Drinks

Jamaican Fermented Ginger Beer

Fiery, effervescent, and alive — real Jamaican ginger beer starts with a ginger bug, a wild-fermented starter of grated ginger and sugar that captures ambient yeast and lactobacillus. The finished drink is spicy, sweet-sour, and lightly carbonated with natural bubbles.

Time 14400 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 80 g Fresh ginger root, unpeeled, grated
- ☐ 1000 g Filtered water (non-chlorinated)
- ☐ 2 g Cream of tartar
- ☐ 150 g White cane sugar
- ☐ 30 g Fresh lime juice

Let's make it.

01 In a clean pint jar, combine 1 tbsp grated unpeeled ginger, 1 tbsp sugar, and 60g filtered water. Stir well. Each day for 5–7 days, feed the bug another 1 tbsp grated ginger and 1 tbsp sugar, stirring vigorously. Keep at 70–80°F (21–27°C). The unpeeled ginger brings wild yeast from its skin — never peel it for the bug. This uses a portion of the total ginger and sugar; reserve the rest for the main brew.

02 In a saucepan, bring 500g of the filtered water to a simmer. Add the remaining grated ginger, sugar, and cream of tartar. Simmer gently for 5 minutes, stirring until sugar dissolves. Cream of tartar adds a slight tartness and helps carbonation. Remove from heat and let cool to room temperature — never add the bug to hot liquid.

03 Strain the ginger syrup through a fine mesh sieve into a large clean pitcher. Add the remaining 500g filtered water, lime juice, and 60g (about 4 tablespoons) of strained ginger bug liquid — avoid adding the ginger solids. Stir gently. Taste and adjust: should be very sweet and spicy now, as fermentation will add sourness.

04 Pour into plastic screw-top bottles (PET bottles are safest — you can squeeze them to gauge carbonation) leaving 2 inches of headspace. Seal tightly. Leave at room temperature for 24–48 hours. Check carbonation by squeezing the bottle: when it feels rock-hard, transfer immediately to the refrigerator to halt fermentation. Open over a sink — it will be effervescent. Burp bottles every 12 hours if using glass to prevent explosion.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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