



HERBAL FORMULATION BASICS

Formulations vs. Simples

- FORMULA IS A
BLEND OF
MULTIPLE HERBS

-SIMPLE IS ONE
SINGLE HERB



HOW TO CREATE AN HERBAL FORMULA

“Hmmm, what do I feel like?

What flavors go well together?”

Then I begin pulling jars, holding them, inhaling them, and then scooping this and that into the pot,

seemingly at random, letting my senses and gut instinct guide me. This is how many herbalists work to create blends, and no two people will make quite the same thing, yet it often all works.”

- Maria Noël Groves

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What's Your Goal?

Before you begin to craft your blend, first decide its purpose.

Do you have a particular health concern you want to address?

Is this a general tonic blend that addresses a variety of conditions for one person?

Or are you simply making a tasty tea that features a particular herb or flavor profile?

What is the best fit?

Will you make a tea daily, do you prefer the convenience of a tincture? Do your kids refuse to take their herbs without the sweetness of a syrup?

Anything that needs to be avoided like sugar, honey or alcohol?

Any allergies for sensitivities?

Is someone pregnant?

Any tastes that someone particularly loves or dislikes?

Ability to regularly take the herbal preparations with ease will greatly increase compliance!!

TYPES OF HERBAL PREPARATIONS



Tea (Water): Pros – inexpensive, gentle, hydrating, easily absorbed, normal, and the ritual alone of making and sipping hot tea is healing. **Cons** – inconvenient for some, some herbs may not taste great, hard to blend herbs that don't mix flavor-wise or require different steeping times and methods (ie: roots and leaves).

- **Tincture (Alcohol): Pros** – extract most herbs well, convenient to travel and take, shelf stable for years, easily absorbed. **Cons** – alcohol issues (addiction, allergy, religion), takes 4 weeks to make, doesn't extract minerals (ie: nettles) and mucilage (marshmallow, slippery elm) well. While 100-proof vodka works for most plants, fresh or dry, high-proof alcohol is more effective for resins (myrrh, boswellia) and fat-soluble constituents (turmeric). Low-alcohol decoction method preferred for mushrooms and polysaccharide-rich herbs like astragalus.

TYPES OF HERBAL PREPARATIONS



- **Syrups, Honeys & Cordials:** Pros – taste good, easy to incorporate into daily routine, gentle, syrups and honeys quell coughs. Cons – not always potent, high-sugar (and alcohol for cordials), shorter shelf life than tinctures.
- **Powders & Capsules:** Pros – convenient to take, homemade is inexpensive (but time-consuming to make), minimal taste, powders can be mixed in honey, nut butter, drinks (better absorption than pills). Cons – need to be digested, pills often not as effective as tea or tincture, store-bought products can be expensive, powders can be unpalatable, only dry material can be used, powders quickly degrade and are often adulterated or low quality in commerce.
- **Vinegars & Oxymels:** Pros – vinegar base enhances digestion/absorption, superior to alcohol for extracting minerals, alcohol-free alternative to tinctures, shelf stable for a few months to one year, honey in oxymels (a vinegar-honey extract) improves flavor of vinegar. Cons – vinegar base aggravates ulcers and some cases of reflux, honey in oxymels may be too much sugar, vinegar flavor may not be palatable, shorter shelf life than tinctures, not as potent for most plants compared to water and alcohol.

PRIMARY HERBS



- Primary Herbs:
 - The herbs that have the primary medicinal action (for a health condition) or primary flavor (for a tasty blend of tea). These can take up a small or large percentage of a formula.
 - Usually, though, they are relatively potent and direct in terms of action or flavor.
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SECONDARY HERBS



- Supportive Herbs: These herbs support the primary herb and whole body vitality. For example herbs that are tonic, nutritious, adaptogen, soothing. Flavor-wise, they might provide a nice base note to offset or compliment the primary herbs. Or, they might buffer a strong activity or potential side effect of a primary herb. Often these take up a large percentage of a formula.

DRIVERS AND OR SYNERGISTS



- Synergists: These herbs help put synergy to work. Movers and shakers are often spices (cayenne, black pepper, cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, peppermint) that increase circulation and improve digestion to enhance the absorption/action of the other herbs. Just a pinch of black pepper improves turmeric's absorption by 2,000 times, and a pinch of cayenne boosts green tea's cancer-killing ability 100 times that of either ingredient alone. Ginger enhances echinacea's anti-cold activity. Harmonizers (licorice, honey) tend to be sweeter bring flavors and actions together. In both cases they often improve the flavor of a formula. Often, just a small amount of a synergist is used. Cayenne, black pepper, and cardamom are so potent they easily overpower other herbs in your blend if you overdo it.

LOVE OR SPECIFIC INTENTIONS



- It can be nice to add herbs with specific intentions depending on the condition.
 - Roses for love, heart healing and protection.
 - Borage for courage and strength.
 - Flower Essences
 - Aromatics with aromatherapy
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EXAMPLE # 1



- SLEEP FORMULA
 - Key Herbs: Hops, Valerian, Skullcap, Passionflower
 - Supporting Herbs:
 - Nervines: California Poppy, Chamomile
 - Nerve Tonics: Milky Oat Seed, Ashwaganda, Hawthorn
 - Catalysts: Cinnamon, Spearmint

EXAMPLE #2

- Digestive Bitter Tonic
 - Key Herbs: Gentian, Dandelion
 - Supporting Herbs: – Aromatics: Cardamon, Chamomile, Ginger, Orange Peel, Peppermint –
 - Bitters: Burdock, Turmeric
 - Catalysts: Ginger
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HERBAL ENERGETICS REVIEW

- Hot - Cold
 - - metabolism - hot overactive cold underachieve
 - Tense - Lax
 - - tone - lax is muscle weakness, tense spasm
 - Damp - Dry
 - - moisture in body - dry is deficiency and damp is excess
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ENERGETICS CONTINUED

- Hot - excitations, irritation, stimulation
 - Cold - Depression, deep cold
 - Dry - atrophy and wasting away
 - Damp - stagnation
 - Tense - constriction, tension, contraction
 - Lax - relaxation
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ENERGETIC FORMULAS



- What is the primary energetic?
- Secondary energetic?
- Catalyst, Driver or Synergist?
- Herbs can warm (speed up metabolism) or cool (slow down metabolism)
- Minerals and Fluids: Herbs can moisten or dry tissues
- Tissue Tone: Herbs can relax tissues or constrict (tone) tissues

LET'S PRACTICE FORMULAS!

- Come up with custom herbal formulations for the following three cases:
 - 1) Red, inflammed, and sensitive skin abrasion, possibly from scratching, with white puss
 - 2) Sudden onset painful aching belly, intermittent cramping, hot mostly liquid diarrhea
 - 3) Heavy, congested feeling chest, cough producing thick mucous
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DOSAGES

- **Dosage of Tinctures**

- - 1 oz bottle is 30ml

- - one dropper full is 1 mil (30 drops)

- - - half a dropper (or one squeeze is 15 drops)

- - - **Infants (10 weeks to 3 years)**

- - 2 to 5 drops well diluted in water, milk, juice, taken 3-5 times daily

- - many herbs are safe, but low dose botanicals should be avoided (arnica, lobelia)

- - infants are very sensitive to botanical medicine and the lowest dose possible should be used

- - **Dosage for Children**

- - 4-10 years

- - average dose is 4-10 drops well diluted in water or juice, 3-5 times daily, low dose botanicals should be avoided in favor of gentler herbs

- - **Adults**

- - - 30-60 drops (1 to 2 droppers full diluted in water 3-5 times daily) t - this is a therapeutic intake and appropriate starting dosage
 - always start lower and build from there

- - Drop dosage is sometimes employed

- - **Senior Dosage**

- - seniors also tend to be sensitive to herbal therapy - good starting dose is 30 drops 3-5 times daily
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TEAS



- Teas dosages
 - totally depends on type of herb and why being taken
 - For tonic and nourishing herbs:
 - Kids - 1/2 cup three times a day
 - Adults - 1 or 1.25 cup three times a day (about a quart)
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DOSAGE CONSIDERATIONS

- This all varies based on
 - - body weight
 - - severity of condition
 - - herb you are using - the nature of the herbs
 - - large single doses are not as effective, rather with herbs we are gently nudging the body back towards homeostasis therefore lower dose, frequently is preferred
 - - Appropriate use
 - - get to know your herbs!
 - - ethical use/distribution of herbs is important!
 - - kava kava example
 - - herbs have a physiological affect, we would not want to use liver stimulating herbs (oregon grape) on someone who has an inflamed liver for example
 - - Pregnancy
 - - many herbs are not advised during pregnancy, generally because of affect on fetus, vascular system or uterus
 - - check contraindications in your herbal books
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Resources

Understanding Formulas from Stephen Horne RH AHG

The Art of Herbal Formulation - By Maria Noël Groves
