The Medical Niche: Marketing Elderberries as a “Super Food”

Pomegranates, acai, goji berries oh my! What do all of these very expensive fruits have in common? They’ve all been marketed as a “Super Food” or “Super Berry.”

“Super Food” is a marketing term used to categorize food with high nutrient and vitamin levels that provide medicinal or health benefits when eaten.

Elderberries, or nature’s medicine chest, have been used by Native Americans and Europeans for centuries to treat coughs, colds and the flu. Elderflowers have been used to treat fevers and fluid retention, while elder leaf ointment was used to mend bruises and sprains.

How do we know, and more importantly, how do your customers know, if this natural medicine chest really works?

The National Institute of Health recently invested $37.5 million dollars to study the medicinal benefits of elderberries, among others. Although the findings have not officially been completed, this investment indicates that the government has peaked interest into the health benefits of elderberries.

Smaller scale studies done in the past have already indicated that the elderberry has super food potential. In 2004, the International Journal of Medical Research conducted a clinical trial which showed that flu patients given one tablespoon of elderberry extract four times per day recovered in an average of 3.1 days. On the other hand, those taking the placebo recovered in 7.1 days.

Studies like these can be handed out in fact sheets to your customers. To help consumers further understand the benefits of eating elderberries, include a nutrition guide with a list of the vitamins, minerals, etc. found in your elderberries.

Additional points of interest:
- Creating Value-Added Products can more than double your profits.
- Elderberries hold many medicinal properties and can be marketed as such.
- FDA and Labeling Laws apply to all products. Make sure you are in compliance with these laws when marketing elderberries to the public.
- Live Better. Locally.

Elderberry Marketing & Recipe Guide

Harvesting Elderberries

Elderberry comes into full production after 3-4 years. Fruit is hand-harvested in August & September by cutting the cluster (panicle) from the bush once all berries in a cluster have fully ripened. The fruit is harvested weekly over 3 weeks.

Elderberries are separated from the panicle by freezing & then stripping or shaking off the fruit. The berries can also be hand-picked off the panicle or combed off using a wide toothed-comb.

Once the berries are de-stemmed, fill a pail with 6 inches of water & pour the berries in. Mature berries will sink & stems, immature berries, leafy matter & bugs will float. Use a net to remove floating matter & then slowly pour out the water over a strainer.

The cleaned berries can be placed in the freezer in a gallon-size ZipLoc freezer bag.

The Benefits of Value-Added

While one lb of fresh elderberries profits a mere $1-3, one 11oz bottle of elderberry juice profits $15-17.

This is where the benefits of making value-added products becomes apparent. Although more time consuming, value-added pays off in the end.

Value-Added Products
- Immune Boosting Syrup: $18/4 oz jar
- Cough Drops: $2.50-$3/15 lozenges
- Wine: $10-$13/bottle
- Pure Juice: $15-$17/11oz bottle
- Elderflower Fritter: $3/each
- Muffins: $2-$3/each
- Jam: $6.50/8oz jar

Elderberry Tales: Successful Cultivation & Marketing

Coltsfoot Winery
Abingdon, VA

When Roger Lenhardt’s father was in his 80’s, he wanted to ensure that his family farm would not be turned into a housing development. That’s when he decided to make his own wine. With that, the farm was turned into Elderberry Life.

Elderberry Life has a simple mission: “to make elderberries available to everyone everyday and everywhere.” Today Elderberry Life has 16 varieties of elderberry plants growing on their farm. They have even been labeled the largest elderberry farm in America, with a processing facility for elderberry juice, jam, jelly & syrup production.

Transferring from home winemaking to a full scale winery proved difficult, however. The pouindage of fruit required to make 60+ gallons of wine could not be sustained by wild harvest. The Carneys needed to cultivate on their own land.

Five years ago, Roger received a request from a winery in Kansas for 4 varieties of elderberries to make their wine. With that, the farm was turned into Elderberry Life.

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Elderberry Marketing

Coltsfoot Winery would love to share their lessons learned and give you the advice needed to start your own elderberry business. A highlight of this success—the robust and full-bodied elderberry wine.

Coltsfoot Winery
Abingdon, VA

Phone: 276-623-1121 Fax: 276-623-1353
Website: www.asdevelop.org

Transitioning from home wine-making to a full scale winery proved difficult, however. The poundage of fruit required to make 60+ gallons of wine could not be sustained by wild harvest. The Carneys needed to cultivate on their own land. The spacing of bushes, the quickest way to de-stem berries—all factors of trial and error.

Coltsfoot Winery would love to share their lessons learned and give you the advice needed to start your own elderberry farm. They own purchase your berries. So give them a call and start writing your story today!

For Sandra Carney’s father, springtime brought with it the excitement of mapping out wild elderberry patches in their nearby woods. In late summer, he would return to that same patch of woods to harvest his findings. This marked the start of a family tradition: country home winemaking.

What started out as tradition, has since grown into a successful local winery. “Didn’t know too much about business, but thought we’d try it,” says Sandra. And with a leap of faith, the Carneys were able to turn a deep rooted family tradition, into a successful business. A highlight of this success—the robust and full-bodied elderberry wine.

Appalachian Sustainable Development
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Elderberry Juice
- 2/3 cup black elderberries
- 3-1/2 cups of water
- 2 tablespoon of fresh ginger root, finely minced, or 1 teaspoon dried ginger
- 1/2-1 teaspoon cinnamon
- small sprinkle of cloves
- 1 cup (or less) sugar

Put all ingredients except honey in a medium sized saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 45 minutes to an hour until liquid reduces by 1/3. Remove from heat and let cool slightly.

When cool enough to touch the pan with your hands, strain the liquid through a strainer or cheesecloth into a large glass jar or bowl. Discard the strained ingredients.

Elderberry Blossom Iced Tea
- 3 elderberry flower blossoms (remove the blooms from the main stem)
- filtered water
- 1 tablespoon of lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon of honey

Additional Suggestions:
- Rose water
- Lemon slices
- Fresh mint
- Fresh lemon balm
- Cinnamon (if brewing hot)

Place 3 fresh elderflowers in a bowl. Boil 6 cups of water. Pour boiling water over the flowers. Cover the bowl and steep for 10 minutes. Strain the tea and serve hot or cold.

Recipe By : www.food.com

Elderberry Flu Season Syrup
- 1 cup fresh or 1/2 cup dried Elderberries
- 3 cups water
- 1 cup raw local honey
- 1 Cininnamon stick, 3 Cloves, & Ginger (optional)

Place berries, water, and spices in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Smash the berries to release the remaining juice and strain the mixture.

Allow liquid to cool and stir in honey.

Syrup will last for 2-3 months stored in the fridge.

Recipe By: Mountain Rose Herbs

Elderberry Crumble Muffins
- 2 cups all purpose flour, (1 C whole wheat)
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/3 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups fresh/clean elderberries

Crumble Topping (optional):
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/4 cup margarine
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup chopped nuts
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups fresh local honey

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Will last for 2-3 weeks in fridge.

Recipe/Photos from: everydaypaleo.com

Elderberry Crumble Fritters
- 12-16 heads of elderflowers
- 1 3/4 cups plain flour
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 1/4 cup cold sparkling water
- 1 packet MCP pectin
- 1/4 cup white granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 3-4 lbs ripe de-stemmed elderberries
- 4 1/2 cups sugar and 1/4 teaspoon butter
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 packet MCP pectin
- 1/4 cup margarine
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup chopped nuts
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Elderberry Jelly
- 1/2-1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2-1 teaspoon cloves
- 3-4 lbs ripe de-stemmed elderberries
- 3 1/2 cups of water
- 2 tablespoon of fresh ginger root, finely minced, or 1 teaspoon dried ginger

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Elderflower Fritters
- 8 tablespoons melted margarine
- 2 cups fresh/clean elderberries
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup margarine
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/4 cup applesauce
- 1/4 cup buttermilk
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups all purpose flour, (1 C whole wheat)
- 1 packet MCP pectin
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/3 cup confectioners’ sugar
- 1/3 cup margarine
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
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