

Drink Your Herbs: Teas, Tisanes, and Tinctures

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Medicinal Disclaimer

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Some Definitions

- **Tea**
 - Leaves of the tea plant steeped in water
- **Tisane**
 - Any other herb(s) steeped in water
- **Tincture**
 - Herbs steeped in liquid other than water
- **Tonic**
 - An *effect*, not a preparation



True Tea:
Camellia sinensis



True Tea

- Cured leaves of the tea plant, *Camellia sinensis*
- Prepared as infusion
 - Hot or boiling water poured over leaves
 - Type determines optimal temperature
- Steep before drinking



Components of True Tea

- Five significant components in all true tea
 - Essential Oils
 - Polyphenols
 - Phytonutrients
 - Enzymes
 - Methylxanthines
- Each work differently in the human body
- Tea may contribute to a healthy lifestyle



Potential Health Benefits of True Tea

- Cardiovascular health
- Cancer risk reduction
- Immune function
- Oral health
- Obesity and body composition
- Stress reduction



White Tea

- Least processed of all teas
 - Young buds picked while tightly enclosed in new leaves
 - Leaves not rolled or crushed in processing
- Most delicate in flavor and aroma
- Least caffeine of all teas
 - 10 – 15 mg per 8 oz cup
- Use water at 175° F
 - Boil, then cool 3 minutes



White tea

Green Tea

- Lightly processed
 - Leaves heated immediately after plucking
 - Heat prevents leaves from withering or oxidizing
 - Dry leaf retains its green color
- Low caffeine
 - 25 – 35 mg per 8 oz cup
- Use water at 175° F
 - Boil, then cool 3 minutes



Oolong Tea

- Midway between green and black teas
 - Leaves withered, then rolled, and allowed to partially oxidize
- May be steeped multiple times, 1-3 minutes each
 - 1st: 30 – 50 mg per 8 oz cup
 - 2nd: 15 – 25 mg
 - 3rd: 5 – 10 mg
- Use water at 195° F
 - Boil, then cool 2 minutes



Oolong tea

Black Tea

- Most popular in the Western world
- Fully oxidized
 - Leaves picked, allowed to wither, then rolled or crushed
 - Allowed to oxidize until black
- High caffeine content
 - 40 – 60 mg per 8 oz cup
- Use water at full boil, 212° F



Pu-erh Tea

- Grown only in Pu-erh county, Yunnan Province, China
- Typically pressed into cakes, then aged and fermented for months to years
- May be darker than black tea
- Smooth in taste
- Very high caffeine
 - Green Pu-erh: 30 – 40 mg per 8 oz cup
 - Black Pu-erh: 60 – 70 mg
- Use water at full boil, 212° F



Tisanes: Herbal “Teas”



Tisanes

- Infusion or decoction from plants other than *Camellia sinensis*
- May be medicinal or consumed for enjoyment
- Caffeine free
- Served hot or cold



Types of Tisanes

- **Leaf**

- Lemon balm, mint, tulsi (holy basil), rooibos

- **Flower**

- Rose, chamomile, hibiscus, lavender

- **Bark**

- Cinnamon, slippery elm, black cherry bark



Types of Tisanes (*continued*)

- **Root**

- Ginger, echinacea, chicory

- **Fruit / berry**

- Raspberry, blueberry, peach, apple

- **Seed / spice**

- Cardamom, caraway, fennel



Types of Tisanes *(continued)*

- **Blend**

- Different types of plants or multiple parts of same plant

- **Other plant material**

- Moss, stems



Preparing Tisanes

- Infusion
- Decoction
- Decoction + Infusion



Infusions

- Used for delicate plant parts
 - Leaves, flowers, and soft, aromatic seeds
- Place plant parts in container, cover with hot or boiling water
 - Heat-resistant glass, ceramic, stainless steel, etc.
 - Never aluminum!
 - Steep for as long as desired, strain before drinking
- May be consumed hot or cooled to room temperature and refrigerated



Decoctions

- Used for hardy plant parts
 - Bark, roots, berries, mushrooms, hard non-aromatic seeds
- Start in cold water and simmer until volume reduced by half, usually 20 – 30 minutes
 - Do not use aluminum pot!
 - Double decoction: reduce volume by $\frac{3}{4}$
- Remove from heat, strain before drinking
- May reuse herbs; refrigerate between uses



Decoction + Infusion

- Prepare decoction, remove from heat
- Add herbs to be infused



Proportions for Infusions and Decoctions

- **Folk method**

- 1 teaspoon of **dried**, cut and sifted herb, or herbal mixture, or 2 tablespoons of **fresh** herb per 8 oz water
- One handful to one quart water

- **Weight method**

- 0.5 – 5 grams dried herb or herb mixture per 8 oz water



Tinctures: Herbal Extracts



Tinctures vs. Extracts

- All tinctures are extracts, but not all extracts are tinctures!
- Tinctures have alcohol as the solvent
- If using any other liquid, e.g., water, vinegar, glycerin, etc., the preparation is an extract



Solvents

- Water
 - Extracts almost everything except resins
- Alcohol
 - Extracts almost everything except minerals and trace elements
- Glycerin
 - Similar to alcohol, but requires fresh, not dried, materials
- Vinegar
 - Extracts minerals, trace elements, and alkaloids
- Oil
 - Extracts oils and resins



Advantages of Alcohol-based Tinctures

- Alcohol generally extracts and concentrates more valuable medicinal compounds
- Concentrated, fast-acting
- Won't spoil if made with at least 80-proof alcohol
- Retain potency for years if stored properly
- Portable and easy to tuck into a purse or traveling bag



Tinctures are Potent! Use With Caution!

- Do your research!
 - How, why, when, to use a particular plant tincture, and in what dose
- Make 100 percent certain of the identity of the plant
- Tincture only plants that have not been treated with pesticides
- Don't use plants collected around the edges of commercially farmed fields or close to roadsides.



Materials Needed

- Plant material
- Bottle of 80 proof or higher alcohol
- Glass jar with tight lid
- Cheesecloth
- Funnel
- Small, dark glass bottles for storage of finished tincture



How Much Plant Material to Use?

- **Fresh Herbal Material: Leaves & Flowers**

- Finely chop or grind clean herb to release juice and expose surface area
- Only fill the jar 2/3 to 3/4 full with herb
- Pour alcohol to the very top of the jar
 - Cover plants completely!
- Jar should appear full of herb, but herb should move freely when shaken



How Much Plant Material to Use? *(continued)*

- **Dried Herbal Material: Leaves & Flowers**

- Use finely cut herbal material
- Only fill the jar 1/2 to 3/4 with herb
- Pour alcohol to the very top of the jar
 - Cover plants completely!



How Much Plant Material to Use? *(continued)*

- **Fresh Herbal Material: Roots, Barks, Berries**
 - Finely chop or grind clean plants to release juice and expose surface area
 - Only fill the jar 1/3 to 1/2 with fresh roots, barks, or berries
 - Pour alcohol to the very top of the jar
 - Cover plants completely!
 - Jar should appear full of herb, but herb should move freely when shaken



How Much Plant Material to Use? *(continued)*

- **Dried Herbal Material: Roots, Barks, Berries**
 - Use finely cut herbal material
 - Only fill the jar 1/4 to 1/3 with dried roots, barks, or berries
 - Pour alcohol to the very top of the jar
 - Cover plants completely!
 - Roots and berries will double in size when reconstituted!



Alcohol Percentages

- **40% – 50%** (80 – 90 proof vodka)
 - “Standard” percentage range for tinctures
 - Good for most dried herbs and fresh herbs that are not super juicy
 - Good for extraction of water soluble properties
- **67.5% – 70%** ($\frac{1}{2}$ 80-proof vodka + $\frac{1}{2}$ 190-proof grain alcohol)
 - Extracts the most volatile aromatic properties
 - Good for fresh high-moisture herbs like lemon balm, berries, and aromatic roots
 - The higher alcohol percentage will draw out more of the plant juices



Alcohol Percentages *(continued)*

- **85% – 95%** (190 proof grain alcohol)
 - Good for dissolving gums and resins, but not necessary for most plant material
 - Extracts the aromatics and essential oils bound in a plant that do not dissipate easily
 - The alcohol strength can produce a tincture that is not easy to take and will also dehydrate the herbs. Stronger is not always better!



Extraction

- Use plastic lid for ease of use, screw on tightly
- Store in a cool, dark place
- Shake several times per week and check alcohol levels
 - Herbs must stay submerged
 - Top off with more alcohol as necessary to prevent mold and bacterial contamination
- Allow to extract 6 – 8 weeks



Extraction *(continued)*

- Drape a damp cheesecloth over a funnel
- Pour contents of tincture into an amber glass bottle
- Allow to drip, then squeeze and twist until you can twist no more!
- Optional: Blend herbs into a mush and strain remaining liquid
- Label with as much detail as possible
- Keep extracts in a cool, dark place and your tinctures will last for many years.



Cautions

- Tinctures are potent!
- Do not use without doing research as to dosage
 - Seek guidance of physician or qualified herbalist
- Overdosing can be harmful
- Some common herbs interact with prescription medications



Enjoy Drinking
Your Herbs!

