

Edible Infusions

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To make an infusion, one must first decide what an “infusion” truly is. There are many different ways of soaking, boiling, and steeping herbs; as well as many different bases to use. According to all of the documentation I can find, a true infusion is made by soaking herbs or spices in hot water. This is also known as a tea or tisane.

For my infusion, I used information from Culpeper’s *The English Physitian*. This book, although published beyond the Society’s period, includes much information that could plausibly have been used for many years prior. In fact, the infusion recipe I have chosen is almost identical to a recipe in *An Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook of the 13th Century*. This leaves me to believe that much of his learning was gathered through much older works, which he just expanded upon. Thus, one could be safe to judge that many of his remedies come from a much earlier time, well within the Society’s time frame.

In Culpeper’s book, he describes many ways of preparing herbal remedies. I chose to make a syrup “made by Infusion.” He states “Syrups made by Infusion are usually made of Flowers, and of such Flowers, as soon lose both colour and strength by boyling, as Roses... They are thus made, having picked your Flowers clean, to every pound of them, ad three pound...of Spring Water made boyling hot by the fire, first put your Flowers in a Puter Pot with a cover, then powr the Water to them, then shutting the Pot, let it stand by the fire to keep hot twelve hours, the strain it out, having strained it out, put the Infusion into a Peuter Bason, or and Earthen one well glassed, and to every pint of it, ad two pound of fine Sugar, which being only melted over the fire without boyling, and scummed, will produce you the Syrup you desire.”

He includes many recipes for remedies, and I have chosen to make a Syrup of dried Roses:

Syrupus de Rosis siccis
Or Syrup of dried Roses

College : Make four pounds of spring water hot, in which infuse a pound of dried Roses, by some at a time, press them out and with two pounds of sugar, boil it into a Syrup according to art.

Culpeper : Syrup of dried Roses, strengthens the heart, comforts the spirits, binds the body, helps fluxes, and corrosions, or gnawings of the bowels, it strengthens the stomach, and stays vomiting. You may take an ounce at a time, before meat, if for fluxes; after meat if for vomiting.

According to Culpeper, “The syrup of dried red Roses strengthens a stomach given to casting, cools an over-heated liver, and the blood in agues, comforts the heart, and resists putrefaction and infection, and helps to stay lasks and fluxes.”

For comparison purposes, here is the recipe from the *Andalusian Cookbook*:

Syrup of Dried Roses

Take a ratl of dried roses, and cover with three ratls of boiling water, for a night, and leave it until they fall apart in the water. Press it and clarify it, take the clear part and add it to two ratls of white sugar, and cook all this until it is in the form of a syrup. Drink an ûqiya and a half of this with three of water. Its benefits: it binds the constitution, and benefits at the start of dropsy, fortifies the other internal organs, and provokes the appetite, God willing.

In the *Andalusian Cookbook*, a ratl is approximately equal to a pound. This matches what Culpeper gives for directions to make syrup by infusion.

To make my infusion, I boiled four pounds of Spring water (which is equal to a half gallon), poured half of my pound of dried roses into a crock-pot, and then covered the roses with the boiled water. I used the crock-pot to keep my infusion warm. I felt this was safer than letting it sit by a fire for 12 hours. I couldn't find a pewter pot, which would probably have been unhealthy anyway, so I decided that the crock-pot insert would substitute nicely as an "earthen one well glassed." I then let this sit for 12 hours.

The next morning, I strained out the spent roses, pressed out as much of the liquid as I could, and put the rest of my dried roses into the crock-pot to make the infusion stronger. I let this sit all day, and that evening, I again strained and pressed out the spent roses; I also poured the infusion through a sieve and muslin to remove all of the dirt and debris.

This left me with 3 pints of liquid. I then added three pounds of white sugar to the liquid, and cooked it down to a syrup.

Culpeper does not give dosage information, so I am serving the syrup both as a drink (according to *Andalusian*) and with a spoon for tasting straight syrup.

Bibliography:

Culpeper, Nicholas, 1616-1654.

The English physitian: or an astrologo-physical discourse of the vulgar herbs of this nation.

London : Peter Cole, 1652.

An Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook of the 13th Century

Translated by Charles Perry

Webbed at: http://www.best.com/~ddfr/Medieval/Cookbooks/Andalusian/andalusian_contents.htm