

Favorite Herbal Infusions

Herbal infusions are potent water-based preparations. They are superb for extracting the medicinal properties of dried herbs. You can drink them or use them externally as skin washes, compresses, douches, sitz baths, or poultices.

How are they different from a tea? They are made using larger amounts of herbs and are steeped in an air-tight container for at least several hours. You can drink them at room temperature, reheated, or over ice. Quart size canning jars are ideal to use because they rarely break when you pour boiling water into them as long as they are at room temperature when water is added. They also allow for a tight seal.

To make a nourishing herbal infusion: Buy (or gather and dry) at least one ounce of nettle leaf, oatstraw or red clover blossoms. Place the ounce of dried herb in a quart jar. (One ounce equals one full cup of dried herb.) Fill jar to the top with boiling water. Cap tightly and allow to brew for at least four hours. Overnight is fine. Strain and drink 2-4 cups a day. Most menopausal women prefer their infusion iced, but you can drink it hot or at room temperature. A little mint or sage may be added to change the flavor.

Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) builds energy, strengthens the adrenals, and is said to restore youthful flexibility source of vitamins A, D, E, and K. For flexible bones, a healthy heart, thick hair, beautiful skin, and lots of energy, make friends with sister stinging nettle. It also encourages the renewal of intestinal villa. Reduces heat and phlegm and enhances jing It may make you feel so good you'll jump up and exercise.

Oatstraw (*Avena sativa*) reduces high cholesterol, increases libido, and strengthens the nerves. A cup of oatstraw infusion contains more than 300 milligrams of calcium plus generous amounts of many other minerals. Its steroidal saponins nourish the pancreas and liver, improving digestion and stabilizing moods. Oatstraw is best known however for its ability to enhance libido and mellow the mood. Do be careful whom you share it with, or you may find yourself sowing some wild oats. In Auryurvedic medicine, oatstraw is considered the finest of all longevity tonics.

Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*) is better in every way than its cousin soy. It contains four phytoestrogens; soy has only one (isoflavone). Red clover infusion has ten times more phytoestrogens than soy "milk," fewer calories, more calcium, and no added sugars. Red clover is the world's leading anti-cancer herb; soy isoflavone encourages the growth of breast cancer cells in the lab. Red clover improves the memory; Japanese men who ate tofu twice a week doubled their risk of Alzheimer's disease. Soy beverage can contain up to 1000 times more aluminum than milk, according to Sally Fallon, lipid researcher and fat specialist. She believes that "the highly processed soy foods of today are perpetuating . . . nutrient deficiencies. . . ."

Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) Used for its antioxidant activity, to lower cholesterol, improve vision, boost the immune system, improve heart health and for coughs, colds,

flu, bacterial and viral infections and tonsillitis. Elderberry juice was used to treat a flu epidemic in Panama in 1995. Elderberries have been a folk remedy for centuries in North America, Europe, Western Asia, and North Africa, hence the medicinal benefits of elderberries are being investigated and rediscovered. To brew: add a ½ cup of **Elderberries** and 1 T grated **Ginger** to 1 ½ quart of Water. Boil for 20 minutes. Sweeten if preferred.

Fenugreek Boil a teaspoon in a quart of water for 20 minutes for a blood cleaning, pancreas and blood sugar regulating tonic drink. Used in cooking or sprouting as well, traditionally in curries.

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