

THE CHEF’S CORNER

As we approach the holiday season, we are greeted by changing leaves, cooler night air, and pumpkin-spiced everything! Regardless of how you feel about pumpkin spice, fall is one of the most beautiful times of year at Market Street Viera and residents are delighted to have a break from the heat Florida summer brings.

In October, a tradition we have in our home is to make Wassail. The word pronounced was hál means to “be in good health” or “be fortunate”. You may recognize it from a Christmas carol that goes, “here we come a-wassailing, among the leaves so green”. In Old English, “wassailing” meant singing carols door to door wishing good health to your neighbors. Although it is not uncommon to hear me singing in the kitchen, I am actually talking about the wassail in which you drink.

Wassail is a delicious hot beverage made with baked apples, oranges, and fragrant seasonal spices. It’s named after the salutation wishing health to a person when presenting a cup of drink. Today, Wassail is often served in a large bowl around the holidays and enjoyed in a glass mug around a cozy fireplace. Not only does wassail create a peaceful ambiance with its wonderful holiday aroma, but appropriately named “good health” is what this feel-good drink brings to the table. It is filled with ingredients that promote healthy brain function and mental clarity. Allow me to just highlight a few.

The first is the apple. Apples are extremely rich in important antioxidants that help reduce the risk of developing cancer, hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease. They not only help roll back the effects of aging, but can also stop advancement of those with Alzheimer’s disease. The second is cinnamon. Cinnamon is excellent for brain health; boosting memory, reverses or delays cognitive impairment, and is a good source of the powerful antioxidant manganese which is crucial for overall brain and body health. The third power ingredient is ginger. Ginger reduces muscle pain and soreness, acts as an anti-inflammatory helping with osteoarthritis, lowers blood sugars, and improves heart disease risk factors. It even protects against Alzheimer’s disease enhancing brain function directly and can help fight infections.

With these spicy powers combined, you have the perfect punch to ensure better health and a good year to come. Please enjoy - from my kitchen to yours, “Wassail!”

From the kitchen of Chef Ryan Gorsuch, Market Street Viera



Wassail Recipe

Yield: 10-12 servings
Prep Time: 5 Minutes
Cook Time: 5 Hours

1 gallon apple cider
4 cups orange juice
10 cinnamon sticks
5 star anise
1 tsp. whole cloves
1 tbsp. ginger
1 tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp. all spice
Handful of cranberries
1 apple, sliced into rounds
1 orange, sliced into rounds

Directions:

Add apple cider and orange juice into a slow cooker. Toss in cinnamon sticks, apple and orange slices, and the rest of the spices inside a spice filter for easy removal later. Cook on low for 5 hours. Enjoy when hot. Serve with a slice of apple or orange and a soaked cinnamon stick for stirring.

Bonus: Add a handful or two of cranberries to add some color and extra holiday flavor.

Sources:

Wassail - <http://projectbritain.com/Xmas/wassail.htm>, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/wassail>, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wassail>

Cinnamon - <https://blog.brainhq.com/2014/07/28/5-proven-brain-benefits-of-cinnamon/>

Apple - <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/267290.php>, <https://humannhealth.com/memory-boosting-fruits/148/>

Ginger - <http://www.healthline.com/nutrition/11-proven-benefits-of-ginger#section11>