

## Nocino (Green walnut liqueur)

*This delicious liqueur is traditionally made on 24<sup>th</sup> June, the day of St John the Baptist, when (at least in warm parts of Italy) walnuts are at the perfect point of (im)maturity. This is my version of the recipe, based on that I learnt from the lovely Julia Savini at her agriturismo, Valle Nuova.*

*We actually first made it in France, using Italian 'pure' alcohol and French walnuts picked in July. In England I'm guessing the nuts definitely won't be ready as early as 24<sup>th</sup> June.*



*The walnuts should still be just soft enough to cut through the whole thing (unpeeled) with a big heavy chef's knife – cut notch then lift knife with walnut attached and whack down on board. The nut revealed inside should be jelly or semi-jelly, with nuttiness just beginning to form. They stain your hands and board like anti-theft capsules stain clothes. Be warned.*

*If you can't get pure alcohol (I don't think it's sold in the UK), use the strongest vodka you can find and the reduce the amount of water in the sugar syrup by 500ml.*

*Note that your liqueur will taste horrible at first, good after a year, and delicious after two. I'm yet to discover just how wonderful it gets after three years in the bottle...*

33 green walnuts, washed and halved

1 litre pure alcohol (ie 95%+)

4 cloves

2 small pieces cinnamon stick

2 strips lemon zest

1.25 litres water

375g sugar

1. Combine walnuts, alcohol and flavourings in a large jar and leave in the sun for 40 days, shaking occasionally. It will change colour from yellow-green to dark brown and ends up looking like ink.
2. Heat water, add sugar and stir to dissolve. Strain alcohol through a sieve lined with wet muslin and mix with cooled syrup. Bottle and leave at least a year.

NB You could use the strained nuts again rather than throw them away: We placed ours in a big jar with a bottle of Marsala and left it to infuse for several months. I then candied the nuts in syrup...

