



How to Make an Herbal Tincture

User
Reviewed

Tinctures are concentrated herbal extracts that are made using alcohol and chopped herbs. The tincture is especially effective in drawing out the essential compounds of plants, especially those that are fibrous or woody, and from roots and resins.^[1] Since this method ensures that the herbs and their nutrients can be preserved for a long time, it is often mentioned in herbal books and remedies as a preferred way of using herbs.

In addition, many herbalists love tinctures for other beneficial reasons, such as their being easy to carry, their utility for long-term treatments, and their ability to be absorbed rapidly, as well as allowing for immediate dosage changes.^[2] As well, should the tincture prove bitter, it's easily added to juice to disguise the flavor. Another benefit of tinctures is that they keep nutrients from the plants in a stable, soluble form and they retain the volatile and semi-volatile ingredients that are otherwise lost in heat-treatment and processing of dry herbal extracts.

Steps

1 Purchase quality alcohol. The preferred type of alcohol for producing a tincture is [vodka](#).^[3] This is owing to its being colorless, odorless, and fairly flavorless. If you cannot obtain vodka, [brandy](#), rum, or whiskey can be substituted. Whatever alcohol is chosen, it must be 80 proof (namely, 40% alcohol) to prevent mildewing of the plant material in the bottle.

- It is also possible to make a tincture from quality [apple cider vinegar](#) or [glycerin](#).^[4] The alternatives may work better where the patient refuses alcohol.

2 Use a suitable container. The container for the tincture should be glass or ceramic. Avoid using metallic or plastic containers because these can react with the tincture or leach dangerous chemicals over time. Items such as a Mason jar, a [glass bottle](#) with an attached stopper, etc., are ideal for steeping a tincture. In addition, you will need to get some small dark glass tincture bottles for storing the tincture in once it has been made; these bottles should have a tight screw-on or tight clip-on lid to prevent air intrusion during storage but to allow for ease of use. Ensure that all containers are both washed clean and [sterilized](#) prior to use.

3 Prepare the tincture. You can prepare a tincture by measurement or by sight; it really depends on your level of comfort with simply adding [herbs](#) and judging by eye, or whether you feel more comfortable adding them by measured weight. Also, you should know whether you want to add fresh, powdered, or [dried herbs](#) to the tincture. Some suggestions for adding the herbs in the order of fresh, powdered, or dried are as follows:

- Add enough fresh chopped herbs to fill the glass container. Cover with alcohol.^[5]
- Add 4 ounces (113g) of powdered herb with 1 pint (473ml) of alcohol (or [vinegar/glycerin](#)).^[6]
- Add 7 ounces (198g) of dried herb material to 35 fluid ounces (1 liter) of alcohol (or [vinegar/glycerin](#)).

4 Using a butter knife, stir around the edge of the glass container to ensure that air bubbles are broken.

5 Seal the container. Place it into a cool, dark area; a cupboard [shelf](#) works best. The container should be stored there for 8 days to a month.^[7]

- Shake the container regularly. Humbart Santillo recommends shaking it twice a day for 14 days,^[8] while James Wong recommends shaking it occasionally.^[9]
- Be sure to label the steeping tincture so that you know what it is and the date on which it was made. Keep it out of the reach of children and pets.

6 Strain the tincture. Once the **steeping** time is finished (either the tincture instructions you're following will inform you of this or you'll know already from experience but if not, about two weeks is a good steeping time), strain the tincture as follows:

- Place a muslin cloth across a **sieve**. Place a large bowl underneath to catch the strained liquid.
- Gently pour the steeped liquid through the muslin-lined sieve. The muslin will capture the plant material and the liquid will pass through into the bowl underneath.
- Press the herb material with a wooden or **bamboo** spoon to squeeze out some more liquid, and lastly, twist the muslin to extract any leftover liquid from the herbs.

7 Decant the liquid into a prepared tincture bottle. Use a small funnel for this step if you don't have a steady hand. Tighten the lid and date and label the tincture.

- If you're storing this for long-term without using until later, consider sealing the caps with **wax**.^[10]

8 Store and use. A tincture can have a shelf life of up to 5 years owing to the fact that alcohol is a preservative.^[11] However, know the properties of the particular herbs you've used, and follow the guidance of the recipe from which you're making the tincture in terms of how long to keep the tincture for.

- Follow the instructions relevant to your tincture for usage; consult a qualified, reputable herbalist or a health professional if you need more information and bear in mind that herbal treatments can be dangerous if you don't know the properties of the herb and its consequences.

Community Q&A

Will higher alcohol content make a better tincture?

 In general, yes. Most herbalists will use Everclear.

Zora Degrandpre, N.D. [Flag as duplicate](#) Not Helpful 0 Helpful 2

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Can I use the old bud to make another batch?

 No. The yield from the old bud is probably going to be so low that it would be useless.

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Should the herbs be chopped? Is it advisable to placed chopped herbs in a blender with alcohol and puree? Would this not maximize the extraction of compounds?

 The traditional herbalist would likely avoid using a blender. It wouldn't necessarily maximize the extraction, but it is an easier and faster approach. Try it and see how well it works for you!

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Can you use chocolate vodka?

 That would not be recommended. You would be adding ingredients such as the chocolate flavoring, which would dilute the herb.

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Can you heat the tincture to drive off the alcohol?

-  You can "burn off" the alcohol by putting the dose into a cup of boiling water and drinking it as a tea.

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wikiHow
Contributor**Why are tinctures stored in dark places?**wikiHow
Contributor

A large number of the medicinal compounds in tinctures are both light-sensitive and air-sensitive. They may break down with prolonged light exposure. Keep in mind, however, that even when stored in cool, dark places, the compounds are likely to break down over time anyway.

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Can I use the same procedure with coconut oil as a base?wikiHow
Contributor

You can use coconut oil to make herb-infused oil, but tinctures need alcohol.

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Tips

- It is cheaper to make your own tinctures than to buy them from a health store.
- Avoid using pots made of steel, iron, and any other metal. Some herbs react to them.
- A coffee filter can be used in place of the muslin cloth.
- Tinctures last longer than dried herbs, usually up to 2-5 years.
- You can "burn off" the alcohol by putting the dose into a cup of boiling water and drinking as a tea.
- You can make combinations of herbs if you have instructions to follow from a reputable source.
- You can control the quality of the herb product in the tincture by making adjustments; follow the tincture instructions.

Warnings

- High concentrations (about 40+%) are flammable so watch out if you are working near heat, or especially open flames.
- Some herbal remedies that are fine for the general population can be harmful for specific members of the population, such as infants, children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and persons with lowered immune systems or allergies. Know the properties of the herbs and the possible complications of the patient!
- Keep out of the reach of children and pets.

- For dosing information consult the "Physician's Desk Reference for Herbal Medicines" or a reputable herbalist book. Again, if you don't know, consult your doctor or a qualified health professional before using.
- Always consult your doctor or a qualified health professional before using any herbal treatment. If you don't know what you're doing, then don't do it; get expert advice.

Things You'll Need

- Mason jar(s) or other wide mouth jar with lid
- Unbleached muslin cloth
- Label / marker
- At least 80 proof vodka or other suitable alcohol
- Fresh or dried herb product, powdered or cut and sifted

Sources and Citations

1. James Wong, *Grow Your Own Drugs*, p. 34, (2009), ISBN 978-1-60652-119-9
2. Humbart Santillo, *Natural Healing with Herbs*, p. 38, (1987), ISBN 0-934252-08-4
3. James Wong, *Grow Your Own Drugs*, p. 34, (2009), ISBN 978-1-60652-119-9

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