

Mixing It Up: Tonics in the Kitchen

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Golden Drink

A traditional Ayurvedic tonic with many variations, this is a good daily tonic that is especially nice in winter or as a calming beverage at bedtime. The herb paste doesn't need to be refrigerated. Just be sure to use a clean spoon each time each time you make this.

Ingredients:

2 parts turmeric powder
1 part ginger powder
1 or 2 generous pinches of freshly ground black pepper
Enough honey to make a thick paste

Mix all ingredients together in a wide mouth jar.

To make the drink:

Put 1 teaspoon (more or less to taste) of the paste in a small saucepan with a small amount (about ¼ cup) of milk (cow, goat, nut, hemp, coconut, etc.) Stir well to mix the paste with the milk. Warm over low heat; slowly add more milk, a little bit at a time, stirring constantly. Use approximately 1 teaspoon of paste for each cup of milk. Heat until very warm but don't let it boil. Have one or more cups per day.

Note: A part can be any amount. For example, to make one serving or so, you may use 1 teaspoon turmeric powder, ½ teaspoon ginger powder, and a pinch of black pepper. If you want to mix up a larger quantity, combine 8 oz. turmeric powder, 4 oz. ginger powder and 1 teaspoon black pepper, etc. Note: **Weigh** the dry ingredients when making a quantity.

Carla's Spice Paste (Thanks to Carla Owen of Murphy, NC for the recipe!)

Use fresh herbs for this paste. It may be mixed with milk as a beverage (see Golden Drink) or used as a spice for just about any dish.

1 lb. fresh organic turmeric root
½ lb. peeled organic ginger root (or fresh pink baby ginger in season)
1 to 6 oz. peeled garlic cloves (1 head is about 2 oz., 10 cloves is about the equivalent of a head)
Zest and juice of 2 organic lemons
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 cup olive oil

Pulse all ingredients in a food processor until you get a consistency you like. Adjust ingredients to suite your taste. Store in a wide mouth jar (with a bit of oil on top) in the refrigerator.

Quick and Easy Tonic Soup

Use this recipe as a starting point to create your own blend. In addition the ingredients below, you'll need some miso paste.

Ingredients:

1 cup powdered dry shiitake mushrooms or any other medicinal mushroom (except reishi, see below)*

For each cup of mushroom powder, add (approximately):

½ cup dehydrated, powdered dandelion leaf, nettles or other wild greens
¼ cup toasted, dried seaweed
¼ cup dehydrated, powdered garlic, scallions or wild onion/garlic tops
¼ cup turmeric powder, to taste
2 tablespoons powdered goji berries, or to taste

Combine everything and store in a glass jar.

To make one serving of soup: Combine 1 tablespoon of soup mixture and 1 tablespoon of miso paste for each serving; mix well. Add a just enough freshly boiled water to make a thin paste. Continue adding hot water and stirring. Use about 1 cup of water per tablespoon of soup mix. Mix It Up: Add some chopped cooked vegetables, meat or grains to the soup. * NOTE: Do not use all reishi mushrooms, as they are too bitter. If using reishi, use no more than ¼ part.

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Milk Thistle Seed Gomasio (Condiment)

Gomasio is a traditional Japanese condiment that adds flavor to anything you serve. Here I've added milk thistle seeds, which have little flavor and are a good everyday liver tonic. Use an electric coffee grinder to coarsely grind the milk thistle seeds (they must be broken up in order to be digested).

1½ cups lightly toasted sesame seeds
¼ cup coarsely ground milk thistle seeds (same size as sesame seeds)
¼ cup sea salt
½ ounce (by weight) of seaweed (toasted) or dried, powdered wild greens (nettles, etc.)
2 teaspoons aromatic oregano
1/8 teaspoon cayenne powder

Mix all ingredients together in a bowl. Store in an airtight jar. Keep the Gomasio on the table and use it to season anything and everything.

Mix It Up: Use any dry culinary herbs you like such as thyme, summer savory, ginger or garlic powder, etc.

Zoom Balls

This is an old-school hippie recipe created by herbalist Rosemary Gladstar in California in the '60s. It is essentially a way to hide herbs in an irresistible mixture of nut butter, honey and cacao. Use any powdered adaptogen in this recipe to get your daily dose of tonic herbs, see below for suggestions.

8 ounces of almond or other nut butter
½ cup honey (or less to taste)
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
¼ cup cacao nib powder
½ cup hulled hemp seed, or other coarsely ground nut or seed
2 tablespoons dried, powdered orange peel
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon turmeric
½ teaspoon ginger powder
1 pinch ground black pepper
1 to 2 ounces finely powdered adaptogenic (or other) herbs, your choice*
1/2 ounce (more or less) of cordial, brandy or liqueur (optional)

Mix nut butter, honey, and cordials (if using) together in a big bowl.

In a separate bowl, mix together all dry ingredients. Add dry ingredients to the wet and mix well.

Refrigerate for 30 minutes or more. Roll into small balls (big gum ball size) and dust with unsweetened cacao powder, coconut or finely ground nuts. Store in a closed container in the refrigerator for up to two weeks, or hide somewhere so that they don't get eaten immediately! Probably best not to eat no more than one or two per day...

* Possible adaptogenic herbs to consider include rhodiola, cordyceps, reishi, turkey tail, ashwaganda, schisandra, shatavari, eleuthero, licorice, goji berries, and American or Asian ginseng.