Set Up a Sparkling Mocktail Station



A bubbly, colorful drink bar for a festive New Year's Eve at home

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Give everyone something special to sip as the countdown begins! This sparkling berry mocktail station combines homemade berry syrup, citrus juice, fresh herbs, and bubbly sparkling water. Guests can mix their own drinks and adjust the sweetness to their liking.
It's an easy, budget-friendly alternative to an expensive drinks bar—and everyone, including children, can enjoy a festive glass.
Prep Time: 15 minutes
Cook Time: 5 minutes
Cooling Time: 20 minutes
Total Time: 40 minutes
Servings: 6 drinks

YOU'LL NEED

For the Berry Syrup

- 1 cup water
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup fresh or frozen mixed berries (strawberries, raspberries, or blueberries)

For the Mocktails

- 2 bottles chilled sparkling water (about 750 mL each)
- ½ cup orange juice
- ¼ cup cranberry juice
- 2 limes, thinly sliced
- 1 orange, thinly sliced
- Fresh mint or rosemary sprigs
- Ice cubes

Optional Garnishes

- Fresh or frozen berries
- Lemon or lime juice
- A small pinch of salt

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO

1. **Make the Berry Syrup**
Add the water, sugar, and berries to a small saucepan. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Cook for about 5 minutes, until the berries soften.

2. Strain and Cool
Gently mash the berries with a spoon to release their juices. Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a heat-safe bowl or jar. Let the syrup cool completely before using.

3. Prepare the Glasses
Fill six glasses with ice. Add 1 tablespoon of berry syrup, 1 tablespoon of orange juice, and 1 teaspoon of cranberry juice to each glass.

4. Add the Bubbles
Slowly top each glass with chilled sparkling water. Stir gently to combine without losing too much fizz.

5. Garnish and Serve
Add a slice of lime or orange and a sprig of fresh mint or rosemary. Serve immediately while the drinks are cold and bubbly.

6. Set Up Your Mocktail Station
Arrange the remaining berry syrup, sparkling water, citrus slices, herbs, ice, and extra berries on a small table. Add a few glasses and let guests create their own combinations.

Helpful Tips

- Make it less sweet: Start with ½ tablespoon of berry syrup per glass and add more after tasting.
- Use frozen berries: Frozen berries are often less expensive than fresh ones and work beautifully in homemade syrup.
- Keep the bubbles fresh: Open sparkling water bottles just before serving and keep them chilled.
- Offer flavor choices: Set out extra lemon juice, orange slices, and fresh mint so guests can customize their drinks.
- Make it look festive: Use clear glasses, colorful citrus slices, and a few fresh berries for a pretty presentation.
- Make it kid-friendly: Serve in smaller glasses and let children choose their own fruit garnishes. Cut grapes and other round, firm garnishes appropriately for young children to avoid choking hazards.

Make-Ahead Instructions

Prepare the berry syrup up to one week ahead. Once completely cooled, transfer it to a clean, covered jar and refrigerate.
Wash and slice the citrus a few hours before the party and store it in a covered container in the refrigerator. Chill the sparkling water and juices until serving time.
Mix the drinks just before serving so they stay bubbly.

Storage

Keep leftover berry syrup refrigerated in a covered container and use within one week. Discard any syrup that shows signs of spoilage.
Once mixed with sparkling water, the mocktail is best enjoyed immediately.
Refrigerate any leftover juice mixture promptly.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can I make the berry syrup ahead of time?
Yes! Prepare the syrup up to one week ahead and keep it in a clean, covered jar in the refrigerator. This saves time on party night.

2. Can I use frozen berries instead of fresh ones?
Absolutely. Frozen strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries are convenient and budget-friendly. There is no need to thaw them before simmering.

3. How can I make the mocktail less sweet?
Use less berry syrup and add a little extra sparkling water or lemon juice. Taste as you go until you find the balance you like.

4. Can children enjoy this drink?
Yes! This recipe contains no alcohol. Children can enjoy a smaller serving with sparkling water, juice, and age-appropriate fruit garnishes.

5. What can I use instead of cranberry juice?
Pomegranate juice or extra orange juice works well. You can also use a little fresh lemon juice for a more tart flavor.

6. Can I prepare the complete mocktail in advance?
It's better to prepare the syrup and garnishes ahead of time, then mix individual drinks just before serving. Adding sparkling water too early will make the drinks lose their fizz.

A Toast to the New Year!
Set out the glasses, add the colorful garnishes, and let everyone create a drink of their own. Sometimes the smallest details—a little sparkle, fresh fruit, and a beautiful glass—make an ordinary evening feel like a celebration.
Cheers to a fresh start and a sparkling New Year!