

HERBAL TEAS

To make an average sort of herbal tea, use approximately 1 teaspoon of dried herb, or 2 teaspoons of fresh herb, per cup of water. ***This is only an approximation!*** Different people have differing tastes in the strength of tea that they prefer. Bitter herbs do not require a full teaspoon and very intense herbs like cayenne need only *a few grains* to make an effective tea.

LEAVES / BLOSSOMS / FLOWERS Use *moderately warm* water for herbs which contain volatile oils. Herbs containing volatile oils are frequently made from the blossoms or leaves part of the plant (but not always). Examples of herbs containing volatile oils, which are not entirely the blossom part of the plant, are peppermint, spearmint, spikenard, and catnip. Using warm, instead of boiling, water makes a light colored, but extremely potent tea. Use this moderately warm water method predominantly when you want the *stimulant* properties of the herb, rather than the relaxing ones. This method also works well when you need serious pain relief or nervine properties pulled from the herb.

For the first several years of my personal herbal use, I brought the water for all teas to a boil and then added the herbs. Eventually, I read somewhere to use *moderately warm* water for certain teas and I tried it with peppermint. The result was a very light, almost clear, colored tea—instead of a dark green one. The tea, however, was extremely potent. The stimulant properties of one small cupful kept my husband awake all night instead of relaxing him into sleep as we were accustomed to having peppermint tea do for him. *Moderately warm water* will preserve the volatile oils, making them available to you in your cup of tea.

ROOTS / BARK For other herbs and other circumstances, bring the water to a boil and pour the water over the herb. Let steep for a few minutes, then strain. Do not put the herb into the water and then bring to a boil. If you do not watch the water/herb mix closely and it comes to a rolling boil, the medicinal properties of the herbs will be destroyed. If you put a lid on while the tea steeps, you will preserve more of the volatile (essential) oils as well as the other medicinal properties of the herb. If you use one of those fancy tea making spoons, this can be a little bit difficult to do. The medicinal benefits that you will gain by covering the tea during steeping make it very much worth the small amount of inconvenience. For herbs in which the root is the medicinal part that you are using, place the chunks of root in the water and bring to a boil. Simmer gently, very gently, for two or three minutes.

When in doubt, or when making a recipe that contains both root and leaf herbs, use the method described for leaves/blossoms/flowers method. The very hot water will pull a more than sufficient number of nutrients from the root herbs and, if you cover the tea while it steeps, you will retain sufficient amounts of the fragile volatile oils in the blossoms and leaves.

Clear soft rain water, distilled water, or water that has been effectively filtered, makes the best tea. Water without chlorine or other chemicals is absolutely essential for poultices. Chlorine and other chemicals destroy most of the medicinal properties of the any herb. Hard minerals can also interfere with the solubility of some of the nutrients. If the nutrients do not pull out of the herb and into the water, they are not available to you when you drink the tea or make the poultice.

Never leave a tea or poultice material to steep or simmer in a metal pot. Occasionally, the herb will react unfavorably with the metal. Glass is much preferred. Some people use a drip coffee pot to make tea. The water drips through the herbs, not allowing the tea to steep, but it seems to make a very tasty and quite potent brew anyway. It is an easy, no mess, no fuss method.

Recommended dosage for a tea that you are taking for medicinal purposes is usually one cupful three times per day. If you are drinking herbal teas for the nutritional value, even 1 cup of tea every day would provide many nutrients that we are all missing to some extent or another.