



Preparing Herbal Teas

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Introduction



HAPPY HERB DAY 2013!

Every year, herbalists, herbal medicine advocates, holistic health practitioners, and herbal enthusiasts come together for Herb Day (metaphorically, of course—the celebration is international!) in honor of herb everything! This year marks the 8th annual Herb Day, which takes place May 4, 2013, and you're invited! Join participants worldwide to spread the education about herbs and share ideas about how herbs bring health, happiness, and well-being into our everyday lives, including foods, beverages, medicine, beauty products, and gardening!

Here at the American College of Healthcare Sciences (ACHS), Herb Day is a big event! But, one day isn't enough. We love to spread the health and celebrate year-round by continually offering cutting-edge herbal medicine courses and programs, Oregon Tilth Certified organic products in our Apothecary Shoppe College Store, frequent community wellness teleconferences and webinars, and our very own urban Botanical Teaching Garden, which is open to the public year-round, too.

This Herb Day, ACHS made an important decision. Our goal is to raise awareness and reach as many people as possible with practical and fun information about how to use herbs today! And, though we DO love to visit with you all in-person, we know not everyone can make the trip to Portland, Oregon to talk herbs with us at the Apothecary Shoppe. So, instead of hosting a community wellness event with limited participation, we put together this eBook celebrating a simple, effective, and fun way you can start adding herbs into your everyday diet: teas! Plus, this eBook event won't be over in two hours; you can use it year-round to learn more about the herbs in your garden, in your Apothecary, and even in your kitchen cabinets! Share this eBook with your friends and family; invite people over for an herbal tea party. We invite you to spread the health!

To learn about Herb Day, visit the Herb Day website at <http://www.herbdays.org/>. You can also download great free resources on how to host an Herb Day event in your area here <http://www.herbdays.org/herbdays-resources/free-herbdays-handouts>

Enjoy! Ask questions! We'd love to hear how your herbal tea making and blending goes—let's talk herbs on ACHS Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/ACHSedu>

When Teas Taste Best

When one's heart and hand are idle,
When one's thoughts are disturbed,
When shut up in one's home all day
When charming friends visit
In a quiet, secluded room with old photos,
antiques, paintings, mementos, and sweet
memories

—Author unknown



General Guidelines for Preparing Herbs as Teas

The preparation of herbs is a simple process but there are general guidelines to follow to ensure quality:

- In this eBook, measurements are usually for dried herbs, unless stated otherwise. **If you are using fresh herb, double the stated quantity.**
- The quality of your herbs will determine the quality of the finished herbal product. Ensure that your herbs are organic or spray free, have not been gathered near a roadway, are free from insects and mold, and that they have a good aroma and color.
- Water used in herbal preparations should be free from fluoride and chlorine.
- It is not possible to provide a volume equivalent for herbs, since some herbs are heavier than others are. For example, 1 ounce of red clover *Trifolium pratense* flowers can fill 2 cups, while 1 ounce of yellow dock *Rumex crispus* root is a quarter-cup! Ensure you have a small, accurate scale on hand when making your herbal preparations.
- If you are an herb tea newbie, always read the recipe completely before starting and ensure you understand the steps involved.
- Always get your ingredients and equipment ready before you begin. You will find most of the equipment and ingredients you need available at the Apothecary Shoppe College Store (<http://www.apothecary-shoppe.com>).
- Never use aluminum ware. Aluminum can react with the chemicals in the herb and affect the product. Aluminum may accumulate in the body and has been implicated in Alzheimer's disease. Instead, use stainless steel, Pyrex, earthenware, or enamel that is free of chips and cracks.
- Be sure to follow storage guidelines for your preparations. However, keep in mind that storage of homemade products is not a science. Never use a preparation that smells or appears to have gone bad.
- It is important not to steep herbal teas for too long. Lengthy steeping can extract excessive quantities of tannin and the action of the herb may alter dramatically. For example, rosemary *Rosmarinus officinalis* tea, when steeped for 5-10 minutes, is a mild soporific¹, but left for too long it can have quite the opposite effect.
- To preserve the delicate flavor and active constituents, the herbs used in teas must be perfectly fresh or carefully dried.
- Choose a teapot that is made from ceramic, porcelain, china, earthenware, glass, or enamel. Metal can interfere with the active constituents of the herbs and produce a metallic taste.
- Endeavor to drink 3 cups of herb tea every day. Choose herbs that are corrective for some imbalance in

¹ Inducing or tending to induce sleep

- your body.
- Drink the tea after meals rather than before. This avoids diluting your gastric juice and interfering with the digestion.
 - Use honey as a sweetener if needed and a slice of lemon. Herb teas are usually enjoyed without milk or creamer. You can add milk if you prefer but it tends to mask the delicate flavors of the herbs.
 - Herb teas can be served iced in the summer. Steep to the desired flavor, which can be a little stronger than in hot tea, as the ice will dilute the flavor somewhat. Cool in the refrigerator and add ice before serving. These make delightfully refreshing drinks on a hot summer's day.
 - Ice cubes can be made from strained tea or add flowers such as borage and violets to the water before freezing.

Herbal Teas

Figure 1: In Japan you can eat green tea in ice cream and even in Kit Kats! Image by American College of Healthcare Sciences © 2013.

Herbal teas, as well as being pleasurable to drink, with regular use, can tone, soothe, and balance the body.

Be sure to distinguish herbal teas from black tea. Tannin or black tea is from the plant *Camellia sinensis*, a medicinal herb that soothes and relaxes, but if taken too frequently the body becomes so accustomed to it that when it is really needed, it has little or no effect. It also contains two powerful alkaloids, theobromine, and caffeine, which are best avoided in excessive doses.



You may wonder, what is the difference between black, green, white, and oolong tea? They are all from the *Camelia sinensis* plant but are processed in different ways resulting in a different level of antioxidants. Black tea is wilted when it is harvested and fermented which is really oxidized (i.e., it is exposed to oxygen). Green tea is wilted and not fermented or oxidized: hence it has more antioxidants, which is why it has potential for breast cancer as this 2013 study shows². In addition, this 2013 study shows cancer preventive activity of green tea polyphenols has been demonstrated in many animal models³ and while the mechanism is not known there is surely no harm in green tea daily as a preventative⁴. Don't like the taste, add some mint and try it iced! In Japan you can eat green tea in ice cream and even in Kit Kats! Oolong tea is wilted and partially oxidized, and white tea is the immature buds that are steamed when they are harvested, dried immediately, and not fermented at all. It has the highest level of antioxidants. White tea is also the most expensive!

² de Pace, R.C., Liu, X., Sun, M., Nie, S., Zhang, J., Cai, Q., et al. (2013). Anticancer activities of (-)-epigallocatechin-3-gallate encapsulated nanoliposomes in MCF7 breast cancer cells. *J Liposome Res.* 2013 Apr 19. [Epub ahead of print]

³ Reuters Health. (2003, October 17). Green Tea Component Destroys Cancer Cells by Blocking Key Enzyme. From *International Journal of Cancer*, 106:856-862. Retrieved from <http://www.cancerpage.com/news/article.asp?id=6409>

⁴ Yang, C.S., Li, G., Yang, Z., Guan, F., Chen, A., & Ju, J. (2013). Cancer prevention by tocopherols and tea polyphenols. *Cancer Lett.* 2013 Feb 8. [Epub ahead of print]

Excessive use of black tea is known to deplete the body of iron and B vitamins and will cause premature aging, graying hair, and early senility. But, on a brighter note, 2011 research⁵ showing black tea (polyphenols) ameliorate adverse skin reactions following UV exposure suggest that black and green teas could be the next weapon in the fight against skin cancer. Antioxidant properties in green and black tea are thought to be active agents against skin cancer. However, given the other constituents in black tea, green tea maybe a better source of antioxidants.

The transition from tannin tea to herbal and green teas can be a gradual evolution, but once you experience the joy of a refreshing cup of herb tea, the transition has begun. A few sprigs of lemon balm *Melissa officinalis*, apple mint *Mentha suaveolens* Ehrh., lemon thyme *Thymus pulegioides* L., peppermint *Mentha piperita* var. *vulgaris*, or lemon verbena *Aloysia citrodora*, added to tannin tea make a pleasant change.

The preparation of herbal teas is straightforward.

BASIC RECIPE: TEA

1 teaspoon dried herb or 2 teaspoons fresh herbs
1 cup boiling water

Pour the boiling water over the herb and leave it to steep for five to ten minutes. Strain the tea and it is ready to drink.

Infusions

An infusion is stronger than a tea. Infusions will extract glycosides, alkaloid salts, and water-soluble vitamins. Infusions are intended for immediate use. Store for a maximum of 24 hours in the refrigerator.

BASIC RECIPE: INFUSIONS

1 ounce dried herbs
1 pint purified water

Place your herbs into a ceramic or glass teapot. Bring the water to a boil. Do not use an aluminum pot. An electric kettle or kettle on the stove is fine. Turn off the heat and pour the water over the herb. Cover the pot and let steep for 10 to 20 minutes. Strain the tea in a non-aluminum strainer and then drink. Store for no more than 24 hours in the refrigerator.

⁵ Korać, R.R. & Khambholja, K.M. (2011). Potential of herbs in skin protection from ultraviolet radiation. *Pharmacogn Rev.*, 5(10):164-73

Decoctions

Figure 2: Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*.
Photograph by Dorene Petersen © 2001.



This method is used for hard woody substances such as roots, bark, and stems that have constituents that are water-soluble and non-volatile. An exception to this is red clover flowers. A red clover flower decoction will extract more minerals than the infusion. Decoctions extract mainly mineral salts and bitter principles. Decoctions are intended for immediate use. Store for a maximum of 72 hours in the refrigerator.

BASIC RECIPE: DECOCTIONS

- 1 ounce herb or root
- 1 pint water

Place the water into a pot made from a non-reactive material (such as stainless or enamel). Do not use aluminum. Cut or crush the herb or root and add it to water in the pot. Do not cut or crush in advance, as vital constituents can be lost.

Turn on the heat to medium. Simmer your decoction with the lid off until the volume of water is reduced by one quarter, so three quarters of a pint remains.

Cool and strain. Take in divided doses according to the use. Store for no more than 72 hours in the refrigerator.

WHEN TO USE A DECOCTION

Some herbs should be simmered in water rather than steeped to extract their specific nutrients. Oatstraw *Avena sativa* contains silica, which requires simmering to be released into the water. Red clover *Trifolium pratense* blossoms must be simmered to extract their copper and iron, and dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* roots should be simmered to prepare a pleasant coffee-like beverage.

Herbal Tea Time

Here is a list of some herbs you can try for tea preparation, along with a brief indication of their use:

TEA HERB	INDICATIONS FOR USE
Lemon balm <i>Melissa officinalis</i> leaves	Headache, insomnia
Basil <i>Ocimum basilicum</i> leaves	Soothing and cleansing, intestinal parasites, acne, immune stimulant
Angelica <i>Angelica archangelica</i> root	Flatulence, respiratory ailments, arthritis

Birch <i>Betula L.</i> leaves	Bladder tonic
Calendula <i>Calendula officinalis</i> flowers	Indigestion, skin troubles
Catnip <i>Nepeta cataria</i> leaves	Headaches, restlessness, digestive aid, infection prevention
Chamomile <i>Matricaria recutita</i> flowers	Headaches, nervousness, indigestion, ulcers, arthritis, and infection prevention
Chickweed	Coughs, colds
Dandelion <i>Taraxacum officinale</i> leaves and root (simmered)	Liver and kidney trouble, PMS, weight loss, hypertension, yeast infections
Elderflower <i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	Chills and fever
Fenugreek <i>Trigonella L.</i> seeds	Cleansing and soothing, cholesterol control, arthritis
Hyssop <i>Hyssopus officinalis</i>	Nervousness, fever, herpes, and coughs
Lavender <i>Lavandula angustifolia</i> flowers	Headache, nervousness
Lemongrass <i>Cymbopogon citratus</i>	Very refreshing, uplifting
Mullein <i>Verbascum thapsus</i> flowers	Coughs, inflammation, hemorrhoids and diarrhea
Nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> leaves	Kidney troubles, hypertension, gout, hay fever, PMS, and scurvy
Oatstraw <i>Avena sativa</i> (simmer)	Dry, brittle hair and nails
Peppermint <i>Mentha piperita var. vulgaris</i>	Flatulence, nausea
Plantain <i>Plantago major</i>	Colds
Red clover <i>Trifolium pratense</i> flowers (simmer)	Colds, skin problems, blood cleanser
Red raspberry <i>Rubus idaeus</i>	Profuse menstruation, preparation for birth
Rosemary <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Circulation, nervousness, and depression, food poisoning preventive, decongestant
Rosehips <i>Rosa canina</i> (careful not to boil)	Colds and coughs, flu
Sage <i>Salvia officinalis</i>	Fevers, tonic, wounds, digestive aid, blood sugar regulation, sore throat
Thyme <i>Thymus vulgaris</i>	Colds, indigestion, cough remedy
Valerian <i>Valeriana officinalis</i>	Tension, headaches
Yarrow <i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Colds, indigestion, cough remedy

Combined Teas

Figure 3: Ingredients for an effective cough, headache, and fever tea blend from the Apothecary Shoppe College Store (www.apothecary-shoppe.com), including: marshmallow, peppermint, and yarrow. Image by American College of Healthcare Sciences © 2013.



There are no definite rules for combining herbs in a tea mixture. Taste is a major priority. Aromatic herbs such as peppermint *Mentha piperita*, fennel *Foeniculum vulgare*, ginger *Zingiber officinale*, lemon balm *Melissa officinalis*, and lemon verbena *Aloysia citriodora* will all enhance the flavor of a bland tea such as

oatstraw *Avena sativa* or a bitter tea such as valerian *Valeriana officinalis*. If you are choosing a tea to correct a particular ailment, you can add a secondary herb to assist the action of the main herb. For example, an effective tea for a cough, headache, and fever would be:

- Marshmallow *Althaea officinalis*: For the cough and irritation (expectorant and demulcent); with
- Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*: For the fever and cough (diaphoretic and expectorant); and
- Peppermint *Mentha piperita*: To improve the flavor of the mixture and assist the cough (antispasmodic).

Teas can also be nutritional and provide minerals. These are particularly useful during times of increased need, such as menstruation, when iron is lost from the body, or at any other time when extra nutrients are required.

Combined Tea Recipes

Figure 4: Ingredients for the Iron Tea blend from the Apothecary Shoppe College Store (www.apothecary-shoppe.com), including: dandelion, nettle, parsley, and yellow dock. Image by American College of Healthcare Sciences © 2013.



IRON TEA

- 1 ounce yellow dock *Rumex crispus* root
- 1 ounce dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* root
- 1 ounce nettle *Urtica dioica*
- 1 ounce parsley *Petroselinum crispum* leaf

Blend the dandelion and yellow dock roots together and weight out ½ ounce of the blended roots. You may need to coarsely chop or even grind the roots depending on how whole they are. Use ½ ounce of the blended dandelion and yellow dock roots and ½ pint of water to prepare a decoction.

Blend the nettle, watercress, and parsley and weight out ½ ounce of the blended herbs. While the dandelion/yellow dock decoction is still hot, pour it over ½ ounce of the nettle/watercress/parsley blend and infuse for 10 minutes. Store for no more than 24 hours in the refrigerator.

Drink ½ cup 2-3 times a day. If these measurements will make too much tea, you can use 1 teaspoon of herb or root to 1 cup of water to prepare each component. This will leave you with just under 2 cups of finished tea.

CALCIUM TEA

Figure 5: Ingredients for the Calcium Tea blend from the Apothecary Shoppe College Store (www.apothecary-shoppe.com, including: calendula, chickweed, chamomile, and oatstraw. Image by American College of Healthcare Sciences © 2013.



This tea is also useful for premenstrual cramps, during menstruation, and for nursing mothers.

- 1 ounce calendula *Calendula officinalis*
- 1 ounce chamomile *Matricaria recutita* (German) or *Chamaemelum nobile* (Roman) flowers
- 1 ounce chickweed *Stellaria media*
- 1 ounce oatstraw *Avena sativa*
- 1 pint apple juice

Prepare the oatstraw as a standard decoction, using 1 ounce to 1 pint of water. Simmer for at least 20 minutes. Cool the oatstraw decoction for five minutes and then pour it over the borage and chamomile. Cover and let it stand for 10 minutes.

Strain, cool, and then add the apple juice.

Drink throughout the day. Store in the refrigerator for no more than 24 hours.

This blend can also be frozen into ice cubes and added to other juice or iced tea.

BRAN TEA

This tea cleanses the kidneys and supports healthy blood pressure.

- 1 cup bran
- 2 cups boiling water
- Lemon and honey to taste (optional)

Simmer the bran and water for 30 minutes. Drink throughout the day. If you wish, add lemon and honey to taste.

MENOPAUSE SUPPORT TEA

Figure 6: Ingredients for the Calcium Tea blend from the Apothecary Shoppe College Store (www.apothecary-shoppe.com, including: chamomile, hops, lemon balm, red clover, and skullcap. Image by American College of Healthcare Sciences © 2013.



1 ounce hops *Humulus lupulus*
(balances the nerves and nourishes nervous system)

1 ounce red clover flowers *Trifolium pratense* (to assist with hot flashes and circulation)

1 ounce lemon balm *Melissa officinalis* (to assist with sleep and improve the flavor)

1 ounce skullcap *Scutellaria laterifolia* (it has been studied for use with addiction and assists with sleeplessness)

1 ounce chamomile *Matricaria recutita* (a mild nervine and balances digestion)

Drink 2-3 cups throughout the day.

CHAI TEA

Figure 5: Bay *Laurus nobilis* with berries in Greece. Photography by Dorene Petersen.



Boil 5 minutes, then steep 10 minutes

1 tablespoon fennel or anise seed
6 green cardamom pods
12 cloves
1 cinnamon stick
¼-inch ginger root, sliced thin
¼ teaspoon black pepper corns
2 bay leaves
7 cups water

Add, bring to a boil, and simmer 5 minutes:

2-tablespoon Darjeeling tea

Add:

6 tablespoons honey or brown sugar
1 cup milk

You can adjust all of the tea formulas for your own taste. Always listen to your own body and most of all relax and enjoy your cup of tea!

How to Make Healthy Herbal Sun Teas

Figure 6: Everyone loves lavender! Photograph by Erika Yigzaw. Reproduced with permission.

Herbal sun teas are easy to make and a healthy alternative to sodas and other beverages that can be loaded down with sugar⁶.

Herbal sun teas are an office favorite here at ACHS, as we love to take fresh herbs from the Botanical Teaching Garden and test our creativity with new flavor combinations. For your tasting pleasure, here's our all-time favorite recipe to try at home (and if you don't have these ingredients in your garden, not to worry—you can swap out herbs or purchase Oregon Tilth Certified organic herbs from the Apothecary Shoppe College Store⁷):



FRESH LAVENDER SUN TEA

Dried lavender *Lavandula angustifolia* flowers
Dried peppermint *Mentha piperita* var. *vulgaris* leaves
Dried lemon balm *Melissa officinalis*
Herb sachet

Spoon the herbs in equal amounts into an herbal sachet. Place outside in the sunlight for 3-5 hours. Sweeten with stevia if desired. Serve chilled.



⁶ According to the Multnomah County website, “Research shows that the rising consumption of sugary drinks—like sodas, sports and energy drinks, and juices with added sugar—is a direct cause of obesity.” What are the other health risks? You can learn more about the potential health risks of sugary drinks, including a downloadable Sugary Drinks Fact Sheet, here: <http://www.multco-itstartshere.org/links-and-resources/toolkit-sugary-drinks>

⁷ Apothecary Shoppe College Store, www.apothecary-shoppe.com, (800) 487-8839

Extend your learning with ACHS on our YouTube channel, [ACHStv](http://www.youtube.com/ACHStv), including this short video on how to make healthy herbal sun teas! Find this video, and dozens more on how to identify, grow, harvest, and use herbs at: <http://www.youtube.com/ACHStv>

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Last Revision

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