



Botanical Gifts Workshop with Elle Hendriks and Wendy Joyce

Recipes:

How to Make (and Use) Herbal Vinegar

Herbal vinegar is easy to make and provides a simple way to add flavour to salad dressings, marinades, and every day meals. This project does require some pre-planning, since the herbs must steep for at least a week (and often up to three weeks), but it's worth it.

Approximately one cup of fresh herbs is needed per two cups of vinegar. This can be adjusted to account for stronger tasting herbs (use less) or very mild herbs (use more). Also important — select herbs that are in good condition. Don't use herbs that are yellowing. Avoid using powdered herbs or spices as they will make the vinegar cloudy.

How to Make Herbal Vinegar (Makes 2 cups of herbal vinegar).

Ingredients

- 200 ml vinegar (I use raw apple cider vinegar from Coral Tree Organics in Otaki)
- 1/4 cup dried herbs or edible flower stamens loosely packed (today we are using Pohutukawa stamen)

Instructions

1. Gently heat 1 part apple juice to ¼ parts sugar (adjust depending on quantities you're making). For 2.5 litres of finished vinegar, use 1 cup apple juice and ¼ cups sugar.
2. Boil the apple juice until the sugar dissolves. Add the Pohutukawa and steep. Once cooled, bottle and place in dark place for 2-4 weeks.



Herbal Culinary Salts

Herbal salts are a quick and simple way to pack tons of flavour into meals – not to mention that they are a great way to preserve fresh herbs from your garden. I've found that homemade flavoured salts tend to get even better as they age over time (though they do eventually start to lose flavour, but that's months away!). Plus, herb salts also make a great homemade gift option for foodies or even party/wedding favours and work out much more cost-efficient than store-bought options!

The Ingredients

- **Salt** – I use flaky sea salt. Kosher salt also works very well.
- **Rosemary** – I use dried rosemary from my garden.
- **Sage** – use dried
- **Oregano** – use dried
- **Thyme** – use dried
- **Seaweed** – use dried and ground up

Other Flavored Salt Herb Options

- Lemon Zest/Orange Zest/Lime Zest
- Basil/Thai basil
- Celery
- Cilantro (Coriander)
- Dill
- Lavender
- Marjoram
- Mint
- Parsley
- Tarragon



How To Make Culinary Salt

Technically there are three ways to prepare any herb salt: the first is to use fresh herbs and store the salt in the fridge (for short-term use), the second is to use fresh herbs and dry them with salt in the oven (or at room temperature), the third is to use dried herbs (home-dried or store-bought). Today we are using home grown, dried herbs. Make sure your herbs are very dry or the salt may get mouldy.

Step 1: Prepare the herbs: wash and dry if necessary.

First, wash the herbs (rosemary/sage/oregano) and pat dry with a kitchen towel. Then separate the stems from the leaves. We are only using the leaves. The stems give a bitter taste to the salt so you can discard/compost them.

Step 2: Mix the herbs and salt in a bowl. Note: for finely ground salt, put the salt and herbs together in a mixer or grinder. Blend till it is a nice smooth refined green salt.

Step 3: Put into a glass jar and put it away. If you used fresh herbs, make sure to store in the fridge.

Optional step 4: Dry the salt mixture

To prolong the shelf life of salt mixed with fresh herbs, it's best to dry the mixture. Spread the salt mixture over a large baking sheet (or multiple sheets, if making a large batch).

To dry at room temperature: leave in a well-ventilated area, near a window if possible. This can take several days to dry completely depending on the weather/humidity (best for warmer climates).

To dry in the oven: place the baking tray in the oven and allow the salt to dry at 230°F/110°C. The time will vary depending on the herbs you use – I suggest paying attention between the 30-45 minute marks and then increasing time as needed, until dry to touch.



Herbal Magnesium Bath Salts

The most beautiful and medicinal soak for a lingering headache, tension, or muscular aches. If you don't have a bath, make this a foot bath! Our feet are often neglected, although they do such important work holding our bodies and anchoring us to the earth. You can absolutely get interpretive with this blend, utilising any fragrant herbs or flowers you have handy to assist the mind, body and spirit to deeply unwind. This soak also looks beautiful and makes the most thoughtful gift!

2 T dried rosemary

2 T dried rose petals/rosebuds

4 T dried lavender

1 cup Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate)

1.5 T olive or jojoba oil

A few drops of your favourite essential oil (choose ones that support the intended effect. For ex., lavender supports relaxation)

1. You can either place all ingredients in a bowl, combine, and put in a jar. Or, put the salts and oils in a bowl and mix. Then layer the salts and the flowers and herbs for a layered look.
2. Add the salts to a running bath or foot bath. You can supercharge this practice with relaxing meditation or soothing music.
3. Dry your body/feet and drain the bath water, composting the spent bath herbs.
4. Be sure to moisturize your skin and drink plenty of water after the bath because Epsom salts help activate the clearance of toxins. This soak is best done in the evening because it can make you feel tired after.



Herbal Love Truffles

Recipe by Wendy Nolan Joyce

These barely sweet adaptogenic*, carminative (relieves gas), and antioxidant truffles support your health and wellness. Plus they're yummy!

Ingredients:

1 cup tahini

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup almond butter

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup maple syrup

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup astragalus powder (can be bought online)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup ashwaganda powder (can be bought at Commonsense organics)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup dark cacao nibs

1 tsp each nutmeg, black pepper and ginger powder

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup coconut oil, melted

1 cup dark chocolate chips, melted

Method:

1. In a large bowl, mix everything that isn't a powder. Blend the powders together in a separate bowl, then fold in to the wet mixture. Add the melted chocolate.
2. Roll this dough into $\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter balls. If the dough starts to fall apart, add more honey.
3. After each ball is formed, roll in cocoa powder. Optional step: for an even more chocolatey truffle, first roll in melted chocolate, then cacao powder. Store in the fridge.



* Adaptogens are plant substances (often herbs) that have been found to help our bodies manage stress and maintain balance, or homeostasis. In other words, they help us adapt to [external stressors](#). By strengthening our internal systems, adaptogens can promote vitality, stabilize mood and improve performance and focus. They can be consumed as supplement capsules, teas or tinctures.

Adaptogens are meant to help our bodies build resilience to stress and mitigate its further affects on the body. They are not a cure, and they may not work in extreme or immediate cases of anxiety or depression. Further, adaptogens work best in addition to a foundation of a balanced diet and adequate hydration.

How Do Adaptogens Work?

Researchers say adaptogenic herbs interact with the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which is a complex system of glands, hormones and receptors in the human body. The HPA axis is central to the body's homeostasis, stress responses and energy metabolism.

When we consume adaptogens, their organic properties and compounds work with the HPA axis to help balance our systems. If there's too much of one hormone, for instance, the adaptogens help to lower it. On the flip side, if there isn't enough of a hormone, adaptogens can help replenish its levels.

Studies also suggest adaptogens interact with the immune-neuro-endocrine system, which helps the body regulate its use of energy and maintain strong immune defenses.

It's important to remember, though, that research on adaptogenic herbs is ongoing.

Popular Adaptogenic Herbs

Adaptogens are generally known for stress relief, but each herb has its own unique properties that make it useful for specific ailments.

For Stress and Anxiety



- **Ashwagandha**, also known as *Withania somnifera* and Indian ginseng, is a shrub that's often used in Ayurvedic practices (an ancient Hindu system of medicine). Several clinical studies found ashwagandha can help reduce anxiety when compared to a placebo or other treatments—often significantly.
- **Tulsi**, known as “holy basil” or the “queen of herbs,” is another shrub commonly used in Ayurvedic medicines. Tulsi is known to promote focus and alleviate anxiety. One clinical trial found it significantly diminished generalized anxiety disorder in patients, as well as their associated stress and depression.

For Fatigue

- **Rhodiola**, or *Rhodiola rosea*, can be found in high-altitude climates in Europe, Asia and North America. In two separate preliminary studies, researchers administered Rhodiola to doctors on night duty and students during an exam period. Results suggest Rhodiola can significantly reduce fatigue when compared to placebos. However, more research is still needed.
- **Ginseng** most commonly refers to either American ginseng or Asian ginseng (also known as red or Korean ginseng), and has been used for medicinal purposes for thousands of years in parts of Asia. Both species of ginseng have resulted in significantly reduced fatigue levels among participants across several clinical trials. At least one study of American ginseng also supports its use in reducing cancer-related fatigue, especially in patients receiving cancer treatments.

For Immune Health

- **Tulsi**, in addition to its anti-stress benefits, can also give your immune system a boost by helping regulate its responses. In one study, healthy participants experienced increased production of certain hormones and types of cells central to the immune system after receiving doses of an alcoholic extract of tulsi on empty stomachs.



- **Reishi mushrooms**, scientifically known as *Ganoderma lucidum*, are a fungus adaptogen. Their immunity-enhancing properties have been observed in several studies testing reishi's effectiveness in treating cancerous tumors. Reishi mushrooms increased the number of certain white blood cells in cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy; these participants also experienced improved quality of life with this additional treatment. Experts concluded that reishi mushrooms work best in tandem with other cancer treatments and cannot be deemed effective for tumor shrinkage when used alone.