

# Bastyr University's Living Naturally Series: Herbal Holiday Gift Making

**Welcome to the wonderful world of herbal medicine making! A simple time tested tradition of caring for yourself, your family, and your community.** We are quickly approaching the holiday season when gift giving provides us with that warm cozy feeling we obtain when we give of ourselves to another. Holiday gift giving doesn't need to be too complicated, and it doesn't need to be wrapped up in consumerism. You can create your own heartfelt gifts that are truly one-of-a-kind and that don't take up too much of your precious time.

**Today we are going to explore how to create herbal medicinal salves, lip balms, and body butters.** Three products which are sure to please anyone, even the person who has everything!

**Salves, lip balms, and body butters are preparations that utilize herbally infused oils along with a solidifying agent, such as beeswax, shea butter, and/or cocoa butter.**

These preparations are semi-solid in nature, and are suited for external application to the skin. Because they are not readily absorbed through the skin, they are the perfect remedy for localized, surface conditions rather than systemic problems. Typically, these forms of herbal medicine provide nourishing, healing, emollient, protective, and counter-irritant effects.

**Salves** are useful preparations to have on hand when treating surface wounds, strains, sprains, bruising, inflammatory conditions, muscle spasms, rashes, psoriasis, eczema, minor burns and sunburns, as well as insect bites and other itchy skin conditions.

**Lip balms** provide a protective barrier that help to soften chapped lips, and they often contain some form of UV protection, which aid in shielding the lips from over exposure to the sun's rays.

**Body butters** are food for the skin. The oil rich preparation provides your skin with the basic building blocks it needs to stay moisturized and healthy. Butters are rich and thick and are perfect for healing chapped, cracked skin.

## Salves

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Salves, also known as ointments and unguents, are medicated oils that have been solidified using a wax, such as beeswax and/or shea butter, or with another solidifying agent, like cocoa butter.

- Traditionally, ointments contain a minimal amount of your chosen solidifying agent, and are almost the consistency of pudding, which makes them easy to spread on the skin.
- Salves contain a higher concentration of a solidifying agent and are firmer in nature; they are great for providing a protect layer on the skin.
- Balms are the firmest of the three preparations, containing the most amount of wax, and are traditionally used on the temples and lips- typically; balms will contain a higher proportion of volatile oils as well.

As mentioned above, salves are the preferred preparation for use on a number of external skin conditions and traumas. However, keep in mind that **they are not to be used on deep wounds, like puncture wounds**. Because the preparation is so good at providing that protective layer to the skin, it is equally good at trapping bacteria in a deep wound. Anaerobic bacteria thrive in a non-oxygenated environment. If they are trapped in a deep wound under a layer of oil and wax that seals them off from an oxygenated atmosphere, they will go wild and multiply, thereby increasing the potential for infection.

**You can create medicated salves to heal a number of topical ailments by using herbally infused oils.** Making an infused oil is simple and can be done utilizing two methods, the long digestion method or the quick double boiler method. Here are the basic instructions for making each.

#### **Making Long Digested Herbal Infused Oils Using Dried Herb**

1. Fill your jar about 1/3 full when using the aerial parts of a plant (non-waxy leaf or flower), or ½ full when using barks, roots, waxy leaves, or berries. If the plant material is super fluffy give it a spin in a coffee grinder to reduce the volume of the space the herb takes up in the jar so that you can get more herb in your maceration.
2. Pour your choice of oil over your herb, filling the jar to the top. The oil should cover the herb by at least an inch for the entire two week maceration time.
  - Dry herbs they will absorb some of the oil to rehydrate themselves. Check the maceration to make sure that the herb doesn't absorb too much oil and is not covered by an inch. If the herb is not covered by an inch there is a chance that it will go rancid.
3. Cover the jar with a tight fitting lid and store in a warm, dark place for 4-6 weeks... depending on the degree of warmth; keeping the temperature between 100 and 125 degrees Fahrenheit. You'll know the oil has finished macerating when it has taken on the rich color and aroma of the herb.
4. Press out the herb from the oil and store the oil in a dark, glass bottle/jar. Label your preparation with the name of the preparation, the ingredients, and the date it was first concocted.

**Using the Double Boiler Method:** from Gladstar's, *Family Herbal*

\*This method is suitable for both fresh and dried herbs.

1. Place chopped herbs and oil in a double boiler and bring to a low simmer.
2. Slowly heat for 30-60 minutes, checking frequently to be sure the oil is not overheating. I like to let my infusion go for at least 2 hours in order to insure a stronger extraction.
3. Then lower the heat, the longer the infusion, the better the oil.
4. Strain the oil through cheesecloth or muslin.
5. When the oil has been poured off, put the herbs in the cloth and wring thoroughly.
6. Store in a dark, sterilized, labeled bottle in a cool, dark area.

**The amount of wax used in your salve depends on the consistency of the salve you want to create.** As a general rule, salves should be harder for summer use and softer for winter use. You want a harder salve in the summer in order to resist the melting effects of the sun's rays, which means you will need to use more wax, and your winter time salves should contain a smaller amount of wax so that your salve doesn't become too hard in colder conditions.

**You can also create individualized salves for treating various conditions.** In this case, you will want to create a harder base salve, to which you can add tinctures or infusions/decoctions. You will want to add your wet ingredients a bit at a time until the desired consistency has been reached.

**The shelf life of your salves should be 1-2 years if stored properly.** To preserve your salves you will want to keep them in an opaque container in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight. They do not keep well when they are kept in locations where they are allowed to continuously melt down and re-cool, such as when stored in the glove box of your car. Also, you may want to use a cosmetic spatula for scooping out your salve in order to prevent bacteria that are on your skin from entering the container.

**You can add a preservative to your salves to increase their longevity,** such as vitamin E oil, and/or essential oils, such as rosemary, oregano, tea tree, eucalyptus, lavender, or thyme. When adding essential oils use 10-12 drops of essential oil per ounce of mixture. Add a smaller amount for mild preservative properties, and for stronger essential oils like thyme and oregano, or add a larger amount to increase the therapeutic properties of the salve.

**Because essential oils are volatile, you will want to add them at the end of your process.** You can add them to the salve mixture after removing it from the heat and prior to pouring them into the containers, or you can add drops of the essential oils into the container before pouring in the heated mixture.

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Page 3

## **Supplies Needed**

Herbal infused oil(s) or fixed oil

Wax: beeswax, shea butter, or cocoa butter

Double boiler, or set a measuring cup inside a water bath (you can create a water bath by partially filling a pot with water. Just be careful that the water is low enough so that it won't splash into the measuring cup!)

Measuring cup, ladle, or other pouring apparatus with a sharply tapered lip

Salve containers: dark, opaque, with a decent sized opening for easy access

Rubber mallet or hammer for breaking up bulk beeswax, or a cheese grater for grating the wax

Scale for weighing the wax

Vit. E or essential oils (optional)

## **Making a Salve**

- 1. Measure out 1 cup of your medicated oil in a glass measuring cup.** You can utilize as many different kinds of oils as you like in order to create a specific salve base.
2. Place the cup into a water bath in a larger pan of water, or heat the oil and wax in a double boiler over low heat.
- 3. Add 1 oz (approx 30 grams) of wax per cup of oil used.** If you are making an ointment, use a 1/2 oz of wax per cup of oil.
  - When buying beeswax in bulk you can freeze it and pull out what you need as you go. Simply freeze the block of beeswax then place it in a triple bag, wrap it in a towel, and beat the block with a hammer in order to break it up into smaller chunks. You can then melt the smaller pieces as they are, or you can grate the beeswax, which allows for quicker melting.
4. Place a spoon in the freezer, or have a glass of ice water ready. You will be using one of these methods to check the consistency of your salve.
5. Gently heat the mixture until the beeswax has melted.
6. Once the beeswax has melted, check the consistency of the salve by placing a frozen spoon into the mix. The salve will harden on the spoon, allowing you to test its consistency. If it's too soft, add more beeswax, too hard, add more oil. An alternate method is to have a glass of ice water available and pour a drop of the mixture into the ice water. You can then check the drop in the water to test its consistency.
7. Repeat the test process until you have the consistency that you want.

8. If using essential oils, remove the mixture from the heat source and add the desired amount of essential oil to your mixture. Or, you can add the essential oil to the bottom of the salve container before filling it with the salve mixture.
  - Remember that you will want to use approximately 10-12 drops of essential oil per each ounce, depending on the essential oils being used.
9. Pour the mixture into appropriate containers and label.
10. Once cool, remove the lid so that it dries out... this will discourage molding.
11. Store in a cool dry place.

**\*Checking the consistency of the salve via the cold spoon trick will not work if shea or cocoa butter is used as the solidifying agent.** When using these mediums make sure to record your observations on the consistency of your salve in your herbal lab notebook. With each consecutive salve made increase the amount of shea/cocoa butter by small increments (maybe by 5 gram increments) and continue to record your observations. By noting your observations, over time you will find the exact amount needed to create a perfect salve time after time. You may want to begin by doubling the amount of cocoa butter used in the previous recipe (use 2 oz instead of 1 oz), and triple the amount of shea butter (use 3 oz instead of 1 oz).

## Lip Balms

**Lip balms provide a way of incorporating your healing salves into therapy for the lips.** Plus, they're an easy preparation to make when creating your salves, because they are made using your salve mixture with a bit more solidifying agent. The extra wax helps create a firmer mixture that is easier to spread on the lips... and boy do they love a nice layer of lip-loving-balm!!!

**When making lip balms you may want to add some extra ingredients and/or herbs that are super beneficial to the lips, such as:**

- Herbs with UV protection: St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) contains the constituent, hypericin, which is a naturally occurring pigment that absorbs strongly in the red and ultraviolet regions of the spectrum, thereby acting as a sun screen.
- Add corrigent (flavoring) herbs, or essential oils for delicious herbal lip therapies such as: chocolate, orange, lemon, bergamot, or cinnamon essential oils.
- Add stimulating herbs for herbal lip stimulation, such as peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), spearmint (*Mentha spicata*), or you can add cayenne

(*Capsicum spp.*) for an ultra stimulating, plumping action!!!- caution, this is only for the truly brave!

- Or... you can create your own special lip treatment using a combination of fixed oils and solidifying agents like cocoa butter or shea butter for a super lip softening blend. Honey is an excellent choice for a lip moistening treatment- and it tastes lovely!
- Try using castor oil to make a gloss. For color try adding beet powder (do not use beet powder with honey as the two do not mix) or infusing the oils in alkanut root to make a red/pink colored lip treatment. You can also add pigmented mica (Herbs of Grace is a good source) for more of a longer lasting lip color.

### **Supplies Needed**

Salve mixture

Extra wax

Essential oils (optional) or other lip loving herbs

Chap Stick containers or small lip balm containers

### **Making a Lip Balm**

1. Make a base healing salve. Reserve ~1/4 cup of the salve mixture. Or, combine a ¼ cup of fixed oil(s) with 8 oz beeswax.
2. Add more wax to the mixture until it is fairly solidified (no need if starting from scratch). Add ¼ oz of wax at a time. Use the cold spoon method to test the consistency of the mixture.
3. For a super lip nourishing treatment add some cocoa butter and/or shea butter. Try a tablespoon each of cocoa butter and shea butter.
4. If planning on using essential oils, remove the pot from the heat and add the EO drop by drop... some will dissipate due to the warmth of the mixture so you may need to use slightly more than anticipated.
5. If adding honey add 1 tsp and let it infuse into the oil mixture.
6. If adding beet powder or colored mica powder add 1 tsp at a time until the desired color is reached.
7. Pour the mixture into Chap Stick containers, filling the tubes so that they have a domed top...this will discourage the Chap Stick from caving in. Or, simply pour into small lip balm containers.

**Label your tins and slather your lips with your new luscious balm!**

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Page 6

## **Body Butters**

**Our skin deserves to be pampered, to be cared for, and to be taken notice of.** It is, in fact, the largest organ of our body and plays a key role in our overall health. It helps to protect our vital organs against damage, and is an incredible first barrier against pathogens by keeping infectious agents out. It helps maintain the fluid balance of your body by protecting against water loss, and it is one of the key organs of elimination, working hard to help remove toxins from our system. Our skin is the mirror reflecting the state of our inner being (rashes, acne, eczema, rosacea can be signs of liver imbalance and/or allergies), and it deserves to be cared for.

**Because our skin works so hard for us it deserves to be nourished so that it can continue its daily duties.** Our skin is made up of a lipid bilayer that is mainly comprised of lipids and water, enzymes, vitamins and minerals. It is important to feed the skin with these cofactors so that it can replenish that which is lost on a daily basis, thereby keeping our skin strong and healthy. Body butters provide the skin with oil rich nutrients that keep the skin healthy and moisturized day after day.

**There are many different ways to make body butters,** essentially all it takes is combining fixed oils with solid butters. The amount of oil to butter content will determine how solid the body butter will turn out, in general, you want **75% solid ingredients (butter) to 25% liquid ingredients (fixed oil)**. The following are two different recipes to try. The first recipe has you cooling the body butter in a container, much like how you make a salve. The second recipe has you whip the body butter as it cools so that you force air into it, making it lighter and airier.

**\*Play with different butters, likes avocado, mango, cocoa, shea, illipe, or kokum.**

### **Recipe for Making a Body Butter**

\*Makes 6-8 ounces

1 1/2 oz Beeswax

4 oz Olive Oil (herbally infused oils are always a plus)

1 Tbl Cocoa Butter

1-2 Tbl Shea Butter

10-30 Drops Vitamin E oil

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Page 7

Essential oils of choice: approximately 10-12 drops per 1 ounce of butter

### **How to Make a Body Butter**

1. Melt your beeswax, cocoa butter and olive/herbal infused oil in a double boiler over low heat until the solid portions have melted.
2. Remove from heat and carefully dry the water off the bottom of the bowl.
3. Add the shea butter, vitamin E, and the essential oils until incorporated.
4. Pour into containers of choice and allow to fully cool before capping.

### **Recipe for Making a Whipped Body Butter**

\*Makes a 1lb batch

10 oz Shea Butter

6 oz fixed Oils: you can use all one, or use 2 oz each of 3 different oils,  
herbally infused oils are always a plus

2 tsp Corn Starch: can add more if desired, it reduces the greasy  
feeling of the butter

10-12 drops of EO per ounce of butter: if desired

### **How to Make a Whipped Body Butter**

1. Melt the shea butter in a double boiler.
2. Remove the bowl from heat and add the fixed oils, corn starch and EO, stirring to incorporate.
3. Set the bowl with the mixture inside a large metal bowl filled with ice for a cold water bath. This helps cool the butter faster and is easier than having to keep putting it in the freezer between whippings.
4. Using a hand mixer, or a whisk, whip the butter continually for several minutes just like you would whip cream. It will begin to cool and as you keep mixing, it will start to look like whipped cream. Once the butter has solidified and has the right whipped texture (it should have peaks on top just like whipped cream), spoon it into jars and label.