



HERBAL TEA BLENDING

KNOW YOUR HERBS

When it comes to formulating your own herbal tea blends, the first thing you will want to do is to know your herbs, specifically their “actions” and which plant parts are commonly used. It’s important to know their flavour, aroma, and colour as well. All of these considerations will lend themselves to creating tasty and effective herbal tea blends. For simplicity, today we’ll be focussing on 12 herbs commonly used in teas (see attached chart: we have all but violet and anise today. Instead of anise, we’ll use fennel; for violet, we’ll be using oatstraw). We’ll also have a few other herbs on hand that I grow/forage which are particularly good for stress, digestion, sleep or just tasty: hibiscus, calendula*, feverfew*, kawakawa*, lavender*.

***hormone-balancing, calms PMS, eases cramping, bloating, symptoms of IBS**

HERBAL ACTIONS

The first thing to know about the herbs you’re considering using in your tea blends is their actions. Herbal actions are one way to categorize plants according to their effects on the body and potential health benefits. You’ll already be familiar with some: **laxative, diuretic, sedative.**

Many herbal books and online resources will list a large number of actions for a single herb, but today we’re keeping things simple and focussing only on the primary actions of the herbs so as not to get too overwhelmed with all the things one herb can do. You might enjoy deepening your knowledge after this workshop and looking into secondary actions of the herbs.

For example, suppose you want to create an **herbal tea to help manage stress**. In that case, you may begin looking at herbs that are characterized as **adaptogens**, such as tulsi (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*) or licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) root, or relaxing **nervines**, such as chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*) flower, and select the best herb for your individual needs.

Plant Characteristics: flavour, aroma & colour.

In addition to knowing which plant parts are typically used for the herbs you are considering, it’s also important to know other characteristics about each plant, such as **flavour, aroma and colour**. Flavour will be one of your top priorities: sweet, salty, sour, bitter, pungent, spicy, acrid, or bland. Flavour is related to the aroma of a plant’s volatile oils (citrusy, earthy, floral, herby, minty, spicy, or woody). Think of lavender, for ex., a floral scent, which derives from its volatile oils; its flavour is earthy, floral and slightly bitter.

Chances are, you are going to focus on the more pleasant flavours in your tea blends. Although some herbs like hops and valerian aren’t great tasting but definitely work to help



you sleep, so sometimes you might have reason to sip a hot beverage with an acrid or bitter taste. You can always add honey!

It can be challenging to formulate a tea that serves a physiological purpose while also catering to taste. Therefore, you may need to significantly slim down your herbal repertoire when crafting tea formulas, which is one reason we have chosen to limit the number of herbs we're using today. The best way to find the flavour of an herb is to taste it to see what you notice. Because you're using herbs that will be infused into water, it is a good idea to brew each herb individually in water to see what it tastes like.

One of the finishing touches of making an herbal tea blend should be adding some colour to your blend. Many herbal ingredients will be some shade of green, but you can add flowers and fruits to add a splash of colour to your tea blends. For example, I often add some calendula, rose petals or hibiscus flowers to my blends to give them a pretty appearance when gifting them.

CHOOSING YOUR BLEND

It's easy to get excited and go a bit overboard in the taste area, but it's important to rein things in to avoid including too many flavours in your tea formula. Try to focus on at most two dominant, complementary flavours that pair well together, such as orange and spices, lemon and mint, or fennel and nettle. Sometimes the herbs that make up the foundational tea blend will have enough flavour to make the tea palatable and pleasurable to drink. Other times, you may need to add additional herbs to achieve the deliciousness you desire!

When developing a flavour profile for your blend, take some time to think about what herbs or other edible ingredients would enhance the blend's flavour or aroma. Herbs like cinnamon, fennel, ginger, and peppermint can help to add a lot of flavour and scent to a tea blend, as will dried fruit so I often add some of these to my blends purely for taste. It can be a good idea to experiment by making a few cups of tea using your foundational herb blend and adding a different flavourful herb to each cup you brew to hone in on flavour to find a taste that suits you.

Keep in mind that the flavour and aroma of a tea blend are primarily due to the volatile oils contained within the plant material, many of which may escape along with the steam during steeping. For this reason, I like making my blends in a thermos and leaving it to brew for 5-10 minutes before straining out the liquid.

Dosage

Determining the dosage for each herb in your tea blend will help you know how much of each herb to include in the overall blend. Generally speaking, 2-8 grams of an herb blend per 8 fl oz of water is taken 3-4 times per day for a total of 6-32 grams per day. You can use the chart provided to see general dosage advice for each herb.



As an example, we have included the worksheet we compiled when developing the Green Goddess tea blend recipe.

Infusion:

An infusion is made by pouring hot water over the leaves, flowers, and more delicate or aromatic parts of a plant so that the properties of the plant are *infused into* (extracted by) the water. These herbal preparations typically steep for 5-20 minutes, depending on the constituents of the herbal blend and the flavour you are looking for in the infusion.

For example, if you are making an infusion from a tea blend that includes chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*) flower, chances are you will only allow this infusion to steep for 5 minutes. If it steeps any longer, the chamomile starts to taste bitter. On the other hand, if you are making a tea blend filled with roots or bark or mineral-rich herbs like stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), for example, you may want a longer steep time of 20 minutes or more (sometimes overnight!) to allow for optimal extraction of the nutrients.

That said, there are always exceptions to the rule. Some infusion recipes call for plant parts that are more difficult to break down, such as roots, barks, seeds, or berries, and these types of infusions can steep from 4-8 hours to overnight.

Generally speaking, most beverage teas are made with ½-1 tablespoon of herb material per 8 fl oz of water when using dried herbs.

Experiential Exercise: Create Your Own Wellness and/or Seasonal Tea Blend

For this exercise, we'd like for you to create your own wellness or seasonal tea blend (preferably both!) by working your way through the following steps.

1. **Choose your focus/goal:** What will be the focus or goal of your tea blend? When it comes to wellness focuses and goals, there are many! Would you like a tea blend that supports a good night's sleep, eases anxiety, or helps alleviate symptoms of digestive discomfort? Take some time to think about your goal or focus and write it down in the Goal of Tea Blend section of the worksheet.
2. Next, **what body systems would you like to affect with this tea blend?** Nervous, Endocrine, Digestive, Circulatory? This answer will depend on your goal. If your goal is sleep, it's likely your primary body system focus will be the nervous system, but if your focus is balancing the seasonal energetics of winter, your primary body system may be the circulatory system. Write down the main body system or systems that your tea blend should address in the Body Systems to Consider section of the worksheet.



3. **What herbal actions are needed for this tea blend to be effective?** If your goal detox, what herbal action will support that? (hint, hint: tonic, alterative or diuretic). If your focus is sleep, what action will help support (perhaps relaxing nervines). Take some time to think, and then write down the primary (3-5) herbal actions you want to incorporate into your tea blend in the Primary Actions section of the worksheet.
4. Now it's time to revisit the Primary Herbal Actions graphic and 12 Tea Friendly Herbs & Their Properties graphic. Make a list of up to 5 herbs that have the actions you are looking for. Make sure none of the herbs interact with medications or have safety contraindications that would make them a concern.
5. Next, consider the flavour and colour of your herbs and which herbs pair nicely. Choose 3-4 and write each herb on your worksheet. You might end up only choosing two herbs for their primary actions, and 2 others just for flavour and colour.
6. Now it's time to blend! Write down your final formula and dosage for each herb.



Keep Calm Tea

Some days there's no going back to bed and trying again tomorrow. Some days, you just have to trudge through. If you find yourself having one of those days, this nerve-nourishing tea blend is a great companion to help you get through the day. Not only does it help to settle a frazzled spirit, but it can help to uplift it at the same time.

Ingredients

½ cup lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*) aerial parts
½ cup oat (*Avena sativa*) milky tops
½ cup peppermint (*Mentha × piperita*) leaf
⅓ cup chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*) flower

Directions

- Combine all ingredients and store the blend in a labeled storage container. Use within 12 months.
- Steep 1 tablespoon of tea blend per 1 cup (8 fl oz) boiled hot water, covered, for 5-7 minutes. Strain herbs through a tea strainer and compost or discard herbal material. Sweeten as desired and sip hot or allow to cool and serve over ice with 2-3 fresh peppermint leaves. Drink 1-4 cups a day.

Hibiscus Rose High-C Iced Tea

This colourful tea is packed with vitamin C and antioxidants and is a great way to support your immunity during the warmer months of the year. Sip a glass or two of this refreshing tea on a warm summer's day, at a garden party with friends, or at a family gathering where a light, refreshing beverage is preferred.

Ingredients

1 cup hibiscus (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) calyces
½ cup rose (*Rosa* spp.) petals
¼ cup orange (*Citrus × sinensis*) peel
⅓ cup ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) root

Directions

- Combine all ingredients and store the blend in a labeled storage container. Use within 12 months. Use 1 tablespoon of tea blend per 1 cup (8 fl oz) boiled hot water. Cover and steep 30-60 minutes. Strain herbs through a tea strainer and compost or discard herbal material. Sweeten as desired. Serve cold over ice with a slice of fresh orange. Drink 1-3 cups a day.



Cinnamon Apple Mock-Digestif Tea

Settle digestion after a rich meal with this alcohol-free digestif. This tea blend contains carminative herbs that help aid digestion, ease gas and bloating, and soothe spasms in the gastrointestinal tract. It also has a great flavour that will pleasantly surprise your tastebuds.

Ingredients

1 cup chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*) flower
1 cup cinnamon (*Cinnamomum* spp.) bark
¼ cup dried apple slices

Directions

- Combine all ingredients and store the blend in a labeled storage container. Use within 12 months.
- Use 1-2 tablespoons of tea blend per 1 cup (8 fl oz) boiled hot water. Cover and steep 5-7 minutes. Strain herbs through a tea strainer and compost or discard herbal material. Sweeten as desired. Sip hot after a heavy meal. Drink 1-3 cups a day.

Land of the Faeries Tea

Light, enchanting, and mysterious—this tea blend features delicate herbs that soothe, moisten, and strengthen the tissues of the body while cheering the heart and lightening the mind. And if the beauty of this herbal tea blend doesn't transport you to the land of the faeries, the tangy flavour certainly will.

Ingredients

¾ cup plantain (*Plantago* spp.) leaf
½ cup rose (*Rosa* spp.) petal
½ cup lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*) aerial parts
¼ cup calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) flower

Directions

- Combine all ingredients and store the blend in a labeled storage container. Use within 12 months.
- Use 1 tablespoon of tea blend per 1 cup (8 fl oz) boiled hot water. Cover and steep 5-10 minutes. Strain herbs through a tea strainer and compost or discard herbal material. Sweeten as desired and sip hot or allow to cool and serve over ice. Drink 1-3 cups a day.



Rose Red Tea

Just like the fairy tale, this Rose Red Tea blend speaks to the lover, the wanderer, the friend, and the helper in all of us. Tightening and toning to the tissues and supportive of the nerves, this tea evokes feelings of love, warmth, heartfelt emotion, and goodwill, even on the coldest of days.

Ingredients

1 cup red rooibos (*Aspalathus linearis*) leaf
½ cup rose (*Rosa* spp.) petal
¼ cup oat (*Avena sativa*) milky tops
¼ cup rose (*Rosa* spp.) hip

Directions

- Combine all ingredients and store the blend in a labeled storage container. Use within 12 months.
- Use 1 tablespoon of tea blend per 1 cup (8 fl oz) boiled hot water. Cover and steep 5-10 minutes. Strain herbs through a tea strainer and compost or discard herbal material. Sweeten as desired. Drink 1-3 cups a day.



Kawakawa: Botanical name: *Macropiper excelsum*

Common name: Kawakawa, New Zealand Peppertree

Part used: Leaves

Kawakawa's primary herbal actions include anti-inflammatory, analgesic (pain-relieving), and anti-microbial properties, making it useful for soothing skin irritations like eczema and bites, easing pain from conditions like toothache, and supporting digestive health. It also has mild diuretic effects that promote elimination and may help with inflammation related to metabolic health.

What is Kawakawa used for?

Kawakawa is used to support tooth ache, pain, stomach cramps, to soothe smooth muscle tissue and topically for eczema, insect bites and inflamed skin.

Active constituents of kawakawa:

✿ pellitorine- has a numbing effect on the body. Hence its use in painful joints & muscles (ointments) & toothaches (poultice).

✿ yangambin- anti inflammatory for cardiovascular system. Kawakawa assists circulation & BP.

✿ dopamine. Which is a mood lifting neurotransmitter; also soothes upset guts and assists in blood glucose regulation in insulin resistance and diabetes. Kawakawa is considered a nervine for mood and a blood glucose regulator.

And this is just a few of its benefits!!