Tincture Infusions:

Tinctures are herbal extractions made and preserved in an alcoholic menstruum. Tinctures are more powerful and last longer than dried herbs. By making your own tincture, you can control the quality of the product you are making by starting with the herbs you collect yourself and ensure the purity of the final product.

Tinctures extract more of the medicinal constituents from plants- destroying most of the phytonutrients in the process. Tinctures are a water base, hence they can be used for both fresh and dried plants. Different herbs contain different constituents that are best extracted in different ways. Some herbs only extract in water, others in alcohol and some in oils, while others can be extracted in multiple menstruum yet require certain volume: weight ratios. Check your resources to learn about the best extraction method for the plant and part.

**Folk Method**

Dried or fresh herbs in powdered or cut forms (approx. 200 grams dried and 300 grams fresh)

80-100 proof vodka or rum (1 liter alcohol)

Wide mouth glass jar with lid

1. If using fresh herbs, finely chop your fresh herb (allowing for as much surface area as possible to come in contact with fluid).
2. Put herbs into clean jar and cover with alcohol about one inch over the surface of the herbs.
3. Seal the jar tightly so that liquid cannot leak or evaporate.
4. Label and shake at least once a day for at least two weeks.
5. When ready to bottle (decant), pour the tincture through a cheesecloth and strainer into another jar or amber colored glass bottle. Make sure to squeeze the saturated herbs, extracting the remaining liquids until no more drips appear.
6. Cap tightly, label and store in a cool, dark place.

**Measured Method**

This method is considered the “persnickety” method. It allows you to extract your herbs according to standard measurements and ratios that ultimately allow you to calculate the amount of herbs you are taking in grams. This is the “calculated” method that is necessary when making herbs to sell in stores or track a client’s herbal intake. This method is the same as a traditional folk method in that we are adding the menstruum to herbs, capping it tightly, labeling and shaking daily. The only difference is that we will be measuring the herbs by weight and alcohol by volume.

1. Measure weight of herbs in grams.
2. Calculate volume of menstruum in milliliters based on standard ratios.
3. Determine % alcohol for best extraction by looking at materia medica manual.
4. Follow Folk Method above using calculated herb/alcohol measurements.

* Weight of herb (grams) / Volume of menstruum (milliliters)
* Standard ratios:
* 1:2 for fresh herbs
* 1:4 for dry herbs with tough cellular structure (roots, seeds, barks)
* 1:5 for dry herbs such as leaves, flowers, stems and soft roots & bark
* 1:10 for toxic, low-dose herbs (eg. Lobelia, Poke Root) and puffy-herbs (eg. Mullein)
* Alcohol / Water Menstruum Ratio
* Different herbs contain different constituents that are best extracted in different menstrua– determine % alcohol in Materia Medica manuals
* 50% alcohol = 100 proof alcohol
* If you are using 190 proof grain alcohol, you can treat it like 100% to make calculations easy– multiply the total amount of menstruum desired by the percentage of alcohol suggested. The number you get is the volume of alcohol you will need. Subtract this number from the total you originally determined to find the volume of water you need (eg. 75% menstruum = 75%alcohol and 25%water. If you have 200 grams of dried herb and want to make a 1:5 ratio, then you’ll need 1,000mL of menstruum that is 75% So, you will need 75% x 1,000mL = 750mL alcohol and 250mL water)

**Preservation & Storage**

Tinctures do not need to be decanted. Some folks choose to keep herbs in the infusion for as long as they use it. I do not care for any herbal material exposed to air, so I choose to decant mine. I also believe they have a longer shelf life when stored in air-tight amber-glass jar.

The lifetime of a tincture is debatable. Some say they last 1 year, others will argue 5, and research has found tinctures holding up for almost 100 years. I generally keep mine for 5-8 years for personal use. If sealed tightly and stored in an amber glass jar in a cool, dark location, tinctures can have a long-shelf life.

**Dosage**

A standard dosage is 1 teaspoon, 1-3 times daily, diluted in tea, juice or water.

Mild Tonics= 5 dropperfuls 2-3x/day

Strong Herbs= 10-25 drops 3-4x/day