

INFUSIONS AND DECOCTIONS

What Are Infusions & Decoctions?

Infusions and decoctions are very simply extracting of herbs into water. Infusions are generally made from the softer parts of herbs like the flowers, tops and leaves, and decoctions are made from the harder or woodier parts of herbs like bark, lichens, hard fruits, larger seeds, and roots.

Water extracts like infusions and decoctions are excellent carriers of the plant's 'tonic' minerals which humans require for successful digestion, assimilation, elimination, toning repair and overall health. They are also a good way to drink more water!

How to Make an Infusion

An infusion is made by treating fresh or dried herbs with either hot or cold water to extract their medicinal and nutritional principles. Or in other words, making a hot infusion is just like making a cup of tea – simply pour boiling water over your chosen herbs and leave to steep.

1. Take 25g of coarsely ground herb per 500ml boiling water. (note this is a stronger dose
2. than a usual 'cup of tea')
3. Pour boiling water on the herb
4. Stir well
5. Cover the vessel tightly and leave for 10-20 minutes in a warm place
6. Strain and press out the 'marc' (the pulp)
7. Add enough hot water to make the infusion measure 500ml

Herbs Best Suited to Hot Infusion:

Many herbs can be prepared through a hot infusion, but this process is best for plant materials with a soft tissue structure so that the constituents can be easily extracted with gentle heat. Aromatic plants like Chamomile & Peppermint are often prepared through hot infusions, and are well suited to this although it is worth noting that heating will slightly damage their essential oils.

Herbs Commonly Hot Infused:



Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*)



Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*)



Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)



Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)



Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)



Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*)



Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*)

Herbs Best Suited to Cold Infusion:

Some herbs contain substances that are damaged by heating, and these herbs are best suited to a cold extraction. Herbs with a high content of carbohydrate rich mucilage (i.e. slimy or gloopy herbs) like Marshmallow & Mullein are better prepared through a cold infusion. Consider also using the cold method for herbs rich in aromatic oils, bitter principles, or those with a high mineral content. Cold infusions are simply made by steeping your chosen herb in cold water overnight to allow it more time to infuse.

Herbs Commonly Cold Infused:



Marshmallow Root (*Althea officinalis*)



Burdock Root (*Arctium lappa*)



Slippery Elm (*Ulmus fulva*)



Mullein Leaf (*Verbascum thapsus*)



Cleavers (*Galium aparine*)



Oats (*Avena sativa*)

How to Make A Decoction

A decoction is made by boiling either fresh or dried herbs in water. It is normally chosen for herbs which won't yield their active constituents at a lower temperature i.e. woodier or harder plant parts which aren't injured by heat.

1. Take 25g of processed herb per 500ml water.
2. Pour 500ml of cold water onto the herb. It is important to begin with cold water to allow complete extraction of the soluble constituents as the water gradually heats.
3. If time allows, let the herb macerate (soak) for a few hours prior to heating
4. Cover the container and slowly bring the ingredients to a boil
5. Decrease the heat and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes. The harder the material, the longer it will need to be simmered for.
6. After decoction press the herb hard to remove all of the solution
7. Allow the decoction to cool, and then strain the liquid. Add enough water to bring the solution up to 500ml

Herbs Best Suited to Decoction:

Any plant part that requires more consistent heat to extract its constituents is well suited to decocting i.e. tougher berries, bark, woody parts, roots, and some seeds.

Herbs Commonly Decocted:



Dandelion Root (*Taraxacum officinale radix*)



Oak Bark (*Quercus robur*)



Juniper Berries (*Juniperus communis fructus*)



Ginger Root (*Zingiber officinale radix*)



Willow Bark (*Salix alba*)

Preservation & Storage

Infusions & decoctions are intended for immediate consumption & won't store well. Consume within 72 hours, (ideally within 24), or freeze for later