

Orange Blossom Water

True orange blossom water is a hydrosol and the by-product of the steam distillation process used to make Orange Blossom essential oil from blossoms of the Seville orange. This is not to be confused with Sweet Orange essential oil, which is made from the peel of the orange.

Although the terms are used interchangeably, flower or floral water is different from a hydrosol. Flower waters are made by mixing essential oil and distilled water. True orange blossom water has a more delicate scent than flower water does. Orange blossom water is used for therapeutic purposes such as aromatherapy and skin care; however, aromatherapy purists feel that flower waters do not have the same beneficial therapeutic properties that hydrosols do.

Orange blossom water is also used in Persian and Arabic cooking and gourmet food preparation, especially desserts. Orange blossom water may be difficult to find but is usually available at Middle Eastern or gourmet and specialty food shops.

Or, of course you can have a go at making your own orange blossom water using the recipe below-especially if you are so lucky as to have Seville oranges growing in your backyard!

This recipe works well for rose petal water also. It's not a true hydrosol in the sense that it is not distilled, but it will produce an orange blossom water that is fragrant enough for cooking.

Recipe for Orange Blossom or Rose Petal Water

Note: You may need to experiment with the quantities of petals and water, as this is an imprecise recipe at best.

1. Use flowers that have not been sprayed with herbicides, pesticides, or insecticides.
2. Flowers should not be hybrid varieties as the smell and essence may have been bred out of them in favor of "showiness".
3. Pick blossoms early in the morning before the sun gets too hot, about 2 to 3 hours after sunrise.
4. Wash the blossoms and petals in cool water and rinse thoroughly to remove insects and dirt.
5. Macerate petals using a stone or porcelain mortar and pestle and let sit for several hours.
6. Place petals in a large glass jar with lid and cover with distilled water. Less is more. You can always add more later.
7. Let stand in the full sun for a couple of weeks. Check the scent. If it is too weak leave it in the sun for another week.
8. Strain the blossom water into several smaller sterilized jars with lids.
9. Store in a cool dark location such as the refrigerator.