

Herbal Cough Syrups

By Kami McBride

Herbal syrups come in handy this time of year and are easy to make. It is best not to take a lot of sugar when you are not feeling well, but if a little bit of sweetener makes the difference if someone takes their medicine or not, then it is worth it. A spoonful of sugar really does help the medicine go down. Often when someone is really sick, it can be difficult for them to stomach harsh tasting herbal medicines, so turning your herbal teas into syrups is a great way to make your herbal preparations taste good.

The basic recipe for making a syrup is to make an herbal tea, cook it down to one half of its original volume and then add one half parts of sweeteners and preserving ingredients. You can do this with many tea formulas and what turns a tea into a syrup is when you concentrate the tea by slow cooking it, then sweetening and adding something so that it will last longer than a tea normally does.

The basic sweeteners and preservatives that can be added to make a syrup are honey, brandy, glycerin, fruit concentrate, molasses, maple syrup and brown rice syrup. Brandy is of course the strongest preserving agent for a syrup but it doesn't taste that great. If you want your syrups to last for six months you want to add some brandy and then add something else that is sweet. Honey is the next best preservative and it also adds a great flavor. The one half parts of sweeteners can be one of the above listed ingredients or a combination of them. Syrup making is fun and can be a very creative process. The whole point is to make your medicines taste good!

Here are several great syrup recipes that I hope help to keep your family healthy and cold and flu free. Feel free to change the ratio of sweeteners using the list that I have previously given.

Elderberry Syrup

3 cups water

4 tablespoons of fresh or dried elderberries

one half cup honey

one quarter cup brandy

Put the elderberries and the water into a stainless steel sauce pan. Bring to a boil and then let simmer on low heat for fifteen minutes. Turn off the heat and let the elderberries infuse for a couple of hours. Strain the elderberries out and put them in the compost pile. You now have a strong elderberry tea. Turn the stove on low and simmer the tea without a lid on the pot until the tea is down to one half of its original volume. In this case you are starting with three cups of tea and cooking it down to one and a half cups. This process is called decocting. Take the tea off of

the stove and add the honey while the tea is still warm. Stir in the honey until it is dissolved. After the tea cools, add the brandy. Store this syrup in the refrigerator with a shelf life of about three to six months. Take a tablespoon every hour and a half at the first signs of a cold or flu.

Sore throat syrup

4 cups water

2 tablespoons osha root

1 tablespoon echinacea root

1 tablespoon fennel seed

1 tablespoon slippery elm bark

1 teaspoon ginger root

Cook this down to two cups as directed above and then add:

One half cup honey

One quarter cup brandy

One quarter cup black cherry fruit concentrate

This is a great syrup to soothe the throat. It works best if you take one tablespoon every two hours at the first tickle of a sore throat

Herbal-C Syrup

6 cups water

3 tablespoons elderberries

2 tablespoons pomegranate seeds or cranberries

2 tablespoons rose hips

1 tablespoon pine or cedar tree needles

1 tablespoon lemongrass

Cook this down to three cups and add:

One half cup molasses

One half cup honey

One half cup fruit concentrate

This is wonderful tasting syrup to take as a tonic during cold and flu season.

Wet and Damp Cough Syrup

4 cups water

2 tablespoons elecampane root

1 tablespoon thyme

1 tablespoon horehound leaf

1 tablespoon yerba santa leaf

Cook this down to two cups and add:

One half cup honey

One half cup brandy

This syrup is for lingering wet coughs with lots of stuck phlegm and mucus.

Kami McBride has taught herbal medicine and women's health since 1988. She is the director of *Cultivating the Herbal Medicine Woman Within*, an experiential herbal studies program where women are inspired to reclaim their heritage as herbalists and healers. Kami is the author of *105 Ways to Celebrate Menstruation* that is available on amazon.com Kami teaches *Women's Wisdom* workshops for women to experience optimum health in relation to their body cycles. Kami can be reached at (707) 446-1290 or www.livingawareness.com