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It's Easy to Make Your Own Vinegar

Many beer, wine, and cider makers are unaware how easy it would be to expand the enjoyment of their respective hobbies by making malt, wine, or cider vinegars. It's not only easy, but can be done in small quantities without additional equipment.

Malt vinegar and hard cider vinegar are especially simple to work with. Just add 24 oz. of beer or cider to 8 oz. of active vinegar bacteria culture. Put them in a glass container only partially filled so there is an air surface for the bacteria. Plug the jug opening with cotton wool so that dust, etc., is kept out, but oxygen can pass freely. Store in a warm place until the process is complete, checking it in one to two months. You will be able to taste the difference and you will see a thick deposit left over from this fermentation. Just move out however much vinegar you want to bottle and restart the process by adding beer or cider to equal what was removed.

In the case of wine vinegars, you must dilute the wine's alcohol content it to no more than 8%. The purpose of this is to dilute the wine somewhat, making it easier for the bacteria in the vinegar culture to work. This step may not be necessary after you have built up a working cultue in a batch or two. Add 16 oz. of wine to 8 oz. of distilled white vinegar, and 8 oz. of vinegar bacteria culture. Store and check as with cider or malt vinegars.

Whatever type of vinegar you're making, it's easy to tell when it is ready. If your vinegar smells like nail polish remover, you know it's still actively working. When it smells like vinegar instead, it's ready. At that point, you may draw off some, or all, of it to use as you normally would any fine vinegar.

Alternatively, your fresh vinegar is now a new starter, four times as large as before, and any, or all, can be used to inoculate a new, and larger, batch.