**Crash’s garlic/habañero vinegar**

This is a hot, spicy, smoky vinegar that works well in salad dressings and spicy recipes that call for vinegar. It’s also great on steamed greens. Ingredients are approximate. Adjust as needed or preferred.

- Habañero peppers, fresh or dried (see notes below)
- 6 to 8 whole cloves of fresh garlic, peeled
- White vinegar
- 2 T champagne vinegar
- 2 T cider vinegar

Take a standard Scotch bottle, preferably with a slight residue of single malt. Put in sufficient habañeros to fill the bottle $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ full. Then push the garlic cloves into the bottle—it is best to use cloves of a size that get bruised or slightly crushed when you force them into the bottle.

In a saucepan, take approximately enough white vinegar to fill the bottle the rest of the way; heat gently to a simmer, then add the champagne and cider vinegars. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly, then pour into the bottle through a funnel. Cork and let sit for a week or two.

This bottle becomes your “nut,” rather like sourdough starter. To produce more vinegar, take beer or similar-sized clear bottles, toss in a half-dozen habañeros and a couple of cloves of garlic, and fill from the Scotch bottle. Keep the Scotch bottle topped off with fresh white, champagne and cider vinegar, and the nut should last through approximately 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ liters of vinegar. (After refilling, be sure to let the nut rest long enough for the fresh vinegar to permeate the peppers and garlic.) The garlic and peppers in the beer bottles will absorb sufficient flavor (and contribute enough of their own) to last for quite some time.

**Notes**

- Dried habañeros work better than fresh ones: they tend to have a smokier flavor and last longer before all the spicy goodness is leached out of them.

(Sisk wonders, what would happen if one substituted chipotles for the habañeros this recipe calls for?)

—John M. “Crash” Craddock III