

Decoction

A decoction often takes several hours to prepare. The point behind making one is to extract and concentrate the compounds from a plant, usually the woody parts like bark or roots.

Here's the procedure and a recipe to make my mullein and beebalm decoction.

Use a glass or ceramic pot if possible. I use stainless only when I have no other option. This recipe uses a small pot and makes a little more than a 1/2 pint.

Mullein and Beebalm Decoction

- Gather several mullein leaves. Don't use the ratty outer leaves but the fresher ones toward the center.
- Gather several branches of beebalm just as it begins to bloom.
- Break the mullein leaves up and add them to the pot, pour enough water over them to cover them completely when they're pressed down. They will float, so use your best judgement. I usually just use 1/2 pot of water. If you want to know exactly what you start and end with, use a measuring cup to add your water.
- Strip the flowers and leaves from the beebalm and set them aside. Break the stems to smaller pieces and add them to the pot.
- You can use dried herb in place of fresh. You can make this without the beebalm entirely.

You want it to barely simmer, without boiling. Tamp down the herbs every so often to make sure they all spend time under the surface.

Evaporate down to 1/2 volume and strain through cheesecloth folded over itself twice into large container.

Rinse the pot. Pour the liquid back into it and continue to cook down on low heat without simmering.

When the volume has reduced to half again, add the beebalm flowers and leaves. After 5 minutes turn off the heat and strain again into a separate container. Rinse the pot. If there is any doubt that there might still be mullein leaf hairs in the decoction, strain again through a finer cloth or with more folds to the cheesecloth (use a fresh cloth).

Follow the same procedure to make a decoction of other herbs that are woody or tough. The mullein leaves wouldn't have given up their goodness to a 5-minute tea brew, but the beebalm will.

You can find my post about how I use this decoction to make a syrup for "winter crud" at wildozark.com/winter-crud

