

Recipes for Digestive Wellness

Bitters Tincture

½ cup coarsely chopped fresh mugwort or wormwood leaves
2 tablespoons fresh or 1 tablespoon dried dandelion root
2 tablespoons fresh or 1 tablespoon dried angelica root
1 teaspoon dried or 1 tablespoon fresh orange peel
1 teaspoon dried cinnamon chips

Combine the herbs in a pint jar. Cover with an alcohol menstrum (100 proof vodka works well, or whatever you usually use for making alcohol tinctures). Put on the lid, let steep for 1 month, and strain.

To use, take 15 to 20 drops in ¼ cup of tepid water 15 to 30 minutes before meals.

Other herbs to consider adding to a bitters formula:

Artichoke leaf
Burdock root
Calendula flower
Clove
Dandelion leaf
Fennel seed
Ginger
Oregon grape root
Turmeric root
Yellow dock root

Carminative Spice Sprinkles

Garden Carminative Sprinkle

1 tablespoon powdered rosemary
1 tablespoon powdered thyme
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground fennel

Digestive Support and Antibacterial Sprinkle

1 tablespoon powdered cardamom
1 tablespoon powdered cinnamon
1 tablespoon powdered ginger

Mix the finely crushed or powdered herbs together and put in a labeled spice jar. Keep by the stove or on the table and use as a condiment to aid digestion and assimilation.

Digestive Support Teas

Tummy Tea

Excellent for digestive upset, cramping, gas, bloating, and anxiety- and stress-related digestive issues. Good for children.

1 part chamomile
1 part mint
½ part catnip
½ part fennel seed

Carminative Seed Tea

This is a traditional Ayurvedic formula used to support metabolism, detoxification, and cleaning and gently aid liver and kidney function. It is an excellent tonic for digestion and whole body wellness. Drink hot or cold.

1 part fennel seed
1 part coriander seed
1 part cumin seed

After-Dinner Tea

This soothing tea is calming and relaxing (which is why it lends itself so well to an after-dinner/evening tea) and helps you digest your food. If you have overeaten or feel discomfort after eating, try this. The minty aromatic qualities of peppermint, sage, and lavender are excellent for the immune system, making this a great tea for cold and flu season as well.

1 part chamomile
½ part peppermint
¼ part lavender
¼ part sage

Tummy Soother

This tea is excellent for irritation of the digestive system including heartburn, acid reflux, and indigestion, as well as ulcers and other inflammatory conditions. I often use it following GI illness or distress, including stomach flus, diarrhea, or vomiting. It is soothing, mellow, healing to mucous membranes, and anti-inflammatory.

1 part fennel seed
1 part marshmallow root
1 part orange peel

Combine the dried herbs and store in an airtight container. To brew, use 1 tablespoon of the herb mixture per cup (8 ounces) of boiling water. Pour the boiling water over the herbs, cover, and let steep for 10 to 15 minutes. Drink 1 to 3 cups per day, as needed.

Other Preparations

Winter Cordial Digestif

This makes a deliciously wonderful digestif (after-dinner beverage) that supports digestion and helps stimulate the immune system and fight cold and flu.

½ cup fresh or dried elderberries
½ cup fresh or ¼ cup dried fruit*
2 slices of lemon
1 tablespoon cardamom pods
1–1½ cups brandy
½ cup raw, unrefined honey

*You might use dried cherries, pomegranate seeds, raisins, apple, pear, autumn olive berry, hawthorn berry, blueberry, etc.

Combine the berries, fruit lemon, and cardamom in a glass pint jar and add enough brandy to cover. Label and let sit in a cool, dark place for 4 weeks. Then strain through cotton muslin fabric, squeezing any remaining juice out of the fruit. Add ½ cup of honey and shake or stir until dissolved. The cordial will keep for 3 years, but I doubt it will last that long! Sip by the ounce in cordial glasses after dinner to settle the stomach and support digestion and immunity.

Tummy Soother Glycerin Tincture

This glycerin tincture is great for digestive discomfort from gas, bloating, overeating, or indigestion. It is a good choice for the ubiquitous children's "stomachache" or "bellyache" and a nice choice for nervous indigestion, nausea, or lack of appetite.

¼ cup fennel seeds
¼ cup fresh or dried catnip leaf
¼ cup fresh or dried chamomile
2 tablespoons fresh or dried orange peel (preferably organic!)
2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger root
1¼ cups vegetable glycerin
¼ cup water

Chop any fresh herbs; do not wash them first—just shake or wipe dirt from leaves if necessary. Place the herbs in a glass pint jar and cover with the glycerin and water. Shake well to combine, then remove the lid and push any fresh herb material down below the level of the liquid, if necessary. Label and let sit in a cool dark place for 4 weeks, then strain through cotton muslin. The glycerin tincture will keep for 1 to 2 years.

Dosages:

Adults: 30–45 drops once or twice a day as needed

Children ages 1–2: 3–5 drops once or twice a day as needed

Children ages 3–5: 5–7 drops once or twice a day as needed

Children ages 6–10: 7–15 drops once or twice a day as needed

Children 10–15: Half the adult dose, or dose as appropriate by body weight

Anti-Inflammatory Honey

This is a soothing, moistening, anti-inflammatory formula that is excellent for acid reflux, heartburn, ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, colitis, and constipation.

¼ cup marshmallow root powder
1 tablespoon cinnamon bark powder
1 tablespoon fennel seed powder
1 tablespoon orange peel powder
½–¾ cup raw, unrefined honey

Mix all the ingredients together to form a paste. Store in a jar with a tight-fitting lid in a cool, dark place. Take 1 tablespoon one to three times a day or as needed to support symptoms. Dissolve in warm water and drink, take by the spoonful, or use in cooking.

Ginger Syrup

Syrups are sweet, so they are not a good way to get direct bitter medicine. However, the honey that makes them sweet has excellent antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and nutritive benefits. This formula is great as a general digestive tonic to increase digestive fire, metabolism, and circulation. It is excellent for lack of appetite, nausea, gas, bloating, and poor absorption of nutrients. It is also a potent antibacterial and antimicrobial that can be useful during cold and flu season.

1 cup grated fresh ginger root
4 cups water
1 cup honey
¼ cup brandy

Combine the ginger root and water in a saucepan. Bring to a simmer, then reduce the heat and let cook, uncovered, at a low simmer until the water volume has decreased by about half. Let cool slightly, then strain through cotton muslin fabric or cheesecloth, squeezing the ginger root to extract the juice. Add the honey and stir or shake to dissolve, then add the brandy. Will keep for 6 months in the refrigerator.

To use, take 1 tablespoon to 1 ounce before meals, straight or diluted, as a digestive aid.

Fiah Cidah

Fiah Cidah, as my New England grandmother would call it, is a warming digestive aid and tonic. It helps reduce mucous production and can be used at the onset of a cold or flu to clear the sinuses, increase circulation, and enhance immunity. As a tonic, take 1 tablespoon once or twice a day in a little water. For cold or flu, take 1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon every hour up to six times a day. While Fire Cidah is excellent for warming the digestive fire and improving the appetite it may aggravate acid reflux, heartburn, and indigestion.

¼ cup freshly grated horseradish
½ cup chopped onion
¼ cup chopped garlic
¼ cup freshly grated ginger
Ground cayenne pepper, to taste
Raw apple cider vinegar
Raw honey, to taste

Combine the horseradish, onion, garlic, ginger, and cayenne in a glass jar and add enough vinegar to cover. Vinegar erodes metal, so use a plastic, glass, or cork lid when making this fiery cider, or put a piece of wax paper between a metal lid and the liquid. Let the mixture sit 4 weeks, then strain and sweeten to taste with honey.