If your alcohol is labeled as proof rather than a percentage of alcohol, the proof is double the actual percentage of alcohol. So if you purchase alcohol described as 100 proof, it means that it is 50% alcohol and 50% water. 80 proof would be 40% alcohol and 60% water.

How to make herbal tinctures using the folk method

You'll need:

- Dried or fresh plant material
- Vodka with at least 40% alcohol for dried herbs or 95% alcohol for fresh herbs
- A wide mouth quart canning jar
- A stainless steel funnel
- A stainless steel strainer
- A cloth for pressing out the herbs or a potato ricer

Method:

1. Wash and sanitize your equipment.
2. Place your chosen herb in the Mason jar. If you are using dried herbs fill the jar half full. The dried herbs will absorb the alcohol and swell in the jar. If you are using fresh herbs, fill the jar completely with the herbs, then cover the herbs with alcohol.

Making Olive Leaf Tincture:

Olive leaves can be tinctured at any stage in their development. I used leaf tips from a mature branch that had been pruned from a local tree. Thanks to a rather hefty harvest of leaf tips from this branch, I dried some and tinctured some. The dry branches could be used for tincture at a later date, or used for tea.

(If you are new to herbal medicine see How to Make a Tincture here.)

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups of olive leaves, dried

2 cups of vodka (at least 40% alcohol)

Glass jar with tight fitting lid

Cloth or sieve to strain the tincture

Method:

The summer olive leaves will have small olives attached; these can be safely dried with the leaves and used in the tincture or tea.

While olives are a naturally dry plant, the leaves should be washed to get rid of dust and allowed to dry overnight after washing. This insures that there is no added dust, insects, or lingering residues in your tincture.

Once the leaves have been washed and dried overnight, you can make the tincture.

Fill a pint or quart, wide-mouth jar with leaves. If you have a lot of olive leaves you can strip them from the stem, I left my olive leaves on the stem since I only had a few.

Once the jar is comfortably full, pour vodka or glycerine over the leaves to cover. Vodka used in tinctures should be at least 40% alcohol. For a specific measurement, a 1:5 ratio can be used. That is, one part dried olive leaf by weight to five parts alcohol by volume. I simply filled the jar half full of olive leaves and covered the leaves with vodka.

Store your jar of steeping olive leaves in a dark cupboard or other place away from direct sunlight. Shake nightly, or as often as you remember to. Let the tincture steep for 4 to 6 weeks.

After 4 to 6 weeks you can strain the olive leaves out of your tincture and transfer the green toned vodka tincture to a storage container or jar. The olive leaves are very dry, and absorb very little of the alcohol. Strain using a stainless steel mesh strainer, or just pour off the vodka through a standard tea strainer and shake off the leaves by hand. You do not need to press out the tincture from the leaves due to how dry the leaves are.

If you inadvertently forget about your steeping elixir, there is no problem. Just strain it when you do remember it, after 4 to 6 weeks.

Use a dark colored amber bottle for storage, or if you only have clear glass, store the tincture in a dark cupboard.

Dosages: 1 to 2 ml of tincture up to 3 times a day. This can be increased if you are fighting a virus or infection, up to 5ml, 2 or 3 times a day.

Olive Leaf Extract Benefits

- antiatherogenic (prevents formation of plaque in the arteries)
- Anti-diabetic
- anti-HIV
- antihypertensive (lowers blood pressure)
- anti-inflammatory

- anti-microbial
- antioxidant,
- anti-viral
- bitter
- hepatic
- hypocholesterolemic (lowers cholesterol and protects the circulatory system)
- hypoglycemic (lowers blood sugar)
- protective against radiation damage
- support healthy thyroid function

Olive leaf tincture is active in the immune system, the digestive system, the circulatory system, and the glandular system.

Olive leaf extract is credited as both an anti-viral and an anti-bacterial agent. In historical usage, olive leaf tea was taken to lower fevers and reduce the impact of various bacteriological and viral diseases, including malaria. It has been found to act against viral agents, changing their pathways and preventing viral replication in infected cells.

Also called an extract (in fact, the same process is used to make real vanilla extract), alcohol tinctures are the most common type and the easiest to make.

First, pick which herbs you plan to use. These are some of my favorite tinctures:

- Chamomile Tincture (great for kids, promotes restful sleep and good for skin)
- Digestion Tincture (helps with nausea, heartburn, etc)
- Sweet Dreams Tincture (I use to help little ones who are having trouble sleeping)
- Echinacea Tincture (great immune support when fighting a cold)

Fill the jar 1/3 to 1/2 full with dried herbs. Filling half full will make a stronger tincture. Do not pack down.

Pour boiling water to just dampen all of the herbs. (This step is optional but helps to draw out the beneficial properties of the herbs)

Fill the rest of the jar (or the entire jar if not using hot water too) with alcohol and stir with a clean spoon.

Put the lid on the jar. Store the jar in a cool/dry place, shaking daily, for at least three weeks and up to six months. (I usually leave herbs for six weeks)

Strain through cheesecloth and compost the herbs. Store the tincture in colored dropper bottles or clean glass jars.

NOTE: The alcohol can be evaporated before use (see below) or a tincture can be made in the same way using apple cider vinegar, though it will need to be stored in the fridge and will only last 3-6 months.

How to Use Herbal Tinctures

The standard adult dose we take is 1/2 to 1 teaspoon up to three times a day as needed. Kids usually get 1/4 to 1/3 of the adult dose.