

Making Agua Fresca

By Mitchell Hewson, HTM, LT, RAHP

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Thirst quenching infused waters can stimulate a client's palate and hydrate the body using fruit, vegetables, and herb. Traced back to Spanish cuisine, fruit waters or aguas frescas, are gaining in popularity as flavorful and healthy thirst quenchers. Infused waters can provide an alternative drink offering flavor, color, texture, and creativity for HT programming. For populations that have a tendency to become easily dehydrated; seniors, people on certain medications, or for anyone outdoors in hot temperatures, infused water may be one approach to combining hydration, nutrition, and horticultural therapy in a long, tall glass.

Proper hydration is important for maintaining a healthy body-boosting cellular energy production and lessening daytime fatigue (Benton & Young, 2015). Hydration impacts many body parts including reducing joint pain by providing synovial viscous fluid as a lubricant surrounding joints and making joint surfaces spongier (Bezci et al., 2015). Brain function can be impaired by even mild dehydration (Miller, 2015); hydration loss of 1-2% of body weight decreases cognitive performance (Pross, 2017) and impairs concentration and mood (Liska et al., 2019).

There are many therapeutic benefits of making and drinking infused water as a horticultural therapy activity: an activity focused on healthy food choices, one that can be complementary to a program growing edibles, and natural drinks without artificial ingredients using fresh ingredients loaded with vitamins and antioxidants. The preparation of infused waters provides a range of movement, exercise, manual dexterity, and hand-eye coordination as evidenced by (AEB) the ability to cut fruit, hold knives, and use of pincer grip to place fruit into blender. Adaptable for all ages and abilities, Sophia Podrozny RD, Clinical Dietitian, Homewood Health Centre states "preparing infused waters helps us re-connect to healthy food and practice food preparation skills".

Tips for Making Agua Frescas

- wash thoroughly before using any fruit, vegetable, herb or flower
- use organic, blemish free, firm edibles avoiding waxy vegetables whose absorption is limited due to wax
- remove fruit stems, seeds, rough spots
- recommended fruits and vegetables include; apple, apricot, avocado, blackberry, black currant blueberry, cherry, Clementine, cucumber, elderberry, grape, grapefruit, kiwi fruit, lemon, lime, mango, melon, honeydew melon, watermelon, rock melon, nectarine, orange, pear, peach, plums, raspberry, strawberry
- herbs; anise, mint varieties, lavender, basil, cilantro, lemon balm, dill, sweet woodruff, lemon grass, tarragon herbs
- flowers; pansy, nasturtium, roses, hibiscus, daylilies

Benton, D. & Young, HA. (2015). Do small differences in hydration status affect mood and mental performance? *Nutr Rev.* 73 Suppl 2: 83-96. doi: 10.1093/nutrit/nuv045

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Liska, D., Mah, E., Brisbois, T., Barrios, PL., Baker, LB. & Spriet, LL. (2019). Narrative review of hydration and selected health outcomes in the general population. *Nutrients* 11(1): 70. doi: 10.3390/nu11010070

Miller, HJ. (2015). Dehydration in the older adult. *J Gerontol Nurs.* 41(9): 8-13. doi: 10.3928/00989134-20150814-02

Pross, N. (2017). Effects of dehydration on brain functioning: A life-span perspective. *Ann Nutr Metab.* 70 Suppl 1: 30-36. doi: 10.1159/000463060



Watermelon Basil Infusion
 2 cups of seedless cubed or balled watermelon
 Handful of fresh purple basil
 One half gallon of fresh water

Chocolate Fruit Delight
 1 sliced apple 1 sliced lemon
 1 sliced orange 1 sliced pear
 Handful strawberries and chocolate mint
 Place all fruits, berries and mint into a glass container, add one half gallon of cold water.

Canadian Delight
 1 sliced delicious apple 1 sliced Bartlett pear
 A few sprigs of lemon balm
 Pour water over fruit and chill.

Lemon and Lavender Water
 3 lemons, thickly sliced
 ¼ cup fresh lavender
 One gallon of water
 Place all fruits and vegetables into a glass pitcher.

Citrus Water with Cucumber Slices
 1 sliced lemon 1 sliced lime
 1 sliced orange 1 sliced cucumber
 One half gallon of water

Mitchell Hewson, HTM, LT, RAHP is the Administrator- Horticultural Therapy in Practice, founding member of the Canadian Horticultural Therapy Association, and recipient of five international awards. Author of *Horticulture As Therapy A Practical Guide to Using Horticulture as a Therapeutic Tool*, Mitchell presently provides the only Horticultural Therapy on line study on mental health issues in Canada (horticulterastherapy@gmail.com)

Mitchell was the first Registered Horticultural Therapist to practice in Canada. He has served a pioneering role in the development of this important therapeutic modality, with a focus on psychiatric care. He has focused on specialized populations including those who suffer from: post-traumatic stress disorder, dementia, addictions and others.

"Mitchell has been at the forefront of the horticultural therapy profession for forty years. Influencing the thinking and practice of horticultural therapy as it has developed in the U.S. and Canada, he has contributed to the professional practice in many other countries including Japan, Taiwan, China, Russia, Singapore, France, Belgium etc. His writing, his programs and his willingness to train others sets him apart. It is his effectiveness as a therapist that is the foundation for all of his professional work and it is his compassion with clients who have mental health issues that is often mentioned by his peers with admiration and inspiration."

