This is the starter 'plant'.

##### Feeding the 'plant'

1. On each of the following 6 days feed the 'plant' with 5 ml (1 tsp) sugar and 5 ml (1 tsp) ground ginger. Stir and cover the jar each time.
2. After the last addition leave the solution to stand covered for another 24 hours.
3. Line a sieve with muslin. Strain the solution reserving both the liquid and the sediment.
4. Over a low heat dissolve 900 g (2 lb sugar) in 575 ml (1 pt) water. Stir well.
5. When the sugar has dissolved bring to the boil and boil for 3 minutes.
6. Pour the syrup into a large bowl and stir in the lemon juice and liquid from the plant.
7. Dilute with 3.5 L (6 pt) water, stir well and pour into clean, rinsed out bottles. Secure the bottles with corks (do not use screw tops as yeast produces carbon dioxide as it ferments liquids which may cause the bottles to explode).
8. Store for at least 1 week before using.
  - Use half of the reserved sediment as the new 'plant' to start the next batch of ginger beer.
  - Give the other half to a friend so they can make their own.

#### Time

5-10 minutes for 8 days, then 1 week storage.