

## METHODS OF PROCESSING HERBS

### DRYING:

Cut stem long and tie together and hang upside down in a warm, dry preferably somewhat dark place. Or ... set on a drying rack, place in a paper bag, or put in a dehydrator.

A fast way to dry non delicate herbs is to spread them on a bed sheet placed on the seat of an old pick up truck in the summer with the windows rolled up. I call this the Idaho redneck version of dehydration!

If you are drying something with high oil content such as rosemary, you may want to strip the leaves off the stem and place on a drying tray.

Delicate herbs such as flowers, I place on layers of tissue (not toilet ) paper and place in a wicker basket. Putting your herbs in Pillow cases are also a good way to dry your herbs as it keeps them dark but allow moisture to escape. If you are collecting the seeds it is best to hang them upside down in a paper bag, as the bag will catch the seeds as they dry and fall. It is important that your herbs are fully dry before storing them in sealed glass jars, I prefer to keep these as dark as possible to prevent oxidation and bleaching of the properties.

### POWDERING:

Once your herbs are dried you can powder them with a food processor, a coffee grinder or a mortar or pestle. If you wish to encapsulate your herbs they will need to be ground quite fine.

If you are using your herbs for teas or infusions or decoctions it may be sufficient to simply crush them fairly finely them up by rubbing them between your hands.

**HERBAL WATER INFUSIONS;** This is just a fancy term for Tea... weather it is made with boiling water or made as a cold infusion such as sun tea.

Bitter herbs, Mucilaginous herbs, are best cold water infused; as are lemon balm, marshmallow, slippery elm and comfrey. Let the herbs steep for at least 48 hours to fully extract the beneficial compounds.

**DECOCTIONS:** This is a concentrated form of hot infusion which is helpful for herbs that do not give up their beneficial chemicals easily and for woody parts or roots. Crush, chop or grind the herbs and place in cold water at a ratio of 1 ounce dried herbs per 16 ounce of cold water. Allow to soak for a few hours. Cover and bring to a slow boil, once water has boiled reduce heat to a simmer. Keep simmering until the volume of liquid has reduced to ½ of what you started with. Strain out the herbs and store in glass container in the refrigerator. Use within 48 hours.

**OIL INFUSIONS;** I have had good luck extracting the properties of herbs into oil using a crock pot with a warm setting. Place your herbs in the crock pot and cover with a high quality carrier oil such as organic olive oil. Heat on warm for 48-72 hours. If I am busy I just leave the herbs brewing in their bath until I am ready to bottle the oil or turn them into salves. The oil should have taken on the color of the herb you are extracting. Strain the oil out of the herbs using a colander or cheese cloth .

If I intend to keep this oil infusion at room temperature I will add some "Benzoin, Resin Absolute as a preservative. I have kept these for years in good form in a cool dark cupboard. Or I have also stored them in the back of a refrigerator to prevent the oil from going rancid

This oil has all off the beneficial properties of the herbs, so you can use this oil as is or you can make a salve of it.

**SALVES :** ( I designate a crock pot just for making salves as they are hard to clean well enough for food cooking... or I am lazy.) But you can also use a double boiler. Heat the herb infused oil in the crock pot at a higher setting, and shave in bees wax at a rate of 1 part bees wax to 4 parts infused oil. While this is melting together I clean and heat my small canning jars. Ladle the hot oil into the jars, add drops of essential oils of your choice as a preservative, stir in and screw on the canning lid. I have found that the jar will seal because the jar and oil is sufficiently hot. Lable and date.

#### **TINCTURES:**

If making tinctures for external use only a high % (90% is best ) rubbing alcohol can be used. Simply put your herbs in a glass jar and cover with the rubbing alcohol. Store in a cool dry place for 4-6 months or longer shaking daily if possible . When ready to use, Strain off herbs and bottle, and lable.

If you are making tinctures for internal use you substitute vodka or at least an 80 proof alcohol and follow the same procedure as above.