

Double Extract Tincturing for Mushrooms

Overview

There are two main classes of chemical/medicinal constituents found in mushrooms. The first are water-soluble **beta-glucans**, a diverse group of polysaccharides that are locked inside the fibrous body of mushrooms. To extract beta-glucans, the mushrooms need to be cooked, which softens the cell walls. Beta-glucans are immune modulators. This is why mushroom preparations for the immune system often involve soup stocks and other forms of nutrient-rich broths; these long, slow cooking techniques maximize the immune-modulating medicine extracted from these fungi.

The second class of constituents are the alcohol-soluble **triterpenes**. Triterpenoids are highly medicinal steroid-type compounds. Among their many medicinal benefits, this class of constituents inhibit cholesterol synthesis and reduce the allergic response by reducing histamines. Triterpenoids are more concentrated in the fruiting body of mushrooms, rather than the mycelium.

Some triterpenes are antioxidant, reducing free radical activity in the body and aiding in respiration (helping to oxygenate the blood). These alcohol-soluble constituents also have liver-rejuvenate properties and help improve the body's ability to process xenobiotics (foreign chemicals).

Extract Preparation

Remember, for best preservation, the absolute alcohol content of the final preparation should be 30% or higher. 200-proof alcohol (100% alcohol) is preferable but not necessary.

You'll begin by making a strong decoction. You'll need 2 ounces dried mushrooms or 2 ounces fresh mushrooms for every 16 ounces (2 cups) of water.

Combine the herbs and water in a saucepan, adding more water if needed to cover the mushrooms. Simmer, covered, for at least 1 hour, and longer if you are able. Add more water as it evaporates to keep the mushrooms submerged. You can simmer the mushrooms for up to 48 hours (use a slow cooker if you prefer); just remember to add water as needed.

When the mushrooms have cooked to your satisfaction, let cool completely, strain out the mushrooms, and transfer them to a glass jar. Measure the liquid that remains, making a note of the amount. Then pour the decoction into the jar with the mushrooms.

Add another ½ ounce of dried mushrooms or 1 ounce of fresh mushrooms to the jar. Then add half as much 200-proof alcohol as there is decoction. In other words, if you have 1 cup of decoction liquid in the jar, add ½ cup 200-proof alcohol. This will give you about 50% alcohol and 50% water in your final preparation. (If you do not have 200-proof alcohol, use equal parts decoction and 100-proof vodka.)

Put a lid on the jar. Let this mixture sit for 1 to 3 months. Then strain through cotton muslin fabric, squeezing every last drop out of liquid from the mushrooms. Properly made double extracts will keep for 3 to 5 years.