

How to blend herbal tea



Course booklet

Welcome

Hello and welcome to the course,

The aim of this course is to provide you with a basic knowledge of teas and infusions and some practical skills so that you can start blending teas at home.

This course is an introductory level course and is really a starting point in the exciting world of medicinal plants.

Safety

Herbs and medications

Herbs are often seen as 'safe' because they are natural but that is not the case, and when someone is taking medications they can interact with herbs (as well as a wide range of supplements and vitamins).

If you are taking any medication I do not recommend you take any herbs internally without first consulting a medical herbalist to check for interactions.

Herbs and particular medical conditions

In these courses we will only be looking at self limiting conditions, things that you would generally not seek medical attention for. e.g. coughs and colds.

It is important to seek medical attention when appropriate, either through a local doctor or local medical herbalist.

Herbs and pregnancy

While there are some herbs that are beneficial in pregnancy and breastfeeding, they must be strictly controlled and for that reason I recommend anyone who's pregnant to see a medical herbalist for advice before taking any herbs (internally) at any stage of pregnancy (or breastfeeding).

External preparations can be used for pregnant women but if you are ever in doubt check with a local medical herbalist.

Teas and infusions



Before we get started you may want to recap on teas and infusions and how you make them as we'll be using those techniques throughout this course.

Teas, or infusions, are when a medicinal plant is soaked in hot water.

Traditionally an infusion is where the herb is steeped in hot water for several hours.

Teas are steeped for much less time and are weaker but still valuable in their medicinal uses.

Infusions are often used for acute conditions such as colds and flus.

The heat of the liquid and its journey through the body is most beneficial in acute conditions, for example, drinking peppermint tea for indigestion.

Herbs that are made into infusions are usually leafy, flowery herbs; chamomile, peppermint and feverfew are examples.

The usual dosage for an infusion is 1-2 tsp; the number of doses per day would depend on the condition and the herbs being used. For example, in colds and flu's

infusions are usually taken 4-5 times a day, whereas in the case of indigestion, one dose would usually be sufficient.

If you are taking any medications or are pregnant seek professional advice before taking any herbal medicines.

Infusion recipe

1tsp of herb (5g)

1 cup of hot water

Either add the herb to a tea strainer and leave in the cup of hot water for 10 minutes. Or add the herb to the cup of hot water, cover and allow to sit for 10 minutes, strain using muslin or a fine tea strainer.

Herbs can be blended together in an infusion and you can experiment at home with this.

The best way to understand a herb is to try it as a tea and see what effects it produces in your body.

Teas or infusions can be added to the bath for skin conditions, such as oats and chamomile for eczema.

You can also use teas or infusions as hair rinses (such as rosemary), or as foot soaks (with calendula).

Bath teas



Teas or infusions can be added to the bath for skin conditions, such as oats and chamomile for eczema. All you need to do is add the herbs to an old sock and pre soak in a bowl of boiling water.

Then carefully put the sock so that the hot tap of the bath runs through it. You can either leave the sock in the bath to infuse more or take it out and enjoy. The great thing about this method is there is very little mess.

Of course this is beautiful but not for everyone!

Hair rinses and foot soaks

You can also use teas or infusions as hair rinses (such as rosemary), or as foot soaks (with calendula).

Fresh vs Dried herbs

Watch my video all about using [fresh and dried herbs](#).

Decoctions



Decoctions are stronger than an infusion and uses herbs that are too rough to make into an infusion like barks, roots and resins.

Decoctions are where roots and barks are ground and then boiled in a saucepan for 10-15 minutes. Herbs that are made into decoctions are usually too tough and hard to be made into an infusion.

Examples include; hawthorn berries, dandelion root, yellow dock root, valerian root and ginger.

Simples

A 'simple' is a term that is often used to mean one herb used as a medicine, but it can also mean simple as in very easy and quick to make.

Simples for Indigestion

There are many herbs that can aid digestion and they are best taken as a tea. If you are using tea bags of the herb you may need to add several tea bags to a mug of hot water to get a good strength. If you are using dried herbs the general rule of thumb is 1 – 2 tsp of dried herb to 1 cup of boiling water. If you are using fresh herbs double that.

Herbs to try for indigestion: Peppermint, chamomile, fennel, cinnamon, caraway, ginger.

Simples for Improving circulation

Taking ginger tea is an excellent way of gently improving circulation.

Other herbs to aid circulation: chilli and rosemary

Simples for Sore throats

Sage tea with a tsp of honey is an excellent gargle and it can then be drunk.

Coughs and colds



Thyme is an excellent herb for coughs as it not only fights any infection it also reduces the strength of the cough and helps to move any mucous.

Headaches

Rosemary tea is an old recipe for headaches, as is peppermint and

lavender. A strong tea or infused oil can also be applied to the temples and wrists.

Simples for Natural sleep

Chamomile is a lovely tea to take before bed to aid relaxation and natural sleep.

Additional herbs for restful sleep: lime flower, lavender and valerian.

Herbs that are great for tea



First, watch my video on [how to taste herbs](#).

How to choose herbs for teas

Once you tasted a few herbs you will know which ones you personally would prefer in a tea. Although if you're looking for a medicinal tea rather than an everyday tea

that is going to influence the ingredients you choose.

What is the purpose of the tea you'd like to make?

Are you looking to help someone recover from a cold or are you making a refreshing everyday herbal tea?

2.How much of the tea will you be drinking?

How many cups of tea will you be making?

On average you'll need 1 - 2 tsp (5 - 10g) of herbs per cup of hot water (multiply this up for tea pots). So are

you going to make a simple tester batch of one or two cups?

Or are you making a jar full to give to a friend for hay fever season? (This could be a very large jar!).

3.What ingredients do you have?

If you're making a special tea for someone you may want to buy special ingredients but usually you'll be making teas out of dried herbs and spices you already have, or ones that you can easily forage.

Leafy herbs for tea

Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

Part used: Leaves

Traditional uses: Was traditionally used in weddings as a sign of fidelity, and used to improve memory.

Modern uses: To increase circulation and support blood vessels, and improve memory.

Way to use rosemary: Rosemary makes a lovely pain relieving infused oil for headaches. Make an infused oil with rosemary and this can be rubbed on to the temples, and around the back of the neck to relieve headaches.

Rosemary is also an 'uplifter of the nerves and spirit', and so can be taken as a tea, or mixed with other herbs to do just that.



Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

Part used:

Leaves, roots and seeds

Traditional uses: Blood

cleanser, iron supplement

Modern uses: anti-histamine, anti-inflammatory

Ways to use nettle: Nettle is a natural anti histamine and a very safe herb. As it is edible it can be used by anyone, from children to the elderly and does not interact with any medications. Nettle tea can be a great way to use nettle as an antihistamine, taken 1 – 3 cups of nettle tea per day a month prior to hay fever to put it to the test!

Nettle was used traditionally as an iron supplement, and is also great as a soup (make sure you use the young fresh leaves in spring.)



Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*)

Part used: Leaves and stems

Traditional uses: 'To remedy a sad heart and strengthen the brain.'

Modern uses: Used to calm nerves and anxiety and aid sleep.

Ways to use lemon balm: As a fresh herb it makes a lovely cordial, and herbal ice cubes for cocktails. As a tea (either fresh or dried) or tincture, lemon balm relaxes the nerves. Try a cup of lemon balm tea at the end of a stressful day.



Cleavers (*Galium aparine*)

Part used: Leaves and stems

Traditional uses: To sieve milk, and the seeds were used as a coffee substitute.

Modern uses: To support the body after infections by improving lymphatic drainage.

Ways to use cleavers: When it's fresh and young cleavers can be used as a spring tonic and as a pesto. It can also be used as a tea when recovering from an infection.



Marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*)

Part used: Leaves and roots

Traditional uses: The root was eaten as a delicacy by the Romans, and is the original source for marshmallow sweets.

Modern uses: To soothe sore throats, reduce coughs, treat urine infections, and digestive problems.

Ways to use marshmallow leaf: Marshmallow leaf makes a lovely soothing cough medicine, either as a tea that's gargled and then swallowed, or made into a decoction and then cough syrup. It also makes an excellent glycerite for sore throats and coughs.

Flowery herbs for tea



Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

Part used: Flowers and leaves

Traditional uses: Used to improve eye sight and treat burns.

Modern uses: To improve lymph function and drainage, to heal wounds and the improve the skin.

Ways to use calendula: Calendula is a wound healer and can reduce bruises, make an infused oil with calendula and then an ointment. This can then be used to heal scars and reduce bruising. Calendula can also be combined with thyme as an antifungal foot soak.



Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*)

Part used: Flowers and stems

Traditional uses: As a pain relieving wash and to treat jaundice.

Modern uses: To reduce bloating, and ease digestion, reduces itch in rashes.

Ways to use chamomile: Chamomile makes a lovely digestive tea, and the cold infusion can be used on rashes, and as an eye compress.



Lavender (*Lavandula officinalis*)

Part uses: Flowers

Traditional uses: As a cure for headaches and worms

Modern Uses: To ease digestion, to aid relaxation and reduce anxiety, and reduces inflammation externally

Ways to use lavender: lavender makes a lovely calming and relaxing tea but be careful it isn't too stimulating for

some people who are sensitive to it. You can make an infused oil that is a powerful wound healer and anti-inflammatory, great in a bruise ointment.



Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*)

Part used: Leaves, stems and flowers

Traditional uses: 'To make the heart merry'.

Modern uses: Used as an anti-inflammatory in arthritic conditions, as well as to reduce

bloating in IBS.

Ways to use meadowsweet: Meadowsweet was originally used as a flavouring in beers, and you can use the flowers as you would elder flower to make cordial (see hedgerow recipes). Dried as a tea meadowsweet is a gentle anti-inflammatory, and is often known as 'herbal gaviscon' as it coats the stomach lining and balances stomach acid. It can also be made into an infused oil/ointment for bruises.

Spicy herbs for tea



Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum verum*)

Part used: Inner bark

Traditional uses: To improve digestion and to reduce fevers.

Modern uses: Improves digestion, reduces bloating, reduces phlegm, balances blood sugar.

Ways to use cinnamon: add to teas in stick form, or chai teas in powder form, to improve digestion and balance blood sugar.

Star anise (*Illicium verum*)

Part used: Seed

Traditional uses: Coughs

Modern uses: helps improve digestion, alleviate cramps and reduce nausea.

Ways to use star anise: add to teas to improve digestion.

Fennel seeds (*Foeniculum vulgare*)

Part used: Seed

Traditional uses: It was said to aid long life, and improve eye sight.

Modern uses: To reduce bloating, reduce flatulence, and ease digestion

Ways to use fennel: Fennel can be used as a tea or tincture to ease digestion, either a cup of tea, or a tsp of tincture after a meal can be used for those who suffer from bloating and sluggish digestion.



Caraway (*Carum carvi*)

Part used: Seeds

Traditional uses: Coughs and to expel worms

Modern uses: heartburn, bloating, gas, loss of appetite, and mild spasms of the stomach and intestines.

Ways to use caraway: As a tea to improve digestion and reduce bloating.



Cardamom (*Elattaria cardamomum*)

Part used: Seeds

Traditional uses: For digestive problems and as an aphrodisiac (!)

Modern uses: Digestive problems, boost the immune system, anti-inflammatory and improve circulation.

Ways to use cardamom: As a tea to improve digestion and circulation.

Can I sell my own teas?

Yes you can sell your own herbal tea blends but there are some things you will need in order to do so in the UK.

If you are in another country it is important to check the regulations for selling tea, in Europe these will be classed as foods so go to your local authority and they will be able to advise you further.

In the UK

You need to get registered as a food business with your local authority. They will come out to the place where you'll make the teas and assess that you meet food hygiene regulations. They will also test that you have the appropriate weighing scales for your product.

You will be given a list of foods that can be sold as teas. It doesn't include all herbs and you will only be able to sell teas with ingredients from that list.

Your labelling and packaging must meet EU regulations for food.

You cannot make any medicinal claims for your tea as it is a food and not a medicine. There are guidelines on the Advertising Standard's Agency regarding this.

For more details on the legal stuff and how you can launch your herbal tea I recommend this book ['How to license products to be sold over the counter'](#) by Natasha Richardson.

The art of blending herbal tea

To get started blending your own herbal teas, firstly I would recommend watching the following [video](#), on how to blend herbal teas.

Here are some of my favourite example tea blends

Classic flu tea

Elderflower (*Sambucus nigra*) 25g

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) 25g

Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*) 25g

(Alternatives include: Boneset (*Eupatorium perforatum*), eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*), chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*).

Make a strong infusion of 2-3tsp of the herb mix to one cup of water and drink hot. Take 8 to 10 cups a day.

Hay fever tea

Nettle (3 parts)

Plantain (1 part)

Eyebright (1 part)

Elderflower (1 part)

Take 2 - 3 tsp (5 - 10g) per cup of hot water, 2 - 3 times a day during peak hay fever season.

Nettle tea on its own can be taken a month before hay fever season as a preventative.

Relaxation tea blend

This can be used for anyone wishing to relax more, either before bed to aid sleep, or during the day to ease the stresses and strains of daily life.

Chamomile (2 parts)

Lemon balm (1 part)

Limeflower (1 part)

Rose petals (1/2 part)

Add 1 - 2 tsp (3 - 5g) of the mix into a cup of hot water. During the day take 1 - 3 cups. Double up the amount if you want something to aid relaxation before bed.



The tea blending pyramid

This is a handy chart to help you get started blending your own teas, and accompanies my tea blending videos.

**Roots,
seeds &
fruits**

Rose	Citrus fruit peel	Oregano
Ginger	Turmeric	Juniper
Pepper	Bay	Rosehip
Cardomum	Cinnamon	Wood betony
Caraway	Nutmeg	Skullcap
Star anise	Elder berry	Basil

**Catalyst
herbs**
1/4 - 1 part

**Flowers &
leaves**

Marshmallow leaf	Lavender	Red clover	Lady's mantle
Rosemary	Primrose	Corn silk	Self heal
Plantain	Eyebright	Feverfew	Vervain
Thyme	Dandelion leaf	Ground ivy	Yarrow
Sage	Elderflower	Herb robert	Shepherd's purse
Lime flower/linden	Hawthorn leaf/flower	Honeysuckle	Mullein

**Secondary/
supporting
herbs**

1-2 parts

**Flowers &
leaves**

Nettle	Peppermint	Raspberry leaf
Oats/oatstraw	Garden mint	Apple
Cleavers	Meadowsweet	Lemon balm
Chamomile	Calendula	

Foundation herbs

3 parts

How to store dried herbs

See my instructional video on [how to store dried herbs](#).

Where to buy herbs

Sourcing good herbs can be a challenge, and it's important to use a reputable supplier and the same issues with food supply affect herbs, and even more important are things like pesticide use when you're going to be using a herb as a medicine.

If you're going to grow your own great, but not everyone has the time, inclination or space and there will always be some things that you are not able to grow.

In the UK I would recommend the following suppliers:

- [Baldwins](#)
- [Indigo herbs](#)
- [Urban Fringe dispensary](#)

For those in the US I would recommend [Mountain Rose Herbs](#).

Ideas for what to do next

If you're ready to learn more about herbs here are some of my tips for taking your knowledge further.

1. Why not plant a few herbs at home? Many will grow in pots, so you don't have to start off with a huge medicine garden (that will come later!).
2. Head out on foraging walks to learn about the flora near you, many foragers (and herbalists) are able to show you good places to forage and info about medicinal and edible plants.

What next?

Other courses you may enjoy

If you've enjoyed this course I have lots more. You can take a look [here](#).