HERBAL PREPARATIONS

Making Tinctures & Glycerites

A step-by-step guide to extracting and preserving herbs at home

Tinctures vs. glycerites: which to use?

Tinctures

Alcohol (vodka, brandy) extracts and preserves plant constituents.

- Strongest, most shelf-stable extract
- Best for resins, alkaloids, most roots & barks
- Not ideal for children or alcohol-free diets

Glycerites

Vegetable glycerin (plus water) extracts and preserves instead of alcohol.

- Sweet taste, alcohol-free
- Popular for children and those avoiding alcohol
- Weaker solvent — shorter shelf life, needs care

What you'll need

Dried or fresh herb

Clean, well-identified plant material — dried herb is most common for beginners.

Menstruum

High-proof vodka/alcohol for tinctures; food-grade vegetable glycerin + water for glycerites.

A glass jar

Wide-mouth mason jar with a tight, non-metal-lined lid (metal can corrode over time).

A kitchen scale

For weighing herb accurately — ratios are by weight of herb to volume of liquid.

Straining cloth

Muslin, cheesecloth or a fine mesh strainer, plus a bowl to strain into.

Labels & bottles

Amber dropper bottles for the finished product, and labels with herb, date and ratio.

THE RECIPE BEHIND EVERY BATCH

Choosing your ratio & strength

Preparation	Herb : Liquid (by weight/volume)	Typical strength
Dried herb tincture	1 : 5	40–60% alcohol (80–100 proof vodka)
Fresh herb tincture	1 : 2	≈95% alcohol, to account for water in the plant
Dried herb glycerite	1 : 5	≈60% glycerin to 40% water
Fresh herb glycerite	1 : 2	≈75% glycerin to 25% water

These are common starting ratios — individual herbs (resins, roots, aromatics) may call for adjustments.

Making a Tincture

STEP BY STEP · THE FOLK / WEIGHT-TO-VOLUME METHOD

1

Prep the herb

Chop, grind or crush dried herb to increase surface area; finely chop fresh herb.

2

Weigh & jar it

Weigh the herb and place in a clean glass jar using your chosen ratio.

3

Add alcohol

Pour alcohol over the herb until fully submerged, with room to spare above.

4

Seal & macerate

Seal tightly, label, and store in a cool dark place for 4–6 weeks, shaking daily.

5

Strain & bottle

Strain through muslin, press the marc, and bottle the liquid in amber glass.

Making a Glycerite

STEP BY STEP · GLYCERIN EXTRACTION

1

Prep the herb

Chop or grind dried herb; finely chop fresh herb to expose more surface area.

2

Mix your menstruum

Combine vegetable glycerin and distilled water in the ratio for your herb (see previous slide).

3

Weigh & jar it

Weigh the herb into a clean jar, then pour the glycerin/water mixture over it.

4

Seal & macerate

Seal, label and store in a cool dark place for 4–6 weeks, shaking or stirring daily.

5

Strain & bottle

Strain through muslin, press the marc well (glycerin is thick), and bottle.

Straining & pressing, done well

Line a strainer

Line a fine mesh strainer or funnel with a few layers of muslin or cheesecloth over a clean bowl.

Pour it through

Pour the macerated jar contents through slowly, letting gravity do most of the work.

Press the marc

Gather the cloth around the spent herb ("marc") and squeeze firmly to extract every drop.

Bottle promptly

Funnel the strained liquid into clean, labeled amber bottles right away.

Labeling, storage & shelf life

On every label

- Common & botanical (Latin) name of the herb
- Part used (root, leaf, flower, etc.)
- Menstruum & ratio (e.g. dried, 1:5, 50% alcohol)
- Date made
- Your name/business, if selling

Tinctures

Store in a cool, dark place, away from direct light. Well-preserved alcohol tinctures can last 3–5+ years.

Glycerites

Shorter shelf life than tinctures — typically around 1–2 years, refrigerated once opened. Watch for cloudiness, mold or fermentation smell.

Common troubleshooting

Mold or cloudiness in a glycerite	The glycerin/water ratio may have been too diluted, or the jar wasn't stored cool enough. Discard and remake with a higher glycerin ratio.
Herb not fully submerged	Any herb exposed to air can spoil. Top up the menstruum, or weigh the herb down with a clean glass weight.
Weak-tasting or pale tincture	Try a longer maceration, a finer chop, or a higher-proof alcohol appropriate to the herb's constituents.
Sediment in the bottled liquid	Strain a second time through a coffee filter or several more layers of muslin before final bottling.

Label it, date it, let it work.

A process and craft guide — always research herb-specific safety, dosing and contraindications before use.