

# Secret Potions, Elixirs & Concoctions

BOTANICAL & AROMATIC RECIPES  
*for* MIND, BODY & SOUL

*by Marie Anakee Miczak*

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## DISCLAIMER

This book is a reference work, not intended to diagnose, prescribe or treat. The information contained herein is in no way to be considered as a substitute for consultation with a licensed health care professional. It is designed to provide information on traditional uses of herbs and historical folklore remedies.

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# Contents

*Introduction by Dr. M. Miczak*.....vii

*Preface*.....ix

## CHAPTER ONE:

*Using the Formulas in This Book & Special Precautions*.....1

Choosing Herbs & Spices to Use.....2

Equipment You May Need.....2

The All Important Patch Test .....3

Other Words of Caution .....3

## CHAPTER TWO:

*The Wonderful World of Essential Oils, Herbs & Spices*.....5

Essential Oil Chart .....5

Herbal Chart.....8

Spice Chart .....12

## CHAPTER THREE:

*Perfume Blending*.....17

Essential Aromatherapy Oil Blending Chart .....17

Fragrance Oil Blending Chart .....19

Amorousness Perfume .....21

Oriental Song.....21

Silver Moon .....22

Sea Zephyr .....22

Tropical Sun.....22

Overview of famous perfumes  
and more advanced blending.....23

**CHAPTER FOUR:**

<i>Skin &amp; Body Care</i> .....	27
Honeysuckle Body Elixir.....	28
Amazon Rain.....	29
Cleopatra's Milk Bath.....	29
Shanghai Salts.....	30
Crystal Salts.....	30
Love Bath.....	30
Peppermint Candy Soak.....	31
Mermaid's Lagoon.....	31
Star Burst.....	32
Queen of the Night Body Butter.....	32
<b>Complete Body Treatment</b>	
Almond Body Polisher.....	33
Rose Water Clay Mask.....	33
Cherry Bath Oil.....	33
Violet Body Splash.....	34
Youth in a Bottle.....	35
Rose Oil Rejuvenator.....	35
Rose Facial Steam.....	35
European Milk Cleanser.....	36
Strawberry Yogurt Mask.....	36
Cleansing Rice Mask.....	36
Ginger After Shave for Men.....	37
Love Potion Lip Balm.....	37
Love Potion Lip Balm II.....	37
Galaxy Gloss.....	38
Acne Poultice.....	38
Acne Salve.....	39
Soothing Acne Bath.....	39
Natural Sunburn Treatment.....	40
Eagle Talons.....	40
Mehndi Henna Hand Designs.....	40

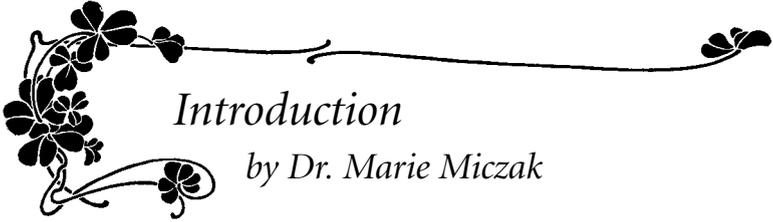
**CHAPTER FIVE:**

<i>Hair Care</i> .....	45
Essential Oils That Are Great for the Hair & Scalp.....	45
Herbs That Are Great for the Hair & Scalp.....	45
Basic Natural Shampoo.....	46
Commercial Shampoo Additive.....	46
Color Enhancement for Dark Hair.....	46
Color Enhancement for Light/Blonde Hair.....	47
Rose Petal Hair Conditioner.....	47
Exotic Fruity Hair Mask.....	48
Natural Hot Oil Treatment.....	48
Shiny Locks Conditioner.....	49
Herbal Dandruff Help.....	49
Hair Growth Tonic.....	49
<b>Complete Hair Treatment</b>	
Natural Hair Purifier.....	50
Deep Conditioning Almond Hair Mask.....	50
Shine Boosting Rinse.....	51

**CHAPTER SIX:**

<i>Mood &amp; Environment Aids</i> .....	55
Victorian Potpourri.....	55
Candles.....	56
Dream Pillows.....	59
Room Mists.....	61
Love Sachets.....	62
Letters with Real Meaning.....	62
Homemade Incense.....	63
Soothing Almond Tea.....	66
Dandelion Tea.....	67
Love Potion Tea.....	67
Royal Russian Tea Blend.....	67
Rose Hip Tea.....	68

Violet Sleep Elixir .....	68
Sleep Syrup .....	68
Spirit Lifter .....	69
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN:</b>	
<i>Share the Secret of Potions</i> .....	71
Pixie Dust.....	71
Homemade Body Soaps.....	72
Spicy Hard Perfume .....	74
Oriental Five Spice Soap .....	75
Mint Foot Soak.....	76
Love Potion Massage Oil for Men .....	76
Aromatic Fire Place Logs .....	77
Mint Lollipops.....	77
Candied Orange Peel.....	78
Banana Bubble Bath.....	79
Calming Hard Perfume.....	79
Healing Salve .....	80
Aromatic Stones .....	80
Friendship Tea .....	81
Gift Presentation .....	82
<i>Conversion Chart</i> .....	85
<i>Common &amp; Scientific Names of Herbs, Essential Oils</i> & Spices.....	87
<i>Glossary</i> .....	91
<i>Resource List</i> .....	95
<i>Index</i> .....	101



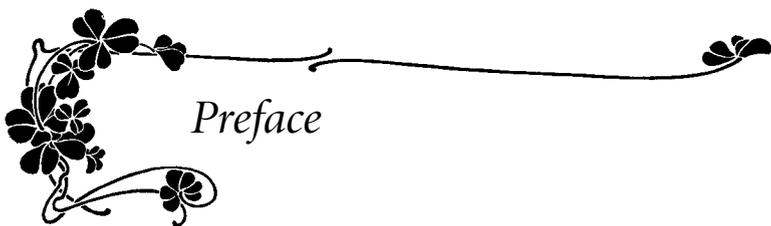
## *Introduction*

*by Dr. Marie Miczak*

Not too long ago in man's seemingly distant past, we enjoyed an intimate relationship with the earth & all it produced. Each culture developed around its own use of herbs, fruits & other botanicals that later became their unique "ethnobotany", literally meaning the knowledge of plants used by a specific ethnic group for food, medicine & healing. *Secret Potions, Elixirs & Concoctions* offers an open door passage to the healing wisdom of ancient cultures from around the world. The combining of folklore & science makes for an enjoyable, easy to follow guide that you will delight to refer to again & again. In our busy world today, stress is perhaps the greatest stealer of good health, manifesting itself in hypertension, heart disease, anxiety attacks & gastrointestinal disturbances to name only a few. Therefore, whatever we can do to diminish this eroding factor in our lives will add not only years to our life, but life to our years!

As you move through the sampling of these exotic, time honored formulas, you will gain confidence in your proficiency to truly effect your own personal physical & mental status. From the soothing bath oils, to the delicately fragranced candles & sachets, you will find yourself wishing to share this fountain of joy with loved ones and fully under-

stand what living well really means. The ingredients in these potions are not costly and there is no need to check yourself into an expensive spa to have them prepared. This wonderful world of scented earthly delights awaits with health benefits which are sure to last a lifetime!



## *Preface*

**D**ragons blood, bat wings, wine, spider webs and a pinch of ground mummy. Sounds like the quintessential brew, right? This is certainly most peoples view of a potion. Although it is true that in Medieval times some herbs were mixed with blood and that pulverized mummy was used in Victorian times for various complaints, the majority of concoctions passed down for generations were quite simple to prepare and used common ingredients. Likewise all of the ingredients used in this book may not be what you would think to use on the given applications but are safe and easily found in most supermarkets and health food stores.

In this day and age when it seems like a new breakthrough in medicine is found everyday, it's intriguing that people are looking to ancient teachings to heal themselves. Be it Aromatherapy, Ayurveda, Chinese, etc. people want the holistic option which these modalities offer instead of a one treatment fits all approach. During the Victorian period mainly in America, people started to put a large amount of faith into science and inventions. Herbal concoctions were now thrown into the 'Wives tales' and 'Snake oil' category and subsequently looked down upon. Although a large amount of the elixirs produced and sold by salesmen were of

no help or even harmful, many of the traditional healing practices brought over from immigrants' homelands were quite helpful. In lands where western medicine had not yet reached, people continued to treat their ailments and enrich their lives with homemade brews.

In this book you will find many recipes that were used long ago but remain beneficial even today. You will find them quite pleasing and easy to make as well. Since they are freshly made with no chemical preservatives, you are getting the full benefit of the herbs, botanicals, etc. that are essential in the healing process. Most concoctions are made in ten ways depending on the application in which it will be used and the type of herb/plant material if any. The easiest and probably most likely method you yourself already use frequently is the classic infusion. A more in depth explanation is found later on in the book but it simply entails pouring hot water over fresh or dried herbs. This works on delicate parts of a plant such as the flowers, buds and leaves. The plant material is steeped, strained off and the liquid is ingested as a simple tea. This and the decoction method was and still is heavily practiced in Chinese medicine. A patient would be given a prescription and be instructed to visit a herb shop to pick up the needed items. The Chinese way is to make a very strong brew which is taken in specific doses throughout the day or week.

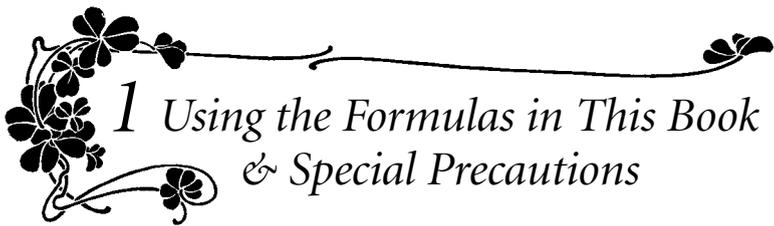
Tinctures are another ancient form of extracting the healing effects of the herb or plant. Most tinctures are made by pouring alcohol over the plant matter and letting it sit for a period of time. Wine was often used but today vodka is recommended because of the high alcohol content. Syrups are also effective in treating various ailments. Being that it is made with honey, it helps cover any unpleasant taste that the herb might hold. First a decoction or infusion is made

depending on the plant material and honey is added while the mixture is still hot. The ratio is 1:1 or uses equal parts honey to decoction/infusion. Both of these methods were used by European peoples to cure a great many illnesses such as coughs, sleeplessness, etc.

Other potions are made utilizing the hot/cold infusion, salve, compress, or poultice technique. If you look closely at many of the recipes you will see that they fall into one of the above categories or use some of the methods to make a more complex brew. Once you master the different ways of preparing concoctions it will be easier for you to formulate your own or add to the recipes in this book.

Another extremely important potion is perfume. Perfumery was not only used by peoples in ancient times to pleasantly scent their surroundings but also to heal and ward off what were thought to be air born diseases such as the plague. Herbs, spices, and botanicals were either burned, placed in water which was heated to carry the scent in the form of steam, or added to oils and other ingredients to form a perfume to be applied to the skin. Many cultures kept the art of perfumery and the essential oils used therein sacred. The Egyptians used cedarwood, frankincense, myrrh and other oils for embalming. The Greeks were probably the most lavish, using perfumes to scent their clothes, bedding, bodies, hair, walls, and more. Throughout Asia perfumes were turned into all sorts of incenses which were made and burned to release the potions into the air. Due to the rich history behind perfumery I thought it only fitting to teach you how to make your own... naturally. Today preparing your own fragrances is simple and you can choose from a large array of pure essential and fragrance oils. People have even found that wearing a single essential oil or note is quite pleasant.

There are so many potions and brews made by people all over the world. This book contains an exceptional sampling which I have personally experienced and modified for today's lifestyle. The ingredients are fairly easy to find and to help I have also included a resource area that contains mail order companies in which you can find many of the components needed for the recipes. Whether you are new to the world of potion making or a seasoned alchemist you will find these concoctions enjoyable to create, use and even give away as gifts. Why not benefit from what the past has to offer?



# 1 *Using the Formulas in This Book & Special Precautions*

**B**efore preparing a formula in this book, be sure to look over the entire recipe first. Take the time to see if you have all the needed ingredients or if substitutions can be made to fit the materials you have on hand. With some of the more botanical based recipe make sure you have the freshest produce possible. If fresh fruits and/or vegetables are not available, use frozen with your last resort being canned. If you have no other choice than to use canned, wash thoroughly to remove any impurities such as sugar, salt etc. Fresh fruits and vegetables should if at all possible be organic. If this is not feasible make sure to use a special wash made for fruits and vegetables to remove any wax, colorants or chemicals that may be on the skin. Other botanical ingredients such as eggs, yogurt etc. should also be as extremely fresh for the best results. You will probably also notice once you flip through the recipes that they have a short shelf life and some must be kept in the refrigerator. This is due to the fact that there is no chemical preservatives added except for natural honey in a few. Once made most of the recipes should be used right away as they start to lose their effectiveness over time. Another threat to your creation is molds. If you see even a hint discard and start over again.

### ***Choosing Herbs & Spices to Use***

Fresh organic herbs are of course the best. Dried will also work well in many of the recipes found in this book. Many health food stores carry a wide variety of loose, dried herbs. You can also buy herbal teas and use the contents of the bag in your concoction. If you will be doing this make sure you find pure herbal teas that do not contain a large amount of fillers such as black tea, etc. Wild crafting is another way of obtaining herbs. Keep in mind though that plants next to roads can have high levels of lead and other chemicals from passing vehicular exhaust. Look also to see if the area in which you are picking herbs has been sprayed with pesticides or herbicides. Many park systems do this so try to find out before taking anything home. Growing your own herbs in a little garden is undoubtedly the best. Which ever route you choose, rinse your herbs well and spray with a fruit/vegetable wash if you think it's needed.

When it comes to spices the fresher the better. Look to make sure spices are vibrant in color and aroma. When ground spices are around too long they start to lose their healing qualities. Always make sure caps and lids are on tight and herbs are kept in a cool, dark place. Whole spices like cumin and coriander can be placed in pepper mills and freshly ground.

### ***Equipment You may Need***

Here is a list of items that will come in quite handy when making the recipes found in this book:

- Sauce pan and/or small pot
- Wooden, glass and/or ceramic bowls
- Blender or coffee grinder
- Small metal whisk

- Wooden spoons
- Chinese hat (sieve)
- Glass bottles and/or ceramic cups
- Measuring cups (wet and dry) and spoons
- Cheese cloth
- Mortar and pestle
- Wood chopping block

### ***The All Important Patch Test***

You will see references to a patch test throughout this book. Just what is it? Well, a patch test is taking a small amount of the formula you've just made and applying it to the skin on the inside of your arm. If after 24 hours no rash or tenderness appears, then the recipe is safe to use. If even a hint of irritation shows up do not continue use and discard. If you do find you have a reaction that persists go to a dermatologist or doctor as soon as possible. Do this with each and every recipe in this book. It is an extremely important step that should not be skipped.

### ***Other Words of Caution***

Just like with OTC products you buy, keep all formulas out of the reach of children. Make sure you clearly mark the concoction you just made and are now storing in the refrigerator. A child unknowingly could mistake it for a beverage or food item, ingest a bit and become ill. I highly suggest getting a pack of peel and stick labels and a black marking pen. Cover formula containers with plastic wrap and stick on a label. Write the recipes name and date of preparation. This way other family members may not take it for moldy food and toss it! Also you can keep an eye on the date to make sure you're not storing it too long.