

Making Herbal Infusions, Medicinal Oils, Salves, and Tinctures at Home





Notes on Making Herbal infusions, Medicinal Oils, Salves, Tinctures

This handbook includes shorthand instructions on how to make basic herbal preparations at home. It is intended for those of you who have been intrigued enough by something you have read on our website, Anniesremedy.com to try your hand at making your own home remedy. This handbook does not give any expansive explanations on using herbs -actually it gives none at all.. These instructions are designed to be used when you have already figured out what to use and why, and are in fact on the way to your kitchen apothecary needing only a basic recipe, measurements, and paper to make notes.

The pages can be read on the computer, but are designed to be printed out, all at once if you like or just as you need them. Before collecting this information in one place, I found myself printing out the same things over and over again, how to convert between cup and milliliters and ounces , the ratio of oil to wax in a salve, a good base for bath salts, etc . Plus, I always need scratch paper to take notes on how things went when trying new plants, herbs and recipes. These notes are many times consolidated and entered into the database that powers Anniesremedy.com

You may wish to journal your results in your own collection, no matter how you keep it. May you find something along the path that brightens your day.

We hope you come back and visit with us often. I welcome your comments and questions. Please email me at members@anniesremedy.com

Always work with common sense and respect for the powder of herbs and of all green and growing things.



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Herbal Infusions Tisanes and Teas

Herbal tea making is just as much of an art as it is a science. There is so much variation in the strength of herbs used to make herbal tea that even the most exact measurements cannot guarantee exact dosage of any one “active” constituent. This is usually not a concern because most herbal teas only have toxic effects when taken in wildly high amounts. And yet the power of the synergy of whole herbs taken in this most basic form may be the most powerful way to experience them. So consider the following measures as guidelines rather than unbreachable rules. Color, taste, aroma all will signal you when the brew is “just right”.

Tools: Teapot, kettle, strainer. Optional: A French press works well for leafy herbs fresh from the garden. Teapots and infusion vessels should not be metal as this can cause unwanted chemical reactions; Use ceramic, porcelain, enamel, or glass.

Basic Tea Ratio : Two cups water (500 ml)(1 pint) to one ounce dried herb, (1 to 2 tablespoons), or 1-2 teaspoons per cup. Use roughly twice as much fresh, leaves and flowers as they have much more volume. Depending on the herb you will generally use hot to boiling water. Pour hot water over herb in a closed container and leave to steep.

Brewing time : 10 minutes and up. Infusing herbal tea is unlike brewing “tea”, *Camellia sinensis*, which becomes bitter and undrinkable if left to infuse over five minutes. Most herbal teas benefit from a longer steeping time, the better to extract the medicinal properties. You need not throw out the leftovers either, and may want to reuse them as a “starter” for another fresh batch. Brewing the herbs in a closed container like a porcelain teapot prevents any volatile compounds such as essential oils from escaping.

Strain: Or not. I often just let the herbs settle to the bottom and pour off the top, letting the herbs soak in the water. My favorite teapot has a built in strainer which prevents loose leaf tea from clogging up the spout when pouring. The second cup is often better than the first. With practice you will get a feeling for how strong you like your drink.



Sun tea: Put fresh or dried herbs in a glass jar filled with water and place in a hot, sunny windowsill for several hours.

Moon Tea: A moon tea is a cold infusion left to steep overnight. *The mystics among us place the herb in an open crystal glass or bowl directly in the light of a full moon.*

These infusions are subtle, preserving the character of fresh, aromatic herbs like chamomile, mints and balms that can be lost when heated.

Some of my favorite teas are: Fennel seed, Lemongrass, Lemon balm, chamomile, cinnamon, cardamom, motherwort, St. John's wort, Valerian

Decoctions

Unlike infusions, decoctions are boiled. Woody roots, non-aromatic seeds and barks are suited to this method.

Tools: You will need a non-reactive, heavy saucepan. Aluminum pots are the worst culprits for possible contamination of your herbs. Glass, ceramic or enamel pans should be used. My favorite pan is a Corningware® 1 quart pan with a see through glass lid. It even has convenient measure marks on the inside.

Ratio: Amounts can vary, depending upon taste and potency of the herbs, however 1 to 2 teaspoons of herb, (3 to 5 grams by weight) to each cup of water is a good starting point. Roots and barks are more concentrated, having less volume and in most cases more potency than aerial parts, (stems, leaves and flowers) of the same plant. They are chopped, grated or bruised to help release the active ingredients.

Heating: Always start with cold water, many herbs benefit from soaking in cold water before brewing.



Slowly bring the herbs to a slow boil over a low heat. Keep the pot covered and simmer for 10 to 20 minutes. Some recipes will call for the liquid to be reduced by a certain percentage to achieve the right strength. Take off heat and leave covered while your brew cools to drinking temperature.

Straining: Roots and barks settle to the bottom naturally, allowing you to decant the clear liquid off the top.

Storage: Most herbal teas should be used within a 24 hour period and are best brewed in small batches. Refrigerate any unused portions in a clean glass jar with a lid.

Some of my favorite decoctions: Dandelion root, Eleuthero, sassafras, sarsaparilla, ginger, reishi mushroom, and white willow.



Measures and Weights

Volume Measures

- 1 ml = 20 drops
- 1 teaspoon = 5 ml = 100 drops*
- 1 tablespoon = 15 ml = 3 teaspoons = 1/2 ounce
- 1 ounce = 30 ml = 6 teaspoons = 2 tablespoons
- 2 ounces = 60 ml = 12 teaspoons = 4 tablespoons = 1/4 cup
- 4 ounces = 120 ml = 24 teaspoons = 8 tablespoons = 1/2 cup = 1 stick of butter
- 1 cup = 237 ml = 16 tablespoons = 8 ounces = 1/2 pint
- 1 pint = 500 ml = 16 oz = 2 cups = 1/2 liter
- 1 quart = 946 ml = 32 oz = 4 cups = 2 pints
- 1 liter = 1000 ml = 33.8 oz = 4.23 cups = 1.057 quart**
- 1 gallon = 3785 ml = 128 oz = 16 cups 8 pints = 4 quarts = 3.78 liters
- 1 barrel = 31.5 gallon

Approximate Equivalentents

- 1 quart (liquid) = about 1 liter
- 1 pinch = less than 1/8 teaspoon (dry)
- 1 dash = 3 drops to 1/4 teaspoon (liquid)
- 1 teaspoon = 1 dram



*5 ml=1 teaspoon 100 drops (of water). Oils, including essential oils, can have different size drops depending on the size of the dropper itself and viscosity and cohesion of the oil.

**1 quart = .9463 liter and can be considered equivalent for all but the most exacting measures. The conversion between metric liters to and cups, pints and so forth does start to have some rounding errors. So stick to one system within a recipe and if you can't eyeball the difference in a measuring cup don't worry about it.

***Fluid Ounces vs dry ounces are a source of endless confusion in recipes. A cup is a measure of volume, but a dry ounce is a measure of weight. So to convert cups to ounces you need to know what is in the cup. For instance granulated sugar: 1 cup = 7.055 ounces. White flour: 1 cup = 4.409 ounces.

Weight Measures

* Metric to US measures are rounded off

- 1/2 oz = 14 grams
- 1 oz = 30 grams = 16 drams
- 8 oz = 250 g = 1/2 lb
- 16 oz = 500 g = 1 lb
- 32 oz = 1000 g = 2 lbs = 1 kilogram



Herbal Oil

Herbal oils are an easy and very satisfying way to use herbs. Its as easy as 1,2, 3

1. Put chopped up herbs in a jar and cover with oil
2. Shake the jar when you go by it in the kitchen. Wait a week or two.
3. Strain out the herbs and enjoy your homemade oil

Ratio: 1 part dried herb to 5 parts oil is a very common herbal oil ratio, the important thing being to make sure you submerge all the plant matter, so no spoilage occurs. Dried herbs soak up oil quickly, so check your batch in a day or so and add more oil if needed.

Leaves should be chopped finely, by hand or in a food processor. Roots and barks should be coarsely ground to the consistency of cornmeal.

Heat speeds the process of extracting the herbal properties into the oil. It can be supplied from the sun shining in a warm kitchen window, the pilot light on the oven, or directly on the stove in a water bath, however an electric device with a thermostat is best for maintaining a consistent, low heat of apx. 100 degree F which is what you are aiming for. Yogurt makers and electric roasters do a great job. Most crockpots are set too high, but can be modified with a dimmer switch to provide more control. (This is beyond my skill set.)

Cold oil infusions can be used for delicate, aromatic herbs such as lavender, lemon balm, and calendula where you don't want to lose any of the volatile properties to heat evaporation, or want to use a carrier oil that does not tolerate heat well. Simply let the herbs soak in the oil in a cool, dark cupboard for a few weeks.

Finishing: Once you judge the oil is done, strain into a clean jar while still warm

Let settle overnight, (a few days if you used fresh herbs). Any gunk and water left in the oil will separate and settle to the bottom.

Decant the clear oil off the top and discard any sediment.



Tips:

Mason canning jars are excellent vessels to make herbal oil.

Using a high quality organic oil such as virgin olive oil, sesame, or safflower oil is as just as important as the quality of the herbs used.

Add one tablespoon of apple cider vinegar or white wine to help break down the plant material.

Straining your oil well helps to preserve it.

Herbs that contain a lot of moisture such as fresh garlic and ginger should be heated uncovered to encourage evaporation.

Some very useful oils to make are: Comfrey, cayenne, calendula, and lavender.

While the oil is at room temperature add a few drops of essential oils such as lemon or rosemary to enhance the healing properties as well as a nice fresh scent.

Store finished oils away from heat and light to preserve shelf life.

For a stronger oil, add a fresh batch of herbs and let infuse for two more weeks.



Salves Balms and Butters

Herbal Oil + Wax

Ratio : 3 oz oil to 1 oz beeswax (liquid measures)

Lip Balm 2 oz oil to 1 oz wax

Summer salves: 2 oz oil to 1 oz beeswax

Oils can be turned into simple salves with the addition of wax to harden the oil. The more wax you use the harder the salve. Firmer salves are more protective, like lip balms, softer salves are more penetrating and useful for treating cuts and scrapes.

Liquid carrier oils : Almond, Apricot, Olive, Safflower, Sesame, Hazelnut, Jojoba, Tamanu, etc

Liquid herbal oils: Calendula, Rosemary, Comfrey, Cayenne,

Solid Oils: Shea butter, Cocoa Butter, Coconut*

Water: Distilled water, witch hazel, herbal tea, aloe gel, hydrosols, tinctures

*Coconut gets soft in summer salves. Substitute wax for 1/2 the amount

Heat: oil and wax together until completely melted, pour off into jars to cool. You can melt the wax separately to reduce the amount of time you have to heat the oil , this also makes it easier to measure.

Balms: Add any essential oils while the oil is still warm and cap tightly to preserve the aroma.



Basic Body Butter

- 4 tablespoons solid oil (*Shea, Coconut, Cocoa)
- 1 -2 teaspoons liquid oil - (vitamin E oil, carrier oil, herbal oils)
- Essential oils - 7 to 10 drops

Using an electric mixer, cream all the oils together until it gets nice a nice airy consistency and spoon into clean jars.

Cocoa butter is hard to work with at room temperature, coconut can be too soft, but shea is just right and my favorite butter to use for this method.

Country Hand Cream

- 3 oz grated hard white soap
- 4 oz wax
- 3 tbsp glycerine
- 2/3 cup oil + 25 drops essential oils or vitamin E
- 3 tbsp liquid (rosewater, tea, aloe)
- Melt soap in a bowl with 6 tbsp boiling water and stir until smooth
- Heat oils, wax, glycerin together, add remaining liquid
- Take off heat, start blending in soap and stir until it thickens
- Add essential oils
- Spoon in clean jars



Petroleum Ointment

When you need a protective barrier against moisture for cuts and scratches

- 6 tbsp petroleum jelly
- 1/2 tsp wax
- 1/3 tsp anhydrous lanolin *
- 10 drops tea tree oil
- Melt jelly, wax and lanolin together slowly in a double boiler stirring constantly
- Add antibacterial essential oils like tea tree or lavender

*(sheep wax, contains no water) optional. You can choose to substitute more jelly.

Cream

3 oz liquid oil + 1 oz solid oil + 1 1/2 oz wax + 4.5 oz water

- Melt all oils and wax together
- Let cool to body temperature
- Add warm liquid to mixing bowl
- Dissolve 1/4 tsp borax with a tablespoon of boiling water
- Drizzle in oil as you blend/whisk the mixture
- Your cream should thicken as it cools
- Add any essential oils and blend well

Store away from heat and light. Creams are the most unstable of creations - oil and water will separate in time and are very sensitive to cold and heat fluctuations. Make small batches and share freely with friends.

I have found that when using alcohol tinctures as a part of the water portion, you get more of a gloppy lotion than a cream.



Poultices and Compresses

Poultices and compresses are applied externally and are commonly used to treat swelling, pain and congestion. They can be as simple as crushing a few leaves of basil to apply to an insect bite or putting a used tea bag on a black eye.

Easy poultice

1. Fill 2 clean socks or muslin bags with chopped herbs
2. Lay in a shallow bowl and pour enough hot water over the bag until it is well moistened.
3. It should be hot, but not unbearably so
4. Apply to the treatment area until it is cool, alternating bags.

Eye Poultice

1. Tea bags are the perfect size to use for eyes.
2. Dip the tea bag in hot water just briefly, it should be very warm, but not hot enough to burn Lay back, relax and apply to closed eyes until cool.
3. You can use regular tea bags, or fill empty tea bags or small muslin bags with herbs of your choice

Good herbs to use: Chamomile crushed apples, red clover, green and black tea and raspberry leaf.



Chest Congestion Poultice

1. Chop herbs well or process in a blender.
2. Moisten with apple-cider vinegar or hot water.
3. Mix the herbs with whole wheat flour or cornmeal, until a paste holds together. The proportion should be 1 part herb to 3 parts flour paste.
4. Spread the mixture on a warm, moist cloth and fold the ends and sides over.
5. Oil the skin before applying to keep the poultice from sticking.
6. Cover with plastic wrap, a blanket, or heating pad set on low to help retain the heat.

Good herbs to use: Fried Onions, Comfrey leaves, Mustard Seed, Cayenne Pepper

Compress (Fomentation)

A hot compress is a cloth, flannel is best, that is soaked in a strong herbal tea, oil, or lotion. Most compresses are used hot; cool compresses are used to stop bleeding and to treat headaches. To treat burns, let the compress cool to room temperature.

To use compresses simply soak the cloth, wring out excess moisture and apply to the affected area. Always make sure the compress is not so hot as to burn the skin. Cover with plastic to help retain heat if you wish.

A few drops of peppermint oil on a cool compress do wonders for a headache.

Good herbs to use: Castor oil hot packs are perhaps the best treatment for lower back pain I have tried.



Powdering Herbs

Powdering herbs is a three step process - drying, grinding and sifting. Powders are used to make herbal capsules, body powders, tooth powders, and making spices for cooking and baking recipes. This may seem like a lot of work considering that most herbs and spices are widely available for sale already finely powdered. The problem with powdered herbs is that they lose their potency, flavor, and aroma very quickly - even when properly stored. The quality of freshly powdered herbs makes it well worth the effort. You can save a ton of money too.

Processing herbs for powder

1. Start with herbs that are dried and brittle. Break them into small enough pieces to fit into a coffee/herb grinder either by hand, or by using a food processor.*
2. Grind the plant material into a fine consistency as you can with an electric coffee/herb grinder.
3. You will be left with some gravel-like chunky pieces in your powder.
4. Position a fine mesh kitchen strainer over a bowl and use a pestle (or the back of a spoon) to sift and press the ground spices through the mesh.
5. Store the powder in a clean jar with a tight fitting lid. You can save any small, hard pieces that remain in the strainer for use in tea.

Tools

- The Vitamix® blender has an almost cult following among herbalists. If you see one on at a garage sale you may want to snatch it up. Economy blenders and food processors will do a decent enough job on all but the hardest plant roots and branches
- If you wish to make a large quantity of herbal capsules you might want to invest in an encapsulating device. I use the “Capsule Machine”, purchased from Mountain Rose and get good results.



Using Essential Oils

Essential oils can be used in many convenient ways to enhance your home and health.

Essential oils can have different size drops depending on the size of the dropper itself and viscosity and cohesion of the oil. A teaspoon can have anywhere from 40 to 100 drops of oil, but you can use 20 drops per ml as an average if you wish.

1 teaspoon = 5 ml oil

Everyday uses

Diffuse essential oils in aroma lamps, diffusers, and potpourris to kill airborne germs and viruses, and enhance mood and spirit.

Clean and disinfect your home with essential oils such as lemon, tea tree and cinnamon. Just add a few drops to a basic cleaning solution of half vinegar half water.

Add essential oils to baking soda for a carpet fresh solution.

Add essential oils to massage oils, making sure you test for skin sensitivity first. Essential oils can add powerful physical and emotional healing to massage therapy.

Add essential oils directly to baths, or dilute them with body oil, bath salts, or honey. Essential oil baths soothe body and soul.

Add oils to shampoos and hair rinses for shiny, healthy hair.

Vinegar Rinse

4 parts warm water to 1 part vinegar

Use a strong rosemary herbal tea to replace water portion for dark hair. Use chamomile for light hair. Add a few drops of the corresponding essential oils to the mix, or try with orange or tea tree highlights.



Use Sage for itchy scalp or dandruff

Shampoo

1 cup water or 1 cup strong herbal tea (rosemary, sage, nettle, chamomile, calendula)

3 oz castile soap

1/4 teaspoon olive oil

(use sesame oil for oily hair and jojoba for dry hair)

30 to 40 drops essential oils

Herbal Oils and Balms

Add essential oils in the final steps of making herbal oils and balms, after all heating is done. They add a final touch to individualize and empower your creations to exactly suit your needs.

Baths/Showers

Add the essential oil to your washcloth and rub briskly while standing under the running water. Use a decongestant oil like eucalyptus to ease congestion from a cold, or to simply wake up.

When adding the essential oils to the hot bath, wait until the water has stopped running, so they don't evaporate. You can dilute the oils in a base oil or honey, or add them neat, using a total of 10 to 14 drops per bath as a general rule.

Diffusers

Aroma Lamps



15 to 20 drops can be used at a time in most standard sized lamps. Candle lamp bowl should be of a nonporous material, like ceramic, marble, glass or porcelain.

Room Spray

As a general rule use 15-30 drops per cup of liquid for room mist sprays, depending on your preference and the strength of the essential oils.

Use a new plant sprayer filled with warm water

Body Spray: Use a base of witch hazel and distilled water. As a general rule use 15-20 drops per cup (8 oz.) of liquid for body sprays, depending on your preference and the strength of the essential oils.

Massage Oils

1-2 drops of essential oil per teaspoon or 5 drops of essential oil per tablespoon of base carrier oil.

2 tablespoons = 1 ounce = 10-12 drops (2 percent dilution)

For use on young children and frail adults you want to cut the amount of essential oils in half.

For blends meant only to treat a small area such as liniments for pain, the ratio of essential oils in the blend can be increased. Increase the dosage slowly until you reach the desired effect. Keep in mind that too great a concentration of essential oils can have unwanted effects, for instance large amounts of lavender become stimulating instead of relaxing.



Smokes, Smudges and Incense

As late as 1925, hemp-tobacco blends were still sold everywhere in Europe, and a pipe with tobacco and hemp was called Sunday pipe or farmers pipe. In addition to hemp and tobacco, many other herbs work well as smoking blends.

Classic British Tobacco

I have enjoyed smoking this myself on occasion, adjusting the herbs to suit what I have on hand. Traditional smoked in a pipe.

Herbs:

Coltsfoot is the basis for many smoking mixtures. Use coltsfoot for half the amount with the other half coming from a combination of the following herbs:

Chamomile, Lavender, Rosemary, Thyme, Bogbean, Eyebright, Wood Betony

Other herbs suitable for smoking include: corn flower, hemp, lobelia, mint, mullein, mugwort, sage, sweet woodruff, speedwell, veronica, and yarrow.

Burning resins

Another way to benefit from herbal smoke is to burn resins. Frankincense and myrrh are powerful aromatics well suited to creating a meditative and celebratory atmosphere in a room.

The purest form to use is resin pieces, most premade incense is adulterated with additives.

- Light a charcoal round on a non-flammable surface or burner and let it burn down to a glowing ember.
- Carefully place a small piece of resin on the charcoal - even a small piece releases a surprising amount of the heady smoke

Charcoal rounds are not meant to be reused



Smudges

Burning herbs is a sacred practice used for prayer and purification that is respected in most herbal traditions. Plants you have nurtured yourself from seed hold the most personal power, but if you don't have herb plants available to you, Mountain Rose sells whole leaf white ceremonial sage, sweetgrass braids, and other aromatics that are ready made for smudges.

Mugwort, bergamot, mints, yarrow, bearberry and tobacco (not from cigarettes!!), may all be used to good purpose. Experiment with different aromatic herbs to find the combination that speaks to your spirit.

Ceremonial Smudge

- 2 fresh stalks mugwort
 - 2 fresh stalks yarrow
 - 2 fresh stalks bee balm
1. Gather several fresh stalks of your favorite herbs with leaves and blossoms intact.
 2. Lay a sheet of newspaper open. Hold the herb stalks tightly in one hand, and bend them gently over onto themselves to form a 7 to 8 inch long wand.
 3. Roll up your herb wand tightly in the newspaper, working from an angle, and secure with string or rubber bands.
 4. Let the bundle dry thoroughly out of direct sun for at least several days. You can periodically unwrap and check the progress, securing the bundle more snugly each time. Humid weather will delay the drying process.

When the herbs are dry, unwrap the bundle and discard the newspaper. Tie the herbs with fine cotton string or cord. Ignite one end to burn. You can perch the bundled herbs upright in a coffee can filled with an inch or two of sand, or use as a ceremonial smudge.



Tinctures and Liniments

Herb/menstruum ratios :

Dry 1:5 - Fresh 1:2

First number is the weight of the herb in grams

Second number is the volume of the menstruum, (the extracting solvent)in ml

Example: 150 grams of dried herb to 750 ml menstruum

Example: 500 grams fresh herbs to 1000 ml menstruum

The most important measure in home tinctures is to always use enough alcohol to completely cover the herb. Leave some headroom in the jar so you can top it off. Dry herbs suck up the liquid and often become exposed.

Processing Herbs:

Chop fresh herbs finely with a knife. Roots and barks should be ground to the consistency of fine cornmeal, or if too hard to grind, chopped and slices as thin as possible.

Alcohol: Using an 80(40 percent alcohol by volume) to 100 proof (50 percent alcohol by volume) Vodka provides the alcohol-water ratio you need without having to add anything. If pure grain alcohol (190 proof) is used, water will have to be added. Stay away from flavored vodkas for best results.

Tips: Don't use city tap water that contains chlorine, use either distilled or pure spring water.

- Glass canning jars are perfect for making tinctures and vital when preserving volatile compounds.
- Cap tightly, put the jar in a dark place at room temperature, and shake at least once daily. I use a kitchen cupboard that I open on a regular basis, so I don't forget the shake the bottle.

Processing Time: The average time is 2 to 3 weeks, with fresh flowers and leaves taking less time than dried roots and barks. Tinctures will take on the color and aroma of the herb when done.



Finishing

Strain the contents well using cheesecloth for really thick stuff, or coffee filter for fine material.

Allow to settle overnight in a clean jar to let the gunk settle to the bottom.

Decant the clear liquid off the top, restraining to catch any remaining particles. The better job you do straining out sediments, the longer your tincture will last.

Storage

Store in a labeled, amber glass bottle away from light and heat.

Tinctures will keep for 6 months to a year. If it starts to collect sediment in the bottom, gets an off odor or changes color, discard it.

Other menstruums: Vinegar and glycerin are also used to make tinctures in cases where you want to avoid alcohol when making remedies for children's and pets. The same procedure is used as with alcohol tinctures; and while the end results are generally a bit weaker and not preserved for as long, this is rarely an issue in home tincturing.

Soaking herbs in wine is also an age old process of enjoying and preserving herbs.

Liniments

Liniments are made with the same procedure and tinctures, but use rubbing alcohol instead of vodka. Liniments are for external use only and should be labeled clearly and stored in a different place than ingestible tinctures.

Jethro Kloss 's Goldenseal & Myrrh Liniment

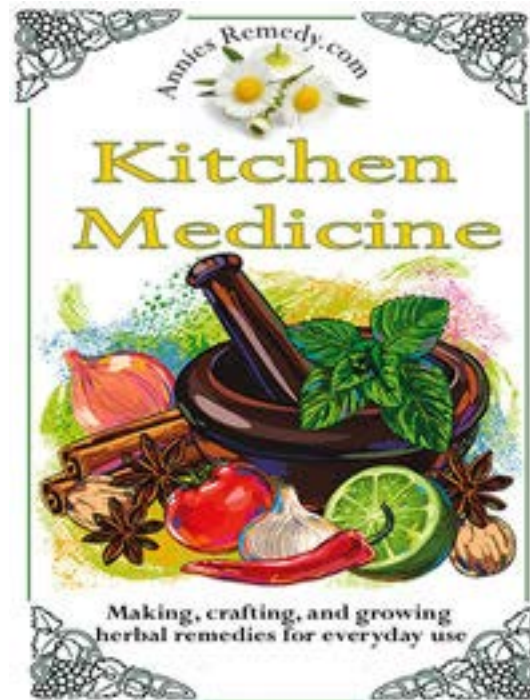
- 1 oz myrrh powder
- 1/2 oz goldenseal root powder
- 1/4 oz cayenne pepper powder
- 1 pint rubbing alcohol

1. Mix powders well and place in a clean jar with alcohol
2. Let stand for seven days, shaking well every day



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