Infused Oil

Oil is a good medium for extracting fat soluble constituents from either fresh or dried herbs. In turn, these oils can be used as the basis for salves, creams, lip gloss, rubs etc. A number of oils can be used: olive, sweet almond, grape seed oil, sesame etc. The choice of oil depends on the characteristics of the oil, availability and herb to be used. If fresh herbs are used, they should be wilted first or slightly dried to decrease the water content. Heat is used to extract the plants- either from the sun or from a low heat source. Usually you extract one herb at a time in order to maximize it’s extraction. Mix herbal oils subsequently in the product. All equipment should be very clean. I usually use a canning jar for this process.

Solar Infusion Method

Chop all herbs coarsely. Powdered herbs can be used but they are more difficult to completely strain later. Fill a wide mouthed glass jar with the herbal material. Pour over this enough oil to completely cover the herbs. Stir the mixture with a chop stick to make sure that the oil has saturated all of the material and that there are no air pockets left. Cover and place in a warm, sunny area for 10 –14 days. Turn and shake the bottle every day. The oil should start to take on color from the plant material but should not bubble or smell funny. After infusion is complete, strain the oil through fine cheese cloth into another bottle for storage. Squeeze the remaining oil soaked herbs to get as much oil out as possible. You may filter the oil again through a coffee filter to remove any fine sediment if needed. If you are extracting a powder, you will have to strain it through a coffee filter. The storage bottle would ideally be dark, but in any case these infused oils should be stored away from light. You may add a small amount of vitamin E to the oil to preserve it. Label and date your extract once it is done. All the spent material from this process can go into compost if you or a gardener near you. At least throw it out in the green can.

Quick Extraction Method

Select and prepare the oils and herbs as above. Extraction can be done in a crock pot on low, in a low oven or in a water bath on the stove. The temperature is meant to be very low 100-150 degrees. If it is higher, it may cook the oil or damage volatile constituents. The tricky part is getting the temperature control right. You can check with a turkey thermometer. It may involve turning the heat source off and on during the extraction process, so do not leave it unattended. Most herbs will extract in 8 hours. After extraction is complete, allow the mixture to cool, then strain and bottle as above.
**Herbs to Use for Infused Oil**
- Calendula: Flowers
- Comfrey: Leaf and Root
- Chamomile
- Lavender: Flowers
- Plantain: leaves
- St. John’s wort: Flowers (Hard to make from dried material)
- Chickweed
- Rosemary
- Peppermint
- Eucalyptus
- Marshmallow

**Possible Carrier Oils**
- Olive
- Sweet Almond
- Grape Seed

**Making Herbal Salves**
Herbal salves are relatively easy to make once all of the infused oils are produced. A salve can be made more potent or just smell better by adding essential oils to the mixture. The salve is a all oil mixture which should be relatively stiff, which is generally accomplished by adding beeswax. Some remedies will call for the use of petroleum based products, but I would not use them in your all natural salves. Medicinal salves can be used as a first aid ointment on minor cuts, as a burn salve, a rub for sore muscles or as a chest rub for a cold depending on the choice of oils and essential oils used.

General proportion of oil to beeswax; 1 cup oil to 2 ounces beeswax

**Essential Oils Which Can be Used**
- Lavender
- Chamomile
- Tea Tree
- Peppermint
- Eucalyptus
- Rose

**First Aid Ointment**
1 cup oil (May use mixture of variety of oils: 1/2 c. infused calendula (olive) oil; 1/4 c. comfrey oil; 1/4 c. SJW oil (if available)
1-1/2 oz. Beeswax
15-30 ml vitamin E oil
Essential oil
   30 gtts tea tree oil
   20 gtts spike or French lavender
   10 gtts Bulgarian lavender (optional)
   10 gtts Roman chamomile
   10 gtts fir

Melt grated beeswax in double boiler. Start with one ounce, but have another ounce
shredded in reserve. Add the oil, warm mixture and finish melting beeswax. Remove from
heat and check for consistency. Add additional beeswax if needed to achieve desirable
stiffness. Check by either putting a small amount of oil on paper towel and allow to set up.
A quicker method is to put a drop of oil in ice water. Either way, you’ll really learn this as
you make you first several batches of slave and see how it turns out as you use it. If the
salve is designed to be in a warm environment (hiking in the summer), then the consistency
needs to be a bit stiffer to hold up. In colder weather or inside, a slightly looser salve will
spread more easily. A looser salve is easier to cover a larger area.

Once the consistency is good- add vitamin E and essential oil. Correct as needed now for
scent.
Pour into small jars. If the ointment starts to stiffen as it is poured, put it briefly back in the
water bath.
Yield depends on size of container.
Shelf life should be 1 year.
**Lip Balm**

These are oil based preparations that are designed to protect, nourish and heal the lips—very delicate tissue. These may be very loose or quite tight, but are generally looser than salves. They may be dispensed from a pot or a twist up tube. In a pot or small jar, the balm can be looser and should be tighter in a tube.

Balms may include ingredients like honey which both provide a lovely taste as well as medicinal properties.

Oil used in balm is usually not olive oil—the taste is generally too strong for this kind of preparation. You may add additional emulsifiers such as cocoa butter, shea oil, mango butter. These are usually hard a room temperature and add body to balm. You may color a lip balm either with commercial products, a bit of lip stick or natural infusions in oil of herbs like alkanet root (red color). More commercial kinds of products use flavoring oil (not essential oils), glitter etc. Certainly, you can make this kind of product for “fun”, but it is not as healthful as the kinds of lip balms listed here.

**Honey Lip Gloss***(modified from recipe given by Mary Bove, ND)*

1 oz beeswax
1 cup oil (may be olive, sweet almond, apricot oil) (may be infused with mild herbs)
1/3 cup honey (experiment with different types of honey—for taste and appearance)
Up to 60 drops of essential oils (choose for flavor or medicinal properties)
10-20 drops of vitamin E (preservative)

In a double boiler, melt the beeswax, stirring occasionally. Add the melted oil to the beeswax. Stir thoroughly until fully blended. Add additional beeswax if needed for the consistency of the herb.

Remove from heat and stir in the honey. Stir well and verify adequate mixing. Check consistency. If proper, then add essential oils and vitamin E.

Pour into small jars. Cap, label and date. If the balm starts to stiffen as it is poured, put it briefly back in the water bath. You may need to add more oil as this should be looser than the salve as it sets up.