

Chapter Twenty Three

Making Herbal Salves

Herbal salves are wonderful things! They are convenient to use and very powerful. The recipes that follow are made from herbals with some essential oils added; excellent salves can be made using just essential oils without the plant material.

Basic Salve Ingredients: (Salve ingredients are broken down and explained further on the next page)

- Carrier-type oil
- Herbals, fresh or dried (or tinctured)
- Solidifier

Optional Ingredients:

- Essential oils
- Lighteners
- Preservatives

Use a 1:10 ratio, approximately, of herbs to oil; add more oil if the salve seems dry as it is cooking.

For each cup of oil used, you will need approximately 1.4 ounces of beeswax.

1 tablespoon vitamin E oil, 3 drops benzoin essential oil, 1 teaspoon benzoin tincture, or ½ teaspoon benzoin herb powder

may be added as a preservative.

Place the herbs in the oil. Heat in crock pot or oven allowing the mixture to get no hotter than 180° F. Once the mixture has reached 180° allow it to cook for 2-3 hours. The herbs will have begun to look a bit grey and be a little bit crispy. The mixture should be stirred a few times as it cooks. If you use fresh herbs, you will have to cook the mixture longer. Fresh herbs have a lot of moisture in the leaves and stems. This moisture must cook completely out or your salve will mold. When the salve is hot, little bubbles will form on the surface and then pop. This is the moisture evaporating off. Keep cooking the salve until there are no more bubbles and the herbs are grey and slightly crispy as described above.

During the last hour of the cooking process, begin melting the beeswax. I use old bread pans that I bought at a thrift store. You will not be able to use the pans for anything else after the beeswax has been melted in them (unless you are willing to work very hard at getting them clean again). You must watch the beeswax closely as it heats. Overheated beeswax goes dark and smells terrible.

When the herbs are finished cooking, strain them just as you do for other tinctures. Press out as much of the oil as you can. Place the oil back into the oven to keep warm. When the beeswax is melted and the oil and the beeswax are approximately the same temperature, stir them together. The oil should be just a little bit warmer than the wax. If the oil is too cold the wax will resolidify as you pour it in. This makes little lumps in your salve that will not stir out. The only solution to this problem is to reheat the entire batch, whipping and stirring it frequently as it reheats. This is not fun, so watch your temperatures carefully.

On occasion, you may not have an ingredient that you need in dry herb form, or you want to make a salve more quickly. You may use tinctures to make salves instead of fresh or dry herbs. Using only tinctures, instead of dry herbs, makes a light colored and very pretty salve. The salve will be pale tan/green instead of dark herbal/plant green.

A salve made with just tinctures will not be as potent as one made from dry bulk herbs, but it will be much quicker and easier to make. This strength is probably fine for lotions or face creams. If you are trying to heal a burn or draw out a serious infection, you should make your salve from herbals—fresh ones if possible. Most herbal salves that you buy commercially are made with tinctures.

If you are adding any tinctures to your salve, do it now while the salve is hot so that the alcohol and water will evaporate away. Wait until the bubbles are finished dissipating. The bubbles are water and this moisture can cause your salve to mold if not completely evaporated out. You will need at least 3 dropperfuls of tincture for each part called for. This is a lot of liquid. You may have to reheat the salve a little to get rid of all the moisture.

When the moisture has been removed, let the salve cool. The cooling process is where the real work begins. For the first hour or so the salve must be stirred frequently—every 5 minutes. The top of the salve cools more quickly than the rest. A crust forms on the tops which will become lumps if not thoroughly stirred in. Attention paid here will give you a beautiful smooth salve; be careless or sloppy here and you will have a lumpy salve) or you can spend a lot of time with a hand mixer trying to get the lumps out).

When the salve is cool add vitamin E/wheatgerm oil or any essential oils that you wish to use. Essential oils are fragile, so be sure that the salve is cool before adding them. The other ingredients of the salve are carrier oils. Carrier oil breaks down the therapeutic properties of essential oils over time, making the oils in the salve less effective. Essential oils for therapeutic purposes should be added to a small amount of the salve at the time of use instead of while making the batch of salve. Any essential oil added now, however, will act as a preservative for the salve. You will be able to keep it unrefrigerated for longer periods of time without the salve getting rancid.

If you are in need of a really strong drawing or healing salve, use as much fresh plant material as possible. You must let the salve cook until every bit of moisture has cooked out of the plants and out of the salve. This can take up to 12 hours. A salve made with fresh herbs such as comfrey, mullein, plantain, and marshmallow is amazing.

Since herbs are at peak medicinal quality at different times of the year, I often make an oil tincture from each herb when it is at its peak medicinally. At the end of the season (late fall) the oils can be combined to make a salve, following the basic instructions above.

Salve making is not as hard as these two pages of instructions make it sound. Mostly it is just time consuming and messy. It also feels very rewarding to have made something so wonderfully medicinal for your family and friends.

General Information about Salve Making Ingredients

Oils:

Almond oil, by itself or in combination with other cold pressed oils such as grapeseed and safflower, is excellent. Almond oil has very little odor, is readily available, and has a low rancidity factor.

Olive oil is a fairly good choice for salves. It can make the consistency of a batch of salve a little unstable, however. A batch that is just the right thickness in the fridge becomes runny on a hot day and difficult to use. No amount of beeswax solves this problem. Olive oil has a low rancidity factor and is good for the skin. It has a slight aroma unique to itself, which you will not notice in a salve using herbs anyway (an herbal salve has its own unique aroma—slight but still there). For light lotions and lip salves, you probably want to use almond or grapeseed oil.

Grapeseed oil is an excellent medium; it is especially nice when blended with almond oil. Grapeseed oil has a low rancidity factor, and is reasonable in price.

Flaxseed oil is an excellent choice because it is emollient, making it excellent for skin problems. Flaxseed goes rancid easily; store any salve made with it in the fridge. It is also quite expensive.

Safflower and Sunflower oils are often rancid when you buy them, or become rancid quickly.

Lard is sometimes suggested as a base. Some sources claim that lard carries toxins and impurities into the body. Dr. Christopher used lard almost exclusively for his salves. Your lard was rendered by you from a pig you raised without chemicals and drugs, it will be safe for salve making. Salves made with lard go rancid very rapidly and must be stored in the fridge. This is enough to make me choose something else. I have used lard when I had nothing else available, even on broken skin, and had no infections or other problems.

Sesame oil should be cold pressed (never use the toasted variety). This oil goes rancid quite quickly at room temperatures, but when not rancid, is very emollient to the skin.

Wheat germ oil Don't use as the base oil—very high rancidity factor. You simply won't believe the smell if wheat germ oil goes rancid! A tablespoon of wheat germ oil added to the salve at the end of processing as describes on the previous page adds wonderful healing properties to the salve. Wheat germ oil is high in vitamin E and antioxidants.

Coconut oil does not make a good base for a salve. However, I love to rub it on my skin, adding essential oils as I go. Coconut oil absorbs slowly, but makes the skin feel so smooth and moist.

Solidifiers:

Beeswax is a natural thickener and interacts well with the skin. Beeswax allows the skin to breathe, has a low melting point so it will incorporate quickly into a salve at low heat, and softens rapidly on the skin. This (cocoa butter or lanolin) is what you want to use.

Cocoa Butter has a lower melting point than beeswax. It may be used alone or with beeswax. Cocoa butter is usually quite expensive, but it gives a salve a very nice creamy texture.

Paraffin is a petroleum product and not absorbable by the skin. In other words, *not recommended* for salve making.

Lanolin—anhydrous—is the closest lubricant to what is produced by our sebaceous glands. It is readily absorbed into the skin, and helps the skin retain moisture. (Hydrous—not the recommended anhydrous—lanolin is 10% lanolin and 90% water. It is expensive. Why pay big bucks for water? Hydrous lanolin has a wonderful consistency if using straight on the skin, but has too much water to use as a salve base. Anhydrous lanolin is hard to find and bit difficult to use. Beeswax is best.

Other Optional Ingredients:

Glycerine Use only vegetable glycerine. Beat into the finished salve as a lightener or sweetening agent (very nice in lip balms). Glycerine has many healing properties.

Aloe Vera Gel makes the salve very light and easy to apply. Aloe vera has many healing properties. It is especially nice added to burn salves. Use caution. Allergies to aloe vera are quite common.

BHM

(Formerly Total Body)

This is an adaptation of a Dr. Christopher recipe. It is a very effective, all-purpose salve. Use to aid healing in sprains, breaks, strains, skin rashes, and minor burns.

6.00	comfrey root
3.00	mullein leaves or flowers
0.75	marshmallow root
1.50	white oak bark
0.25	wormwood
1.00	lobelia (can use slightly less)
0.75	skullcap
0.75	black walnut leaves
0.75	heal all or plantain
1.25	red clover blossoms
0.75	oregon grape root

BHM-Plus

(Formerly Drawing Salve)

This salve has all the same herbs as the BHM salve, with the addition of herbs that are specific to infections and suppurating sores. This is a very potent salve! It is better at drawing out infections than anything I have ever seen on the market—both herbal and otherwise.

3.00	comfrey root
2.00	mullein leaves or flowers
0.50	marshmallow root
0.75	white oak bark
1.00	wormwood
0.50	lobelia
0.50	skullcap
1.00	black walnut leaves or hulls
1.00	plantain (or heal all)
0.75	red clover blossoms
0.50	oregon grape root
0.50	bay leaf
0.50	fenugreek seed
0.25	uva ursi
0.75	chapparal
0.50	poke root
0.50	wormwood

CM

(formerly Skin Irritation)

A basic salve for healing non-open wounds such as breaks and sprains and for any rash or skin irritation. Layer with arnica oil if there is swelling. Consider using the BHM salve discussed above.

1.00	calendula flowers
1.00	marshmallow root
1.00	comfrey root
0.50	mullein leaves or flowers

PPAC**Pain Pack Oil or Salve**

This recipe is also in the tincture file. PPAC is effective when there has been severe bruising and blunt instrument trauma. It is best used with Butterfly Express, llc. essential oil blends ^{Le}Deeper or ^{Le}Paine.

1.50	mullein leaves or flowers
3.00	slippery elm
1.00	lobelia
1.50	comfrey root
0.50	oregon grape, goldenseal, or myrrh
0.50	poke root
0.50	wormwood

add the following if inflammation is present

1.00	bayleaf or arnica (arnica only if the skin is unbroken; use the homeopathic for otherwise)
1.00	fenugreek seed

LN

(Liniment)

Ingredient list on page 23 of this document.

Miracle Salve (Formerly Healing/Burn)

This is an amazing healer—even for very severe burns. This salve was originally made for one of my sons. He had 3rd degree burns from ankle to hip. No antibiotics or nonherbal anti-infectious agents of any kind were used. We soaked his leg in cold water with lots of lavender oil for the first 24 hours and gave him garlic capsules, IF, and RC tinctures by mouth.

This salve was later used on my husband's very severe burns. It was estimated that 65% of his upper body was 3rd degree burns; another 10% had 2nd degree burns. These burns included his face, ears, and hands and were so severe that it was several months of hard work before he could raise his chin to look you in the eye. The muscles of the shoulders, arms, hands, back, and abdomen were also severely damaged. (We got to watch muscle tissue regrow and srtiate properly. Not a pretty sight, but fascinating.)

This salve was renamed Miracle Salve at this time because we know that it really does work miracles. We saw, and have continued to see, miracles with its use!

Once again, as with our son, no antibiotics or nonherbal anti-infectious agents were used. My husband did not see a doctor or go to a medical facility through this experience. The external burns were not the scary part. He had gasped as the explosion happened and inhaled flame and noxious gases. But that is another story for another day.

Most of his skin healed beautifully. One hand, used to remove his burning clothing, suffered some major muscle damage. This hand is still a bit unsightly but it usable and pretty strong. He has no fingerprints on either hand, and he lost some dexterity in his fingers.

The shape of his nose, ears, and lips was permanently changed a little bit, but you would have had to know him well before the burns to notice. There are two very small scars on is face and a couple of other small ones on his body. He looks wonderful!

Ingredients for Miracle Salve:

3.0	comfrey root	2.0	lobelia
2.0	plantain		(use less if pain is not a factor)
2.0	mullein	2.0	oregon grape

The amounts above requires 13 1/2 cups of almond oil. You might consider using some jojoba or apricot oil because of their emollient properties.

For a single batch, 1 lb of beeswax is about right. This amount is approximate because there is a lot of difference between the consistency of solid beeswax and the beeswax that comes processed into little pellets and is light in color. This measurement is for the solid block variety of beeswax. You would probably need quite a bit more if you were using the pellets. If you use too much and your salve is a bit solid, just stir in a little additional almond oil.

When the salve has cooled (after the wax has been added), add 2 cups of vitamin E oil. Vitamin E speeds healing, rebuilds damaged cells, and reduces scarring. I generally use wheatgerm oil. Since I am going to add essential oils, shelf life and rancidity will not be a factor.

For a single batch of the above recipe I added the following essential oils:

5 ounces lavender	2 ounces helichrysum
2 ounces tea tree or eucalyptus	2 ounces geranium

Do not use more essential oils in a batch than is shown above. This is a lot of essential oil, but we were dealing with a major burn. Infection was a concern—we didn't see any except a tiny bit along the ridge of one ear where it was difficult to keep the salve. Essential oils can be a bit caustic, especially to already damaged skin. You can always add more essential oils later if you feel like you need it.

The addition of 1 cup of glycerine and 1 cup of aloe vera gel will make a salve lighter and more easily spread. The aloe vera is cooling and soothing to skin. Both aloe vera and glycerine have many fine healing properties of their own.

When using salve on deep burns, consider spreading the salve on *non-stick* gauze and then placing the salve covered gauze on the burn. You should prepare all of your pads first and then move the patient into position for the dressing change. This will make the dressing changes shorter and less painful for the burn victim.

The addition of essential oils to your salves will prevent infection! We have dealt with some horrendous burns using this salve, essential oils, and herbal tinctures and we had never dealt with infection. Be sure to add infection fighting herbs to the diet or medicinal regimen.

Fluids are very important. Because of my husband's internal burns, he was unable to take any fluids for several days. This made these burns very scary. Push the fluids from the very beginning and things will go much better.