STELLA'S MULLED APPLE CIDER

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Ingredients:

1 gallon of apple cider
2 tablespoons of Stella's Mulling Spice
1 large orange, thinly sliced
2 apples, sliced into rounds
1/2 cup of fresh orange juice
1/4 cup of brown sugar (adjust to taste)

Directions:

1. Pour the apple cider into a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat.
2. Add Stella's Mulling Spice to the pot either in a cheesecloth, a mulling bag, or add it loose to strain later. You can adjust the quantity based on your preference for spiciness. Two tablespoons plus the cinnamon stick is a great starting point.
3. Add the thinly sliced orange and apple rounds to the pot. The orange slices will add a citrusy brightness, while the apple slices will infuse a natural sweetness and fruity aroma to the cider.
4. Pour in fresh orange juice to enhance the citrus notes and provide a touch of acidity to balance the sweetness of the cider.
5. Add the brown sugar to the pot. You can adjust the amount of sugar based on your sweetness preference. Start with 1/4 cup, and then taste the cider as it simmers. You can add more sugar if desired.
6. Stir all the ingredients together until the mulling spice and sugar are fully dissolved in the cider. Heat the mixture over medium-low heat, bringing it to a gentle simmer. Avoid boiling the cider, as it can cause it to become overly concentrated, bitter, and change the flavor.
7. Once the cider is simmering, reduce the heat to low and let it continue to simmer for at least 20-30 minutes. The longer it simmers, the more infused and flavorful it will become. You will want to strain the spices at this point if you did not use a cheese cloth or mulling bag.
8. You can leave it on the stove on low heat to keep it warm, or in a crockpot on warm, and serve it when ready.
9. When serving, ladle the mulled apple cider into mugs or heatproof glasses, making sure to include some of the orange and apple slices in each serving.
10. For a festive look, you can garnish each serving with a cinnamon stick or a fresh slice of orange.