

## Infused Oils

Infused oils can be made from macerating fresh-wilted plants or dried herbs in oils. Olive oil works well and resists rancidity. Different oils confer different benefits, but that too large a topic for an introductory booklet.

It is very important that water not be used to clean the plant and that all containers mentioned below are bone dry. Heat jars in the oven for five minutes before filling. To fresh wilt an herb pick it and let it dry for 24 hours to reduce the amount of water present in the plant. These measures will inhibit mold growth.

To Make an Infused Oil:

Chop plant material and put in a clean, dry jar. Slowly pour oil over plant filling all the way to the top. Screw on a lid and let the oil infuse for six weeks. With a few exceptions, I like to let mine infuse on top of my water heater to infuse in at a consistent level of warmth. Strain the oil, pressing oil from plant material. Let the oil sit for a few days to watch for water which might settle to the bottom. I don't generally have this problem if I fresh-wilt plants overnight before starting my oils. Store oil at room temperature in a brown, glass bottle or dark place. Refrigeration will help to delay rancidity.

Making your infused oils into ointments is very easy and it also helps to preserve them

To Make an Ointment:

Pour 2 ounces of infused oil into double boiler. Place the pan over very low heat and grate 2 tablespoons beeswax into the oil and stir until it is melted. Pour the ointment into a jar and let it set. If it is too thick melt it back down and add more oil. If it is too thin re-melt and add more beeswax.

# Basic Herbal Preparation



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If you have any questions about the information in this booklet or are interested in scheduling a personal herbal education consultation contact me.

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## Folk Method of Making Extracts

When making extracts from dried herbs use one part herb to five parts menstruum. When using fresh herbs use one part herb to two parts menstruum. I have listed types of menstrooms and benefits they confer to your preparation below.

To make an extract:

Pack a clean sterile jar loosely with chopped plant material. Pour menstruum over the plant material. Cap the jar and shake the mixture well. Top the jar off with more of your menstruum if necessary to cover the plant material. Label the jar with contents and date. Store in a dark place. Shake the jars every so often, sing to them or dance with them if so moved. After 4-6 weeks, they are ready to use. Strain; making sure to squeeze excess liquid from plant material. A stainless steel potato ricer works well as a cheap tincture press.

## Hydro-ethanolic extract

Made using a combination of alcohol and water. This is the method most commonly used for extracting and concentrating medicinal constituents of plants. For folk method I use a 50-50 mixture such as 100 proof vodka with fresh-wilted or dried plant material.

## Elixir

Made using a combination of brandy and honey to extract plant constituents. Useful to replace syrups made with sugar.

## Acetum

Made using acetic acid and water (vinegar). Acetums work well when you are wanting to make tonic preparations which extract minerals from plants.

# Beverage Preparation

## Infusions

There is confusion surrounding the difference between an infusion and a tea. When flowers and leaves are being used for health-building purposes you want to make an infusion. An infusion calls for more plant material and is allowed to steep longer; thus drawing out far more of an herb's chemical constituents. An infusion is much stronger than a tea thus increasing its potency and sometimes the intensity of its flavor.

To make an infusion:

Put one cup of herbs in a quart jar or thermal carafe. Bring a kettle of water to boil. Fill the jar to the top with boiling water and put a lid on it. The type of herbal material determines the steeping time. I generally like to steep infusions overnight when possible but I use these as my minimum guidelines. Leaves = 4 hours Flowers = 2 hours

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*Herbal beverages add vitamins, minerals and antioxidants to your daily regimen; as well as containing other health promoting constituents.*

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## Decoctions

A decoction is made by simmering tough, fibrous herbal ingredients. Decoctions are the best method of preparing barks, roots, berries, seeds.

To make a decoction:

Place 1 cup herbal material in a saucepan and cover with 1 ½ quarts of water. Cover and place on heat, simmering the liquid until it is reduced in volume by half. For a really potent decoction: remove the pan from the heat and let the liquid sit covered overnight.

Most decoctions are well served by adding a bit of milk (or almond milk, hazelnut milk, coconut milk) and honey as many of the herbs used in decoctions are quite strong.

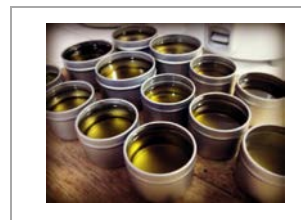
# Basic Types of Herbal Preparations

## Beverage Blends



Herbs can be used to make many tasty beverages but the method of preparation depends on the part of the plant being used.

## Infused Oils



Infused oils are useful as massage oils, but they are also the base ingredient in many other preparations such as ointments and creams.

## Elixirs, Tinctures and Acetums



These are preparations made by steeping an herb in a solvent known as a menstruum.

*“Nature is doing her best each moment to make us well...With the least inclination to be well we should not be sick.” ~ Henry David Thoreau*

## Getting Started



The most important thing you need to get started is good quality herbs. If your herbs are old and lifeless, your herbal preparations will be disappointing to you. The picture to the left illustrates the difference between quality oatstraw and stuff that should be tossed in the compost.

Most beverage teas sold contain herbs that I would place in the former category. Herbs should retain a bright green color, they should not be brown, They should retain a fresh smell and flavor. Flowers should be close to their color at harvest. Assessing quality by use of your senses is called organoleptic testing.

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*Even in industrial quality control settings herbs are evaluated, in part, by organoleptic testing.*

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### Gathering Equipment

Glass and stainless steel are good materials for working with herbs. Cast iron is fun and rustic looking but there are a variety of chemical reactions that can occur when a menstruum comes in contact with it. The following items are nice to have on hand.

- Glass canning jars
- Dark colored jars for storing finished products
- Stainless steel strainer; cheesecloth
- Glass or stainless steel saucepans with tight fitting lids
- Tea pot, thermal carafe or French press
- Tea kettle
- Stainless steel potato ricer or tincture press

## Why doesn't this herb work for me?

I hear this question a lot. The conventional healthcare establishment has contributed to the idea that there is always a "little white pill" to any problem. True well-being goes far beyond that. It does not come in the form of a little green plant, either. People have different biochemistry and you have to match the plant to the person. There is no-one-size fits all answer. Medicinal herbal blends for chronic health issues work best when individually formulated with the help of an herbalist.

Additionally, no amount of bodywork, energy work or herbal therapy is going to help you feel better if you are not:

- Getting the nutrients your body needs to function properly and repair itself.
- Sleeping and exercising enough.
- Taking steps to alleviate and manage stress.

## Eat Your Herbs!



While all this talk of infusing, decocting and extracting is exciting, don't forget that the best way to incorporate herbs in your life is to add them to your food. This is a lost art that can be easily regained by looking in medieval cookbooks. For example, the idea of what types of greens constituted salad greens was wildly different. Play around with incorporating herbs into your recipes.



Garnishing soups and other dishes with herbs is a great way to include them in your daily regimen.