

Cordials and Elixirs



Cordials and Elixirs and herbal liquid extracts made with alcohol and something sweet. My favorite sweetener is honey, although sugar and even maple syrup can be used! The name cordial and elixir are interchangeable in herbalism but here's how I think about it: When I'm making something purely for pleasure, to be enjoyed for flavor and not necessarily medicine, to be sipped from a small cordial glass or added to drinks, I call it a cordial. For instance, I make a sweetened alcohol extract of Black Currants and I call it a cordial. But when I'm making it thinking about taking it in medicinal doses as a medicine, I call it an elixir, i.e. Thyme Elixir for a cold or respiratory issues....this is just how I organize these terms in my mind- you might think about them differently! The most important thing to know is that both terms mean the plant was extracted in a combination of alcohol and something sweet and you will find folks using the terms interchangeably in the herb world!

I like to make my herbal elixirs with aromatic, essential oil-containing plants. I find the addition of the honey really harmonizes the flavors and can sometimes be more palatable than a tincture and just tastes great. Some favorite elixirs include Thyme, Sage, White Pine (*Pinus strobus*), Balsam Fir (*Abies balsamea*), Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), and Goldenrod (*Solidago spp*). I also especially love making them

with nervine herbs that are good for the emotional heart. Since honey is love and emotional heart medicine, calming, nervine herbs go beautifully with it. Examples of elixirs I make in this category include Basil and Tulsi, Wild Rose (*Rosa multiflora*, *Rosa rugosa*, *Rosa spp*), Peach Lf, Lemon Balm, and Hawthorn. And I love making cordials with fruits, including Black Currant, Blueberry, and Peach! You can also, of course mix fruits and herbs, which is a lot of fun! Cordials and elixirs are total kitchen medicine- I encourage you to have fun and experiment with them!

Basic Cordial/Elixir Recipe

Fresh Herb or Fruit of Choice

Honey (preferably raw)

Brandy (this is traditionally used but you could use any alcohol that is 40% alcohol- vodka, gin, rum, etc)

DIRECTIONS: Chop-up your fresh herb (or fruit) and fill a jar of your choice. Cover your herb, by volume 3/4ths of the way with brandy (or other alcohol) and 1/4th of the way with honey, so that it's a 75:25 mixture of the two. It's ok if your ratios aren't perfect- this is kitchen medicine! If you are using crystalized honey, don't worry, it will dissolve in the alcohol in just a few days. Cover, shake well and let sit for 2- 4 weeks minimum. Strain if desired or leave the plant material in and use as is! These have a virtually endless shelf-life and will last unrefrigerated for years. For dosage- I like to take 1-2 tsp 3/day for a medicinal dose or use it freely to make herbal mocktails and get my medicine that way! These are also lovely mixed with sparkling water or seltzer. If you are making this with DRIED herbs then use 1 part herbs: 4 part of the alcohol/honey mix, by volume.