PRACTICAL TINCTURE MAKING

Higher alcohol is best for herbs whose constituents tend to be more volatile, resins, oils and others ex. Myrrh, echinacea,
The standard for most tinctures with high alcohol is 19 proof or 95% ethyl alcohol. Alcohol is astringent and dehydrates a plant over time. The “mark” is what’s left behind and consists of cellulose and other insoluable constituents (including minerals which are valuable).

Higher water is OK for extracting herbs where the extractive is mainly tannins.

TANNINS AND ALKALOIDS DON'T MIX

Vinegar is only for lobelia inflata

Demulcent and mucilaginous herbs do not tincture well. Not worth the trouble.

Maceration versus percolation methods
Dry versus fresh plant considerations

For tinctures and liquids it is best to use the metric system of mililiters (mL) or centimeters (cc).

1 ounce equals 29.57 cubic centimeters or mililiters.

100

BASIC TINCTURE STRENGTH

All ‘official’ tinctures re made with an alcohol and water solution or pure alcohol. The majority are made with 60% alcohol. The official definition of a tincture is a solution with at least 45% alcohol and an herb to menstruum ratio of 1:4
“A:B” is is the weight versus volume ratio or the number of grams of herbs in relation to the amount of menstruum in milliliters.

- Most tinctures of dried non-toxic botanicals represent the activity of 20 gm of dried herb in each 100 CC of tincture – this makes a standard 20% or 1:% W/V tincture.
- Tinctures of dried more intense or toxic botanicals represent 10 gm of dried herb in each 100 CC of menstruum or a 1:10 ratio
- Tinctures of fresh undried botanicals is with 50 gm of fresh herb in each 100 cc of menstruum. Or a 1:2 w/v ratio

100 cc or ml is equal to 3.38 ounces
For the sake of simplicity (folk method) the average amount of dried herb to menstruum would be one ounce to 4 ounces of menstruum.

A fluid extract is a 1:1 ratio which means it is stronger.

WINE EXTRACTS

Draksha or wine extracts utilizes the smoother digestive advantages of the grape as opposed to the harsher effects of grain alcohol.

The w/v ratios of wine is similar to that of alcohol tinctures but the dose that is given is more usually a tablespoonful 3 times daily.

Because of its acidic properties even though wine has less alcohol its extractive properties are similar to higher proof alcohol.

Because wines have a lower alcohol content they are more likely to undergo changes over time. If kept too long, wine deposits is astringent matter, flavor degenerates and it looses its strength. Make small quantities with no heat and stored in well-caped bottles in a cool, dark place.

Port wine has added brandy and its alcoholic strength can be raised to 30 to 40% which is 60 to 80% alcohol.

Madeira is the strongest of the white wines it is of variable quality. It’s alcoholic content is 6-7%.

Claret is a light red wine with 12 to 17% alcohol

Champagnes are charged with carbonic acid with alcohol content of 12%

Apple Cider is 5 to 10%
Mead (honey wine) is 9 to 11% alcohol.

VINEGAR EXTRACTS

Are generally weaker. They (especially apple cider vinegar) have the advantage of possessing a number of valuable nutritional elements such as mineral salts, sugar, starch, gum, potassium which all play a major role in human metabolism, respiration, blood conditioning and vitalization. Vinegar itself is a good tonic for the GI tract and helps to regulate PH.

They are the best botanical menstrua for applying to the face and hair for retaining youthfulness and beauty.
Besides lobelia inflate other herbs that can be extracted in vinegar include calamus, camphor, cinnamon, clove, garlic, nutmeg, peppermint, rosemary, rue, sage and wormwood among many.

Vinegar and glycerin are well tolerated by all and preserves for a very long time.

Dr Christopher’s famous anti-plague remedy consists of equal parts Oak bark, mullein, skullcap, lobelia and comfrey.

GLYCERITES

Glycerine is the sweet principle of oils and made its way into medicine in 1846. It is obtained through hydrolysis of vegetable, animal fats or oils. The process is somewhat complicated.

Glycerine is a fair extractive ranging somewhere between water and alcohol.

Glycerin is slightly antiseptic and has anti-fermentative properties, though inferior to alcohol.
Diluted glycerin is demulcent, emollient, soothing and healing.
Undiluted it is irritant and stimulant.
It easily absorbs water from the air and must be stored air-tight. It does not evaporate under normal temperature and produces a sensation of warmth to the skin and tongue.

In order to preserve with glycerin the menstruum needs to be at least 60% to 75% glycerin.
Dosage is usually 10 to 25 drops TID or QID.

Combine herbs in the same w/v method previously described but adding sufficient menstrua to establish the ¼ inch of menstruum above the settling herbs at the bottom of the jar.

Dr. Shook's method for making a glycerite

8 oz of powdered herb
2 quarts of distilled water (plus a little extra set aside)
¼ ounce potassium sulfate
8 oz. glycerin
Dissolve the potassium sulfate in water, add the powdered herb and simmer until it is reduced to 1 quart. Strain and retain the decoction and the herb separately. Again add enough water to cover the herb and simmer for 10 minutes. Strain and retain the liquid. Combine the two liquors and add the glycering and blend thoroughly. Cool the mixture and store in amber bottles in a cool place. This winds up with less than 20% glycerin. This should be refrigerated for full preservation.

An alcoholic glycerite is adding enough alcohol or herbal tincture made in alcohol to bring the alcoholic content up to 20 to 25%. This is how most commercial glycerites are made.

SPAGYRIC TINCTURES

These are alchemical preparations that are considered superior because the extract or transform all aspects of the plant into solution. It is based on the principle that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Practically speaking spagyric tinctures extract the valuable minerals in herbs which are usually discarded with the "mark" after such tinctures are made.

Spagyric medicine actually predates homeopathy by about two centuries. The former was first coined by the 16th century Renaissance visionary, Paracelsus, who abided by Hippocrates' dictum, "like cures like," as well as old-world herbal knowledge from China, Tibet, and India. Paracelsus espoused the principles of alchemy to work with medicine, dividing a plant into three basic parts:

- **Mercury:** The water element in which the essence of the plant is carried.
- **Salt:** The earth element, and the calcined ashes of the plant.

Suphur: The fire element and the essential oil of the plant.

- Spagyric liquid extracts versus herbal tinctures
- Herbal tinctures are typically alcoholic extracts of a plant or plants, although some varieties are made with vinegar, glycerol, ether, or some other material. Alcoholic extracts, however, should be avoided as they can damage the integrity of the extracted substance.
- Paracelsus and modern-day spagyrics process a plant to retain its botanical properties and nutrients before separating the three parts and extracting nutrients and energies therein before reuniting them. The careful separation, extraction, and reunification process ensures that as much of the plant's nutrition that can be drawn by modern technology is drawn into the liquid herbal extract. Equally important is the ratio of the said nutrients—which in synchrony allow the plant to live and thrive in nature—that is retained in the spagyric liquid extract.
- Both methods of nutrient extraction have their uses, but spagyric extracts are arguably more versatile in their use because they are always non-toxic and gentle. Spagyric extracts are easy to use internally and externally as complementary and natural remedies.