

## *Making Herbal Vinegars*

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### **Why Herbal Vinegars?**

Herbal vinegars have been used as long as alcohol for extracting constituents from plants. Alkaloids do not break down well in water but when combined with the acidity of vinegar, they break down into alkaloidal salts that easily dissolve in water.

Vinegar extracts minerals readily and is great for extracting the hard to extract minerals from herbs rich in vitamins and minerals such as Burdock, Dandelion, Catnip, Chicory, Yellow Dock and more. Vinegars are especially a great way to boost your calcium intake.

Vinegar itself is medicinal. Undiluted vinegar is refrigerant and can help to manage a fever. Vinegar promotes the flow of saliva and diminishes thirst. It also promotes secretions of the kidneys and respiratory mucus membranes.

When vinegar is applied externally, it helps to cleanse, tone and condition the skin. As an antiseptic, vinegar helps to kill bacteria and can be applied to reduce odor caused by perspiration. External applications are suitable for treating sunburn, itching, reducing the surface temperature of the body during fevers, and relieve skin inflammation including eczema. It is soothing for bruising and sprains and will help to reduce inflammation caused by both.

When making herbal vinegars, it's best to stick with Organic Apple Cider Vinegar (unpasteurized if you can find it) or other light vinegars such as a red or white wine vinegar. White vinegar should be avoided as it is distilled from grain alcohol and run through a course of treatments that are less than desirable for something we consider to be medicine.

### **Herbs That Work Well With Vinegars**

Some herbs go better with vinegars. The well known 4 Thieves vinegar combined herbs such as Calamus, Camphor, Cinnamon, Clove, Garlic, Nutmeg, Peppermint, Rosemary, Rue, Sage and Wormwood. Fire Cider is another classic blend of herbs in vinegar and generally contains herbs such as Garlic, Onion, Horseradish, Cayenne, Ginger, and Turmeric. Herbal vinegars can be made as 'simples' and then combined together to get the desired mixture or they can be mixed together in a 'compound' formula. Plants marked with \* are great for a calcium supplement blend.

Nettles\* (tops)  
Dandelion\* (roots and leaves)  
Burdock (roots)  
Catnip (tops)  
Chicory (roots and leaves)  
Pine (needles)

Garlic (cloves)  
 Bergamot (leaves and flowers)  
 Apple mint (tops)  
 Yellow Dock\* (roots)  
 Blackberry\* (roots and leaves)  
 Raspberry\* (leaves)  
 Red Clover\* (blossoms)  
 Sage\* (leaves and flower buds)  
 Thyme\* (leaves)  
 Basil\* (leaves and flowering tops)  
 Oregano\* (leaves)  
 Rosemary\* (leaves)  
 Mugwort\* (young plants)  
 Violet\* (leaves)  
 Chickweed\* (whole plant)  
 Rose (flowering tops)  
 Peach (leaves and twigs)  
 Alfalfa\* (tops)  
 Ox Eye Daisy (leaves and flowers)  
 Lavender (leaves and flowers)  
 Juniper (berries)  
 Plantain\* (leaves)

### **How to Make Herbal Vinegar**

1. Fill your jar with the herb you are using. Chop up the herb before filling. Fill your jar until it is lightly packed, or as Susun Weed would say “tight enough to make a comfortable mattress for a fairy. Not too tight and not too loose.”
2. Pour in your vinegar to fill the jar. Place the lid on your jar. If your lid is metal, you might want to put a layer of waxed paper or plastic wrap over the mouth of the jar to keep the vinegar from reacting with the metal.
3. Label your jar. Be sure to include the type of plant used, the type of vinegar used, the start date and the ready to use date (6 weeks past the start date)
4. Shake well and place on the counter where you can see and shake daily. Keep out of direct sunlight. Your vinegar is ready to use in 6 weeks. The herbs can be strained off or left in the jar. They can be eaten. Try adding them to your salads, beans or other dishes that are naturally complimented by vinegar.

### **Uses for Herbal Vinegar**

- ~Take a tablespoon 20 minutes before a meal to assist in digestion (can be added to a cup of water)
- ~Add a few spoonfuls on beans or grains before eating
- ~Use in your salad dressing mix
- ~Add to soups
- ~Add to stir fries
- ~Splash on cooked greens such as Spinach, Kale, Nettles, Chicory, Collards and Cabbage

- ~Drink 1 tablespoon in a cup of water in the morning to help with arthritis
- ~Mix with honey and seltzer water to make shrub (a refreshing summer drink)
- ~Use in marinades for meats and vegetables
- ~Use as a liniment for sprains, sunburns, bruises and inflammations
- ~Apply to acne
- ~Use as a Hair rinse to nourish scalp
- ~Cool yourself down on a hot summer day
- ~Cleanse your skin and reduce odor from perspiration

**Recommended Herbal Books (\*indicates available through library loan system):**

- ~Herbal Vinegar by Maggie Oster\*
- ~Emily's Vinegar Diet Book (The Vinegar Book) by Emily Thacker\*
- ~Vinegar Book II by Emily Thacker\*
- ~The Vinegar Anniversary Book by Emily Thacker\*
- ~The Herbal Kitchen by Kami McBride\*
- ~The Herbal Medicine Maker's Handbook: A Home Manual by James Green
- ~Healing Herbal Wines, Vinegars & Syrups by Joyce A Wardell
- ~Folk Medicine by D.C. Jarvis

**Online Resources**

Two part article by Susun Weed:

Part 1: [http://www.susunweed.com/Article\\_Herbal\\_Vinegar.htm](http://www.susunweed.com/Article_Herbal_Vinegar.htm)

Part 2: [http://www.susunweed.com/Article\\_Herbal\\_Vinegar2.htm](http://www.susunweed.com/Article_Herbal_Vinegar2.htm)

Maggie Oster on Vinegars: <http://www.mountainroseherbs.com/newsletter/10/september/herbalvinegars.php>