

# A Selection of Dygestives – being most diverse in nature

(A selection of herbal digestive aides from the late 1500's – 1600's)



(A woman picking herbs, unknown Book of Hours, 14<sup>th</sup> century)

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## Introduction/Summary of the Project

This project presents a selection of digestive remedies, as could be found in England between 1550 and 1650. The items are a mixture of period recipes regarding the digestive properties of various herbs, as well as some items which are based upon period medicinal recipes, but are personal experiments and combinations. My selection includes:

- Syrup of Roses (period recipe),
- Syrup of Mint (period recipe),
- Syrup of Roses and Mint (period method, experimental recipe),
- Cordial of Mint (period method, experimental recipe – 2 versions), and
- Syrup of Lemon Balm and Chamomile (period method, experimental recipe).

The techniques and recipes used (and patterned after) are taken from a variety of period works, although relying heavily upon *Bancke's Herbal* (1525), and the works of Plat (1594) and Culpeper (1653). It should be noted that the herbs chosen for this project are not the only plants recommended for digestive ailments, however given that many period health care remedies utilize herbs and compounds which may be harmful when ingested, I have limited this project to a small selection of non-toxic herbs.<sup>1</sup>

Although I have been interested in period herbal remedies and grooming products for some time, this is my first attempt at actually making and trying any of the recipes I've been gathering. This desire is part of the reason the project went from being a modest selection of two syrups, to the selection of five listed above.

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<sup>1</sup> It is noted however, that even the most innocuous may have ill effects if a person 's health is already compromised, or if taken in large quantities.

## Medical Theories of the Late 1500's – Mid 1600's

During the SCA time period, there were essentially four theories regarding herbal medicine, the theory of humours, doctrine of signatures, principle of contagion and astrological correspondences. Of the four theories, the theory of humours and astrological correspondences, relate most strongly to the late 1500 – mid 1600 medicinal recommendations found in the works of Plat (1594), Culpeper (1653) and *Banke's Herbal* (1525).<sup>2</sup>

Although not necessarily the first of the theories to develop, the theory of humours<sup>3</sup> remained a pervasive theme in period medicine, utilized by early Greek philosophers to Elizabethan era physicians<sup>4</sup>. The theory of humours was based on the belief that human beings were filled with four distinct humours (fluids): choler (yellow bile), phlegm (white), blood (red) and melancholy (black bile) (Cameron, 1993). In particular Culpeper states:

*Blood* is made of meat perfectly concocted, in quality hot and moist, governed by *Jupiter*. It is by a third concoction transmuted into flesh, the superfluity of it into seed, and its receptacle is the veins, by which it is dispersed through the body.

*Choler* is made of meat more than perfectly concocted; and it is the spume or froth of blood: it clarifies all the humours, heats the body, nourishes the apprehension, as blood doth the judgment. It is in quality hot and dry; fortifies the attractive faculty, as blood doth the digestive; moves man to activity and valour: its receptacle is the gall, and it is under the influence of *Mars*.

*Flegm* is made of meat not perfectly digested; it fortifies the virtue expulsive, makes the body slippery, fit for ejection; it fortifies the brain by its consimilitude with it; yet it spoils apprehension by its antipathy to it. It qualifies choler, cools and moistens the heart, thereby sustaining it, and the whole body, from the fiery effects, which continual motion would produce. Its receptacle is the lungs, and is governed by *Venus*, some say by the *Moon*, perhaps it may be governed by them both, it is cold and moist in quality.

*Melanchoy* is the sediment of blood, cold and dry in quality, fortifying the retentive faculty, and memory; makes men sober, solid, and staid, fit for study; stays the unbridled toys of lustful blood, stays the wandering thoughts, and reduces them home to the centre: its receptacle is in the spleen, and it is governed by *Saturn*.

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the various herbs used in this project and how they relate to the theory of humours and astrological correspondences, see Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> A Greek/Roman theory credited to Hippocrates and Galen.

<sup>4</sup> See: Culpeper, *Banke's Herbal*, & Heise.

Of all these humours blood is the chief, all the rest are superfluities of blood; yet are they necessary superfluities, for without any of them, man cannot live.

Namely; Choler is the fiery superfluities, Flegm, the Watery; Melancholy, the Earthly.

In this theory, diseases were caused by an imbalance in the humours. In an effort to balance these humours, patients were treated with herbs which supposedly had hot/cold or moist/dry properties. It was believed that by using and/or ingesting herbs with the right heat/moisture properties, one would be able to achieve a balance in their humours<sup>5</sup>.

In contrast to the theory of humours, some renaissance and later Elizabethan era physicians supported the theory of astrological correspondences. In this theory, each disease body part and herb was associated with an astrological sign(s). Herbs were also believed to correspond to astrological signs, and treatments were based on the astrological associations, and comprehensive lists of correspondences. Of the four theories, the theory of astrological correspondences is still in use by occult and pagan/magical practitioners, as well as some Asian religious movements.

How one received treatment for illnesses during the late 1500's – 1600's, depended greatly upon one's station in life. For the poor and working classes, treatment was either done in the home by a family member or friend with herbal knowledge, or through folk remedies (SOURCE). If a poor or working class person was lucky, they may live near a convent or know of a nun who treated illnesses, as nuns and those girls sent for schooling in cloisters, frequently were trained in medical treatments – the girls for use in their future homes, the nuns so that they would be able to help those in need (Gorman and Faulkner, 2003).

In contrast to the seemingly 'luck' based medical care for the poor and working classes, the upper classes and nobility had the means to hire physicians or apothecaries. Although they could hire 'trained' medical practitioners, this training may have been haphazard or non-existent – as there was no accreditation process, anyone could call themselves a physician or apothecary and start treating patients. Thus, hiring a trained practitioner did not always mean the treatments were any less painful, foul-tasting or potentially deadly, as those treatments administered by the poor who had a small amount of

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<sup>5</sup> See the Yale University Medical Library, Historical Collection web page.

knowledge regarding herbal matters. For example, wormwood, the herb used to make absinthe, is a frequent ingredient in period medical remedies, yet wormwood is deadly if processed wrong or taken in the wrong amounts.

The Culpeper books *The English Physitian* and *Culpeper's Complete Herbal* are written both for use by medical practitioners and for the common man's/woman's use - as noted by Culpeper in the forwards and several times in both books. Plat's *Delighte's for Ladies* was written for housewives of the era, including recipes, directions for preparing banquets, chores, grooming and medical treatments for the family 'dispensary'. The herbs used in this project are a selection of plants that were apparently quite common during the mid 1500's – late 1600's. In fact, Culpeper doesn't describe any of them in his works, declaring that they are so common as to be grown in most dooryards or be known by all people, be they children or adults. I suspect (as I have not been able to find sufficient evidence neither for, nor against) that the herbs chosen for this project were readily available either in a dooryard garden or local forests/grasslands, and therefore would not have been purchased by most people during this time period.

In the following sections I briefly introduce the major inspiration for the particular redaction, including the herbs used and any period recipes being used or patterned on. Please note that I tried all of the preparations for both taste and their medicinal uses, and the comments given are merely my impressions, as I am not a qualified dietician or doctor.

## Redaction 1: Syrup of Roses

### *Method Notes:*

In *The English Physitian*, Culpeper (1653) lists three pages of medicinal uses for roses. With regard to digestive/stomach complaints, in particular he states “The Syrup of dried Red Roses strenthneth a Stomack given to casting....” I can find no suggestion as to what Culpeper means by ‘casting’, however I suspect it refers to diarrhoea, as both Culpeper’s writings and *Bancke’s Herbal* suggest that



*Apothecary Rose*

fresh roses are beneficial to both ‘bind’ and ‘lax’ the bowels, whereas dried roses are good for binding.

Although Culpeper suggests three different methods for making medicinal syrups (dependent upon what part of the plant is being used), the method I am using for this version of Syrup of Roses comes from *Delights for Ladies* (Plat, 1594).

*A Singular manner of making the sirup of Roses.*

*Fill a siluer Bason three quarters full of rain-water or Rose-water: put therein a conuenient proportion of Rose-leaves [petals?]: couer the bason and set it upon a pot of hot water (as we usual bake a custard) in 3 quarters of an houre, or one hwole houre at the most, you shal purchase the whole strength and tincture of the rose: then take out those leaues, wringing out all their liquor gently, and steepe more fresh leaues in the same water: continue this iteration seuen times;, and then make it vp in a sirup: and this sirup worketh more kinly than that which is merely of the iuice of the Rose. You may make sundry other sirups in this manner.<sup>6</sup>*

### **Changes:**

In contrast to Plat’s method, Culpeper discusses not only how to infuse the herb into the water, but also how to turn this into a syrup. Culpeper’s method calls for one pound of sugar (roughly 2 ½ cups<sup>7</sup>) for every pint (2 cups<sup>8</sup>) of water. With nearly 7 cups of sugar for 5 cups of mint water, I felt this would make an extremely sweet syrup - even mixed with water! Thus, I reduced the amount of sugar by approximately half. Additionally, as I didn’t purchase enough dried herbs, I didn’t have enough rose

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix B for a comparison between Plat and Culpeper’s recipes for making Syrup of Roses.

<sup>7</sup> Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension for Nutrition Resources (<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/08704.html>)

<sup>8</sup> GotPoetry? Metric Conversion Tools (<http://www.gotpoetry.com/Sections/op=viewarticle/artid=3.html>)

petals to repeat the decoction process<sup>9</sup> 7 times, thus I worked with the amount I had. The changes outlined here regarding the amount of herbs and sugar used in the syrup, is used for all other syrups in this project, therefore the specific method used and the justification of measurements is only mentioned here, and is not repeated when discussing the other syrups presented in this project.

***What I Did:***

<i>Ingredients</i>	<i>Method</i>
100g. dried red rose petals 6 c. filtered water 3 c. fine white sugar <sup>10</sup>	In a double boiler, place 25g. of dried rose petals (coarsely crushed in a mortar) and 6 cups of filtered water. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce heat so the liquid in the top pan stays at a heavy simmer for approximately 1 hour. *Strain out rose petals, squeezing them to release all of their liquid. Put the decoction back over heat and add another 25 g. of rose petals and boil for 1 hour. Repeat from * 2 more times. After straining out the last batch of petals, place the pan of liquid directly on the burner (not over the double boiler as before) and add the sugar. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring frequently. Boil vigorously for 5-15 minutes, or until a little of the liquid cooled on a spoon, pours with the consistency of new honey. <sup>11</sup> You can reduce the mixture further if you want a stronger syrup. Bottle when the mixture is tepid and store in a cool dark place.

***The Outcome:***

The mixture started off being a lovely shade of red, but ended up being a very dark brown colour, although it stains cloth red (as can be attested by the stains left on the dishtowel used to wipe the bottle with).

*Taste:* I tasted the rose petal decoction prior to adding the sugar and it was rather bitter and unpalatable, however after adding the sugar and turning the mixture into the syrup, the taste was pronounced ‘different, yet not unpleasant’ by both myself and Lord Raphael (my somewhat reluctant guinea pig).

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<sup>9</sup> A decoction is the vigorous boiling of herbs in water, for a period of time. On the other hand, infusing is where herbs are steeped in boiling water (e.g. like making tea).

<sup>10</sup> Sugar was first referred to as ‘white’ in approximately 1430, thus I chose to use plain white sugar in my redactions. (See: <http://web.raex.com/~obsidian/IGGcord.html>)

<sup>11</sup> An easy way to do this is to keep several metal spoons in the refrigerator and use those to test the syrup.

Does it work: With regard to the effect Syrup of Roses would have on nausea, I have not yet had a chance to test it. However, as I frequently have indigestion<sup>12</sup>, I tried 3 tablespoons mixed with cool water and found it to be a somewhat acquired taste, but did seem to reduce my symptoms.

Other Comments: I wonder if the slightly bitter aftertaste is a consequence of boiling the batches of petals as long as I did. The next time I try this recipe, I plan to only boil each batch of petals for 30 minutes and see if that reduces the bitterness.

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<sup>12</sup> My frequent bouts of indigestion and stomach complaints is the primary reason I was interested in doing this project, as I am always on the lookout for herbal remedies for such things.

## Redaction 2: Syrup of Mint

### *Method Notes:*

Mint has been used throughout history, being mentioned in a variety of works. Regarding medicinal remedies, *Bancke's Herbal* suggests that mint in general, can restore a weak appetite and is useful in treating various other digestive disturbances. On the other hand, Culpeper maintains that of the various types of mint (horse mint, spearmint, wintergreen, etc...) peppermint is the most



useful in treating digestive ailments, stating “Mint is an herb that is useful in all disorders of the stomach, as weakness, squeamishness, loss of appetite, and vomiting...and peppermint more so”

None of the sources I have been able to find, describes a syrup of mint remedy similar to the simplicity of the syrup of roses found in Plat's work (see Redaction 1). The ‘Syrup of Mint’ (Syrupus de Mentha) discussed in Culpeper's *Complete Herbal* is more complex than the simple syrup described in the previous redaction.

*Take of the juices of Quinces sweet and between sweet and sour, the juice of Pomegranates sweet, between sweet and sour, and of each a pound and a half, dried Mints half a pound, red Roses two ounces, let them lie in steep one day, then boil it half away, and with four pounds of sugar boil it into a Syrup according to the art, perfume it not unless the Physicians command...The Syrup is in quality binding, yet it comforts the stomach much, helps digestion, stays vomiting, and is an excellent remedy against sour or offensive belchings, as any is in the Dispensory. Take a spoonful after meat.<sup>13</sup>*

Although the syrup described above includes other ingredients, Culpeper makes the same recommendations about mint as a single herb, stating that it provokes appetite and “strengthens the belly, causes digestion, stays vomits and hiccoughs”, maintaining that mint is “serviceable to dissolve wind in the stomach, to help the cholic....” Thus, I suggest that the inclusion of sour tastes such as quince/pomegranate juice and roses serves to offset the natural sweetness of mint, particularly when mixed with copious quantities of sugar.

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<sup>13</sup> From Culpeper's *Complete Herbal*

Even though Culpeper doesn't specifically recommend Syrup of Mint for digestive complaints, I believe based on other recommendations and comments he makes regarding the medicinal properties of mint, that it would have been used as a period digestive remedy. Mint is widely discussed throughout Culpeper's works both on its own and in compounds with other herbs, as being beneficial for digestive/stomach ailments. Additionally, in *The English Physitian*, he maintains that herbed syrups are helpful because they are more palatable, keep longer and work faster for internal ailments as they are swallowed already in liquid form.

***What I Did:***

<i>Ingredients</i>	<i>Method</i>
100g. dried peppermint leaves 6 c. filtered water 3 c. fine white sugar	In a double boiler, place 25g. of dried rose petals (coarsely crushed in a mortar) and 6 cups of filtered water. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce heat so the liquid in the top pan stays at a heavy simmer for approximately 1 hour. *Strain out rose petals, squeezing them to release all of their liquid. Put the decoction back over heat and add another 25 g. of rose petals and boil for 1 hour. Repeat from * 2 more times. After straining out the last batch of petals, place the pan of liquid directly on the burner (not over the double boiler as before) and add the sugar. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring frequently. Boil vigorously for 5-15 minutes, or until a little of the liquid cooled on a spoon, pours with the consistency of new honey. <sup>14</sup> You can reduce the mixture further if you want a stronger syrup. Bottle when the mixture is tepid and store in a cool dark place.

***The Outcome:***

Taste I found the syrup quite pleasant when mixed into a julep with cool water. As noted with Redaction 1, it is quite sweet. To mix the julep so that is not as sweet requires using much less syrup, which reduces the taste. Mixing 3 tablespoons with cool water, I found the sweetness tolerable, although the mint flavouring is not as strong as I would have liked. I believe this is a result of only using 100g. of mint and 4 decoction phases. Additionally, if mixed with other herbs, I think the level of mint flavouring in this recipe would be adequate.

Does it work: For nausea, I found approximately 3 tablespoons mixed with cool water to be refreshing when sipped, and seemed to have a minimizing effect on my stomach upset. When used for indigestion, I found the same preparation ineffective – in fact, it made the symptoms worse! However,

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<sup>14</sup> An easy way to do this is to keep several metal spoons in the refrigerator and use those to test the syrup.

when mixed with warm (not hot) water, it did seem to ease the symptoms marginally. For indigestion, I suspect that a straight decoction with very little sugar or honey in it would ease the symptoms better than the syrup.

### Redaction 3: Syrup of Mint and Roses

#### *Method Notes:*

Redaction 3 is a personal experiment, based loosely upon the herbal properties of roses and mint, expounded by Culpeper and described in *Bancke's Herbal*. None of the sources used promotes and syrup of mint and roses as a digestive aid, although Culpeper maintains that “Rose Leavs and Mints heated and applied outwardly to the Stomach, stayeth castings, and very much strengthneth a weak Stomach....” In this suggestion, rose petals/leaves are warmed with mint leaves, presumably in boiling water, then placed on the stomach as a kind of poultise or plaster. It stands to reason that for some stomach complaints, heat on the stomach soothes pain (e.g. wind/gas bubbles or stomach cramps), therefore warmed leaves would have the same effect. Thus I suggest that it was not the mint/rose combination that actually helped the patient, but rather the heat. That being said, the calmativie properties of scents may also play an effect in reducing symptoms, the combination of mint and rose scents is quite refreshing.

#### *Changes:*

In this redaction, I didn't have 100g. of each type of herb, so I reduced the number of decoction phases to 2, using 50g. of herbs (25g. peppermint leaves and 25g. rose petals) for each phase.

#### *What I Did:*

<i>Ingredients</i>	<i>Method</i>
50g. dried peppermint leaves 50g. dried rose petals 6 c. filtered water 3 c. fine white sugar	In a double boiler, place 25g. of dried rose petals, 25g. of dried peppermint leaves (coarsely crushed in a mortar) and 6 cups of filtered water. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce heat so the liquid in the top pan stays at a heavy simmer for approximately 1 hour. Strain out rose petals, squeezing them to release all of their liquid. Put the decoction back over heat and add another 25 g. of rose petals and peppermint leaves and boil for 1 hour. After straining out the last batch of herbs place the pan of liquid directly on the burner (not over the double boiler as before) and add the sugar. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring frequently. Boil vigorously for 5-15 minutes, or until a little of the liquid cooled on a spoon, pours with the consistency of new honey. <sup>15</sup> You can reduce the mixture further if you want a stronger syrup. Bottle when the mixture is tepid and store in a cool dark place.

<sup>15</sup> An easy way to do this is to keep several metal spoons in the refrigerator and use those to test the syrup.

***The Outcome:***

*Taste:* This syrup is remarkably refreshing and pleasant to taste. Lord Raphael said that he liked this better than both the rose and mint, because he felt the hint of rose helped cut the sweetness of the mint. I found the taste similar to various sweetened, herbal iced teas I've tried in the past.

*Does it work:* Of the two so far, I found this one to ease indigestion the best. As straight mint often exacerbates the symptoms of indigestion, perhaps cutting it with rose essence helps reduce the potential negative effect of the mint.

## Redaction 4: Cordial of Mint (2 versions)

### *Method Notes:*

Cordials/flavoured liquors came into more frequent use in the later part of the SCA period of interest, which, incidentally is the period covered by this project. The use of distilled alcoholic cordials in a medical sense was first written about in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by Arnold de Vila Nova, an alchemist and medical professor at the Montpellier medical school in France (Hannum, year unknown). In his book *The Boke of Wine*, de Vila Nova described the distillation of wine into *aqua vitate*, (commonly called brandy in the late SCA period through the modern era). He also described the process for flavouring the distilled liquor with herbs and spices, exhorting the restorative and life giving properties of the resulting liquid.

When making alcoholic cordials, there are essentially two methods: steeping (cold infusion) and distilling. As distilling is illegal, steeping is the preferred method for SCA purposes, and has a solid background in late period writing. The following example dates from the late 1500's and is an example of a steeped cordial.

#### *To Make Cinnamon Water Without Distilling it*

*Take one quart of brandy, & halfe a dram of oyle of cinnamon, & a pinte of water, & halfe a pound of white sugar. boyle ye water & sugar together, & mix ye oyle & sugar together, yt is with a little of ye sugar before you put it to ye rest, then mix them alltogether, & set it by till it be cold. & then bottle it up (Renfrom, year).*

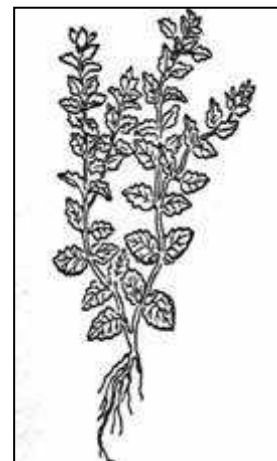
In a medicinal sense, Culpeper writes at length regarding both tinctures (the liquid from steeping herbs/fruits in distilled spirits, with sugar syrup added) and cordials (herbed and distilled waters to which honey, sugar or sugar syrup has been added). He maintains that as they make the body 'hot', they should not be taken by those prone to hot tempers, stating that they are particularly to be avoided by those with an abundance of melancholy humours.

### *Changes:*

Given that alcoholic cordials were used in period both as medicine and a pleasant drink, I have developed a recipe for a mint digestive cordial, based upon Culpeper's *Tinctura Cinnamoni, vulgo, Aqua Clareta Cinnam* (tincture of cinnamon), although the measures and steeping time are different.

*Take of bruised Cinnamon two ounces, rectified spirits of Wine two pounds, infuse them four days in a large glass stopped with cork and bladder, shake it twice a day, then dissolve half a pound of Sugar Candy by itself in two pounds of Rose Water, mix both liquors, into which hang a nodule containing, Ambergris half a scruple, Musk four grains.*

When reading various SCA brewing and herbal discussion lists, it is frequently said that when using the cold infusion method of making cordials, vodka is better than brandy, because it has no taste of its own.<sup>16</sup> However, as I have never made cordials before, and brandy is called for in period recipes, I have decided to make 2 versions of the same cordial, one with brandy and one with vodka, then test to see which had the better flavour, etc.... Additionally, since I didn't have a full 50g. of peppermint when I started the cold infusion/steeping process, I have added some Syrup of Mint to the final mixture, to increase the amount of mint flavour.



***What I Did:***

<i>Brandy Version Ingredients</i>	<i>Method</i>
50g. dried peppermint leaves 2 cups brandy 1 ¾ c. Syrup of Mint 3 c. sugar syrup	In a jar with a tightly sealing lid, pack 50g. dried peppermint leaves, cover with 2 cups of brandy. Sit in a cool dark place to steep for 2 weeks, shaking at least once a day. At the end of the steeping period, strain off the liquid, which should have reduced significantly <sup>17</sup> . Mix this liquid with the mint syrup and sugar syrup. Bottle and store in a cool dark place.

*For the Vodka version, the same measurements and method was used, the only change is using vodka rather than brandy.*

***The Outcome:***

*Taste:* In a word – WOW! Lord Raphael and I tasted both the syrups, and the syrups mixed with water.

The brandy syrup tasted quite nice on its own, whereas the vodka based cordial syrup tasted too strong of alcohol. Both syrups left a cool, fresh sensation in the mouth. Mixed with water, the vodka based cordial was much more palatable, but the brandy version was the overall favourite for both of us.

*Does it work:* Of all of the redactions, this has been my favourite. My stomach was feeling rather 'off' prior to tasting these, and afterwards, that feeling vanished. Perhaps, to use Culpeper's terminology, my

<sup>16</sup> See Heise.

<sup>17</sup> Using dried leaves, the leaves soak up a significant portion of the liquid. In this case, I steeped the mint in just over 2 cups of brandy, and ended up with only ¾ of mint infused brandy.

stomach was cold and the heat of the cordial warmed it, balancing the humours. When tried as an indigestion remedy, I can say that the brandy cordial, taken in a small glass of cool warm water (mixed in approximately a 1:8 ratio) was refreshing, light, and cooling – definitely reducing the symptoms.

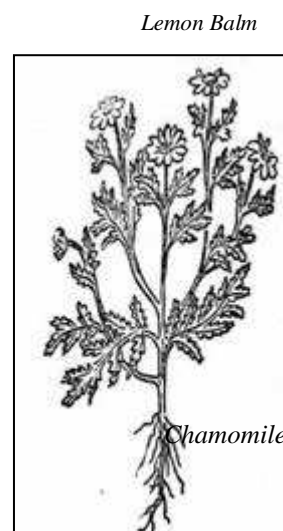
## Redaction 5: Syrup of Lemon Balm and Chamomile

### *Method Notes:*

The last redaction is a personal experiment, combining two herbs discussed by Culpeper as being beneficial in easing stomach/digestive complaints – lemon balm and chamomile. He maintains that chamomile “...easeth al al the pains of the chollick and Stone, and al pains and torments of the Belly...” Although he doesn’t give specific advice for how to take chamomile, he does give such advice regarding lemon balm:

*...let a Syrup made with the Juyce of it and Sugar, (as you shall be taught at the latter end of the Book) be kept in every Gentlewomans house, to releve the weak stomachs and sick Bodies of their poor sickly Neighbors.*

In general, Culpeper quotes Discordes as promoting both lemon balm and chamomile for being beneficial to digestion.. The comments of Culpeper combined with their lemony scent, inspired me to create a digestive syrup of lemon balm and chamomile (following the recipe used for the Syrup of Mint and Rose). The only change made in this recipe was to substitute leatherwood honey for sugar, as I ran out of sugar after finishing the cordials and didn’t have time to purchase more.



### *What I Did:*

<i>Ingredients</i>	<i>Method</i>
50g. dried chamomile flowers	In a double boiler, place 25g. of dried chamomile flowers, 25g. of dried lemon balm leaves (coarsely crushed in a mortar) and 6 cups of filtered water. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce heat so the liquid in the top pan stays at a heavy simmer for approximately 1 hour. Strain out rose petals, squeezing them to release all of their liquid. Put the decoction back over heat and add another 25 g. of chamomile and lemon balm and boil for 1 hour. After straining out the last batch of herbs place the pan of liquid directly on the burner (not over the double boiler as before) and add the honey. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring frequently. Boil vigorously for 5-15 minutes, or until a little of the liquid cooled on a spoon, pours with the consistency of new honey. <sup>18</sup> You can reduce the mixture further if you want a stronger syrup. Bottle when the mixture is tepid and store in a cool dark place.
50g. dried lemon balm leaves	
6 c. filtered water	
2 c. honey	

<sup>18</sup> An easy way to do this is to keep several metal spoons in the refrigerator and use those to test the syrup.

### ***The Outcome:***

This was the strangest of the syrups while it was cooking. The chamomile smelled faintly sour, and the lemon balm both looked and smelled like boiled spinach (not one of the nicest smells in the world).

While it was cooking, I feared it would taste as foul as it both looked and smelled.

Taste: This was by far the biggest surprise of this project. The lemon balm and chamomile syrup actually taste GOOD! We tried it mixed 1:8 with water and found it to be rather pleasant, tasting faintly like weak, lemon scented tea.

Does it work: This is the only one that I have not had adequate time to try at this point. Chamomile I have found in the past, to be soothing for a nauseous stomach, so I am curious to see if this syrup will have the same effect. Although I cannot say if it works as a medicine, I can at least say that it works rather well as a calming cordial drink.

### **Conclusion**

I'm really glad that I attempted this project. Rather than turning me off studying period medicine, finishing this project has only increased my interest in period medical remedies (in fact I'm already planning my next project!). Through completing this project I've learned three important things: (1) scary smelling/looking concoctions may taste surprisingly good, (2) the temperature of the water used to mix-up medicinal syrups may have a big impact on how well they work – and requires a bit of 'trial and error' to sort out, and (3) although period medical practices may seem questionable by modern standards, quite often it is grounded in practical experience and results.

## Bibliography

### **Primary Sources:**

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*[A good source if you can find it, although some of the references made may have been altered by the editors, as some parts seem almost to be written by different authors.]*

Culpeper, Nicholas, *The English Physitian*. (1652). Online:

<http://www.med.yale.edu/library/historical/culpeper/culpeper.htm>

Culpeper, Nicholas, *Culpeper's Complete Herbal*. (1654) Online:

<http://www.bootlegbooks.com/NonFiction/Culpeper/Herbal/Default.htm>

*[The Culpeper books are a great resource. Even if the recommendations made are not effective, the way things are described makes for very interesting reading, and gives some insight into how people in late period may have thought about medical matters.]*

Plat, Hugh, *Delightes for Ladies* (original: 1602). Reprinted: Violet and Hall Trovillion (eds). (Herrin, IL: Rovillion Private Press). (1939).

*[As a woman I find this interesting, because it is a man, writing about what women 'should know'. It covers a wide variety of 'feminine' areas of interest, giving an insight into the life of period women – albeit from a male perspective, so the insight gleaned should probably be taken with a grain of salt.]*

### **Secondary/Tertiary Sources:**

Cameron, M. L. Anglo-Saxon Medicine. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, (1993).

Hannum, Hurst, *Brandies and Liqueurs of the World*. Doubleday & Company, Garden City, N.Y. (year unknown).

Heise, Jennifer, A. (writing as Jadwiga Zajackowa), *Making Herbal Preparations*. (2002). Online:

<http://gallowglass.org/jadwiga/herbs/preparations.html>

*[Jadwiga's stuff is a great introduction to period herbal remedies and grooming. She gives lots of information, excellent bibliographies, and lots of recipes. However, it is a good idea to double check some of her assertions, as other sources suggest different techniques which may actually be more period.]*

Medieval Medicine <http://www.intermaggie.com/med/index.php>