

Queimada

You need a large earthenware container, a large bowl like the one grandma used for kneading the bread dough. You don't have one? Well, grab a sizeable pumpkin, slice it open across the top and hollow it out. It will do. Either you invest in a large earthenware basin or a pumpkin or stop reading: metal is out and plastic will melt.

Plastic will melt? What are you planning to put in the basin? Battery acid? You're nervous, it happens the first time. Relax.

Queimada is a traditional witch's brew and ritual (more about that later) performed in the northwestern provinces of Spain, in particular in Galicia and dating back hundreds of years. The finality of the preparation ritual is to distance the bad spirits that, according with the tradition, lie in wait for men and women to try to curse them. All occasions are good for a queimada: a party, familiar meetings or gatherings of friends. After dinner, in the darkness of night, the people who take part in it gather around the container where it is prepared, ideally without lights, to cheer up the hearts and to be better friends. One of them ends the process of making the queimada while reciting the spell holding up the burning liquid in a ladle and pouring it slowly back into the container.

Ingredients:

You need *orujo*, a fiery rotgut from Galicia—anything from 100 to the-sky-is-the-limit Prof.—sugar, lemon peel and coffee beans. If you feel creative, add fruit; a few diced apples, bananas or pears. You can't find *orujo* at the local liquor store? *Cachaza*, the Brazilian national drink will do at a pinch, find any watering hole faking *caipirinhas* and offer to buy a few bottles. *Cachaza* has a slightly different flavor from *orujo* but, being from the land of the samba, it will set your hips gyrating in no time, an intriguing side effect.

Preparation:

In your chosen container pour the spirits, a pint per person will do fine. Add half a cup of sugar per pint of spirits, lemon peel (from two or three lemons) and a handful of coffee beans. If you're determined to have diced fruit, add to the mix and stir.



Grab a little of the liquid in a ladle and set it afire. Now pour the burning contents of the ladle into the larger container and watch the flames rise. Watch your curlers and eyebrows.



While you stir the burning liquid someone must recite a special curse, otherwise the quimada makes no sense.



This is the curse in original Galician:

Mouchos, curuxas, sapos e bruxas.

Demos, trasnos e dianhos, espíritos das nevoadas veigas.

Corvos, pintigas e meigas: feitizos das mencións.

Podres canhotas furadas, fogar dos vermes e alimanhas.

Lume das Santas Companhas, mal de ollo, negros meigallos, cheiro dos mortos, tronos e raios.

Oubeo do can, pregón da morte; fucinho do sátiro e pé do coello.

Pecadora lingua da mala muller casada cun home vello.

*Averno de Satán e Belcebú, lume dos cadvres ardentes, corpos mutilados dos indecentes, peidos dos infernales cus, muxido da mar embravescida.
Barriga inútil da muller solteira, falar dos gatos que andan á xaneira, quedella porra da cabra mal parida.*

*Con este fol levantarei as chamas deste lume que asemella ao do Inferno, e fuxirán as bruxas a cabalo das sas escobas, indose bañar na praia das areas gordas.
¡Oíde, oíde! os ruxidos que dan as que non poden deixar de queimarse no agoardente quedando así purificadas.*

E cando este breraxe baixe polas nosas gorxas, quedaremos libres dos males da nosa alma e de todo embruxamento.

Forzas do ar, terra, mar e lume, a vós fago esta chamada: si e verdade que tendes mais poder que a humana xente, eiquí e agora, facede que os espritos dos amigos que están fóra, participen con nos desta Queimada.

You can't get your tongue around it? No problem, try the translation below. Later, when you've drunk half of the queimada try again reciting in Galician. You'll be surprised. The ancient words will flow from your lips.

Owls, white-owls, toads and witches.

Demons, goblins and devils, spirits of the misty vales.

Crows, salamanders and mages, charms of the medics.

Rotten pierced canes, home of worms and vermin.

Wisps of the Holy Company, evil eye, black witchcraft, scent of the dead, thunders and lightning.

Howl of the dog, omen of the death, maws of the satyr and foot of the rabbit.

Sinful tongue of the bad woman married to an old man.

Satan and Beelzebub's Inferno, fire of the burning corpses, mutilated bodies of the indecent ones, farts from the arses of doom, bellow of the enraged sea.

Useless belly of the unmarried woman, speech of the cats in heat, dirty turf of the wickedly born goat.

With this bellows I will pump the flames of this fire from Hell, and witches will flee straddling their brooms, to bathe in the beach of the thick sands.

Hear! Hear the roars of those that cannot stop burning in the firewater, getting purified.

And when this beverage goes down our throats, we will get free of the evil and our soul of any charm.

Forces of air, earth, sea and fire, to you I make this call: if it's true you have more power than humans, here and now, make the spirits of the friends who are outside, take part with us in this Queimada.

Keep turning until most of the alcohol has consumed and the flames ebb. Drink. Look around at all your beautiful friends to discover that this valley of disenchantment and aridity holds unexpected gifts in store.