



Switchel



Switchel or haymaker's punch is a drink made of water mixed with vinegar, and often seasoned with spices like ginger. It is usually sweetened with molasses or brown sugar. Switchel originated in New England and it became a popular summer drink in the American Colonies in the late 17th century. By the 19th century, it had become a traditional drink to serve to thirsty farmers at hay harvest time, hence the nickname haymaker's punch. Herman Melville wrote in *I and My Chimney*, "I will give a traveler a cup of switchel, if he want it; but am I bound to supply him with a sweet taste?" In *The Long Winter* Laura Ingalls Wilder describes a switchel-like beverage that her mother had sent for Laura and her father to drink while haying: "Ma had sent them ginger-water. She had sweetened the cool well-water with sugar, flavored it with vinegar, and put in plenty of ginger to warm their stomachs so they could drink till they were not thirsty. Ginger-water would not make them sick, as plain cold water would when they were so hot."

If you want a non-alcoholic 18th Century treat, switchel is our answer to 21st Century soft drinks.



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