

**Drink Your Herbs:
Teas, Tisanes, and Tinctures**
A Talk Presented at Garden Fest 2018
by Kathleen Harrington, Herb Society of America—Baton Rouge Unit

Medicinal Disclaimer

It is the policy of The Herb Society of America not to advise or recommend herbs for medicinal or health use.

This information is intended for educational purposes only and should not be considered as a recommendation or an endorsement of any particular medical or health treatment.

Ideas and Recipes

5 Easy Ways to Add Tea to Your Next Meal

1. Use tea instead of stock for soups.

Sometimes the desire for soup comes on strong, but the pantry or freezer is short on stock. Have no fear; get busy steeping! Dragon Well green tea and Lapsang Souchong black tea are the two types of tea to keep on hand for brewing your own substitute stock. The green tea works well with vegetables, fish, and poultry, lending its savory, more mellow notes. The black tea offers a smoky flavor that pairs well with beef, mushrooms, and heartier flavorful ingredients. Rooibos is a caffeine-free infusion that would lend its earthy, honey-toned notes to soup too.

Try making butternut squash soup with rooibos, and chicken soup with Dragon Well green tea. It will add savory, herbaceous flavor that would match up well with the chicken and could even be the base for a white chili.

2. Turn tea into a spice mix.

Think of tea bags as convenient, pre-portioned spice packets. When ripped open, the finely cut leaves resemble oregano or basil and can be sprinkled into recipes just like those herbs. Stir a teaspoon or two of tea from bags of Moroccan mint green tea into Greek yogurt with other spices to make a dip or add the leaves to a veggie-filled quiche custard.

3. Add tea to poaching liquids.

Brewed tea works wonders when it comes to poached dishes. It imparts subtle nuances that infuse into both aromatics and protein while cooking. Try poaching Portobello mushrooms in smoky lapsang souchong black tea, or some fish in a broth of jasmine green tea with fresh ginger and onions.

4. Cook your beans and grains with tea.

Swap out water for brewed tea when cooking your next pot of beans or rice! Lapsang souchong black tea imparts a hint of smokiness to beans, while matcha green tea gives rice a grassy green color and flavor.

5. Infuse tea into dessert.

Whole-fat dairy and tea marry well together. Infuse puddings or custards with the subtle flavors of tea by steeping tea in warmed milk. The tea-infused milk dresses up desserts with a bit of intrigue — try infusing Earl Grey tea into chocolate custards, or some chai spice in a batch of pudding pops.

From: <https://www.thekitchn.com/5-sweet-savory-ways-to-infuse-your-recipes-with-tea-224655>

Making Your Own Tisane (Herbal Tea) Blends

A variety of herbal tea blends are available for purchase, but very often these commercial blends use artificial flavorings and aren't the real thing at all. You can avoid this problem by making your own blends using natural herbs and flowers you have grown or collected yourself. Mixing your own herbs for tea is as easy as choosing the scents that appeal to you and blending up your favorite choices.

In summer, you may prefer a delicious iced tea, while winter may see you brewing a nice warm tea to ward off the chill.

After mixing up your favorite blend of dried herbs for tea, keep it in a glass jar in a dark place. Use at least one teaspoon of dried herbs per cup of water, more to taste. Experiment a little and come up with your own variations to call your own—you can create specialty blends for different purposes and give them away as personal gifts.

The Structure of an Herbal Tea Blend

While the field is wide open for whatever herbs you want to try, most good herbal tea blends follow a structure to provide a range of tastes.

Flowering notes. The basic blend includes flowery notes of some sort. Common options include violet flowers, chamomile flowers, dandelion petals, calendula petals, or wild rose petals. Add one part of this herb.

Placeholder flavor. After adding the flowers (fresh or dried), add a place-holding flavor. This will be the flavor that ties everything together and keeps an iced tea tasting strong enough to withstand a few ice cubes melting into it. Dried red raspberry leaves or dried nettles work well here. Add two parts of these herbs.

Fruity component. Next, a fruity or naturally sweet component is nice. Dried rosehips is a common choice here. These are sold in many herb shops or health food stores if you have not harvested your own. Another option here is hibiscus flowers, which are not only sweet and lemony flavored but also impart a rich, red color to your teas. Add one part of these herbs.

Cooling herb. Especially for summer iced tea, a cooling herb is an ideal final ingredient. Mint is usually most common here. You can add any combination or variety of available mint herbs you have. Another naturally cooling herb that works well to round out your blend is borage—the leaves or flowers (or both) can be used. Add one part cooling herbs to finish your recipe.

https://www.thespruceeats.com/make-your-own-herb-tea-blend-1762127?_ga=2.10710268.931934248.1528762245-1329174343.1528329237

* * *

TranquiliTea

These calming herbs can help with relaxation. No exact measurements needed here; your “part” can be a teaspoon, a tablespoon, a cup, etc. Just maintain ratios.

4 parts chamomile
2 parts lemon grass
2 parts rose petals

Combine the herbs in a glass jar and shake to mix.

To use, add 1 teaspoon of tea mix for each serving to a tea ball or strainer and steep by covering with boiling water for 5 to 10 minutes.

If you wish, you can add a touch of honey or a pinch of stevia for sweetness.

Adapted from: <https://www.bulkherbstore.com/blog/how-to-make-your-own-tranquil-tea-blend/>

ImmuniTea

This tisane uses classic immune-boosting ingredients that are rich in antioxidants and vitamins. It makes a great hot tea for the winter colds-and-flu season.

- 1 part elderberries
- 1 part elderflowers
- 1 part chamomile
- 1 part rose hips
- 1 part astragalus
- 1 part echinacea

Mix all the herbs together and store in an airtight container.

To brew, use a tea ball to steep 1 teaspoon of tea blend in hot water for 20 minutes.

From: <http://realfoodoutlaws.com/immunithea-wellness-herbal-tea/>

* * *

Tummy Tamer Tea

This tisane consists of herbs that heal and soothe the stomach and digestive tracts.

- 1 part calendula
- 1 part fennel
- 1 part marshmallow root
- 1 part chamomile

Finely, mash, grate, and/or mince herbs and mix together equal parts of each to store in a glass jar until ready for brewing.

Steep in a preferably glass teapot or tea infuser for five minutes, then enjoy!

Adjust to taste any of the above herbal ingredients for what satisfies your unique pains and personal preferences.

Adapted from: <https://www.voxnature.com/herbal-teas-digestive-tummy-tamer/>

* * *

Herbal Chai

Warming and relaxing. Great for children.

- 12-18 cloves
- 14-18 cardamom pods
- 2 sticks cinnamon
- 4 slices ginger root
- 2 teaspoons fennel seeds (optional)
- 2 tablespoons rooibos
- 5 cups water
- 2 cups milk
- honey

Crush cloves, cardamom pods, cinnamon sticks, and fennel seeds in a mortar and pestle until they are broken open.

Place the crushed herbs and ginger slices in water and slowly simmer for at least 20 minutes.

Add the milk and allow it to warm, then remove from heat and add the rooibos.

Steep for 10 minutes and strain.

Add honey to taste.

Adapted from: <http://mamarosemary.com/blog/2012/10/25/after-school-teas>

Simple DIY Elderberry Tincture

2 parts elderberries
1 part echinacea leaf
½ part peppermint leaf
Vodka

Combine all herbs in a large bowl and mix well.

Place herbal mix in a glass jar.

Pour hot, but not boiling water over the herbs until they are rehydrated. (Not enough water to make the herbs float, but enough to moisten all the herbs.)

Pour Vodka over herbs, leaving one-inch headroom in jar. Put the lid on the jar and tighten. Shake until everything is well mixed.

Store in a dry, cool area, like a cabinet, for 2-3 weeks. It is best, but not mandatory, to shake the jar once daily.

After the appropriate time has elapsed, strain herbs off using a cheesecloth.

Store in a clean glass jar and label with ingredients and date prepared.

Suggested dosage: 30 drops daily (for an adult) for prevention of viral infections is usually the recommended dosage for this type of tincture. If you come down with something, you'd want to take that amount 3-4 times a day throughout the course of the illness.

Adapted from: <https://www.bulkherbstore.com/blog/diy-elderberry-tincture/>

* * *

Good Night Sleep Tight Sleepytime Tincture

2 parts chamomile flowers
1 part valerian root
1 part hops flowers
1 part passionflower
1 part skullcap
1 part lemon balm
1 part peppermint leaf (This is added both for flavor and to help with digestion which can sometimes be a cause for sleep issues)

Combine herbs together in a bowl. Store in an airtight container when not in use. Label blend and date made.

Fill a wide-mouthed mason jar 1/3 full of dried herbal mixture.

Fill mason jar to the top, covering herbs, with 60 proof or better vodka.

Allow to steep in the jar for 4-6 weeks, shaking daily to mix.

Strain tincture into tinted dropper bottles using a cheesecloth or strainer.

To use: Take 1-2 droppers-full 30 minutes prior to bedtime. If you awaken in the middle of the night, you can safely take another dropper-full without feeling groggy in the morning. You can make this with vegetable glycerin (a sweet option great for children but doesn't have as long of a shelf life as alcohol), or even apple cider vinegar. Tinctures made with alcohol are the most effective.

Safety

This tea/tincture is NOT for use during pregnancy. Though many of these herbs are safe to take for sleep issues, they should not be taken for more than 14 consecutive days at a time. A sleep problem that persists longer than 2 weeks should be looked into with a doctor. This tea/tincture should not be used in conjunction with antidepressants/MAO inhibitors, sedatives, or anti-convulsants.

Adapted from: <http://www.thehippyhomemaker.com/good-night-sleep-tight-sleepytime-tea-tincture-good-nights-rest/>

Trusted Sources for Herbs

(<https://www.motherearthliving.com/health-and-wellness/bulk-herb-wholesalers-you-can-trust-zmez16jazolc>)

Frontier Co-op, <https://www.frontiercoop.com/>

Seasonings, herbs, food and drink, personal care, supplements

Mountain Rose Herbs, <https://www.mountainroseherbs.com>

Bulk organic herbs, spices, and essential oils. Bottles, presses, strainers and infusers, seeds, extracts, books

Oregon's Wild Harvest, <https://www.oregonswildharvest.com/>

Herbs listed by product type and health concern; biodynamic herbal tonics

Pacific Botanicals, <http://www.pacificbotanicals.com/>

Herbs and spices, sea vegetables, superfood powders, fresh herbs, bulk seeds for propagation

References

The Difference between Tinctures, Tonics and Teas... Oh My!, <https://www.nourishingherbalist.com/2013/07/23/the-difference-between-tinctures-tonics-and-teas-oh-my/>

Helps untangle the terminology.

The Tea Spot, <http://theteaspot.com/about-tea.html>

Overview of the types of *Camellia sinensis* teas, brewing information, etc.

Tea & Health: An Overview of Research on the Potential Health Benefits of Tea, <http://www.teausa.com/teausa/images/TeaCouncil-ResearchDoc-2015.pdf>

Detailed information and references to peer-reviewed articles.

What Is a Tisane?, <https://www.thespruceeats.com/tisane-herbal-infusion-basics-766322>

Guide To Herbal Infusions Tisanes and Teas, <https://www.herbs-for-health.com/herbal-infusions-tisanes-and-teas/>

Introduction to herbal infusions.

Herbs and Health, <https://www.arbortea.com/health-benefits-herbal-tea/>

Overview of health benefits of some common components of tisanes, e.g., blueberry, burdock root, chamomile, dandelion root, ginger root, etc.

Herbal Infusions and Decoctions - Preparing Medicinal Teas, <https://chestnutherbs.com/herbal-infusions-and-decoctions-preparing-medicinal-teas/>

Techniques and dosage recommendations.

How to Make Herbal Teas, Herbal Infusions and Herbal Tinctures, <https://www.motherearthnews.com/natural-health/herbal-remedies/how-to-make-herbal-teas-infusions-tinctures-ze0z1202zhir>

Learn how to prepare basic herbal remedies such as teas, infusions and tinctures; three easy recipes included.

Guide to Making Tinctures, <https://blog.mountainroseherbs.com/guide-tinctures-extracts>

Clear, easy guide to understanding the process of tincture-making