

MAKING LAUDANUM

an

Opium Tincture



Disclaimer: While growing poppies, collecting seed and dry pods, and buying and selling of pods and seed are legal in most countries, the extraction of crude resin, and the cooking of straw (dried pods and stems) are illegal in most. Please consult with the rules and regulations of the country were you live. What you do after that is none of my business.

Introduction:

Real Laudanum was traditionally made with opium and many other ingredients, among which were henbane, nutmeg and lots of others. This type of Laudanum is actually an alcohol extract of concentrated poppy tea that I got from Fogle in Holland.

There are numerous ways to make such a concoction. I don't claim this is the best way, but the results of this recipe is a nice tasting liqueur with a good opium buzz. And the best thing is, there are no chemicals or fancy equipment needed.

To make two litres/8.33 cups of Laudanum you need:

Ingredients:

- 1) dried poppy straw (ca. 2.3 kg/5.03 lbs with seeds = 1.0 kg/2.2 lbs without the seeds)
- 2) alcohol (1 litre/4.16 cups 80%)
- 3) aniseed, star anise and/or fennel
- 4) sugar and dextrose (=glucose)
- 5) water

Materials:

- 1) several big pans
- 2) filter cloth (cheese cloth, or an old t-shirt)
- 3) several plastic buckets
- 4) several glass jars
- 5) stove
- 6) water bath
- 7) some cutlery, spatulas etc.
- 8) 50ml syringe or turkey blaster (optional)

Poppies:

Papaver somniferum are opium poppies. Other species like P. orientale, and P. rhoeas, don't contain the opiate alkaloids. Whole dried poppy pod and stems can be purchased online if you're not able to grow them yourself. Personally, I don't buy poppies, I grow them. So, get some seeds, find a deserted plot somewhere in suburbia, and spread them.

Poppies can either be harvested green after they bloom and dried at home, or let them dry in the field. They will be dry about one month after they bloomed. But beware: heavy rainfall can flush all goodies from the pods after they've dried. Harvested green and fresh poppies should be crushed and spread out to dry to ensure mold doesn't form.

Once the poppies are dry, separate the seeds from the straw by using a kitchen sieve. Use the

seeds for food or next years harvest. You can use a blender to make the straw even finer. But you don't want it to be too powdery as this will make it harder to filter in a later step.



Alcohol:

Americans can use Ever-Clear. Some Europeans use 80% Stroh Rum. The rum is mixed with activated charcoal, from the fish-pond-store, and left for a week or so. The rum should be clear and colourless after this, with no smell other than that of alcohol. I call this "reclaimed rum".

Step 1)

Get a pan that holds your poppies, maybe 10 litres/2.64 gallons, or several pans. Put your poppy straw (1kg/2.2 lb) in the pan(s) and cover with water (about 7 litres/1.84 gallons). Water boils at a temperature at which morphine becomes unstable. A temperature of 85°C/185°F seems to be a safe upper limit. Morphine doesn't rot away immediately at 100°C/212°F, it takes time, So you can boil the water as long as it's done fast! Some people will bring the water to a boil then simmer for 30 minutes. I prefer to cook the straw at 85°C/ 185°F for a couple hours while stirring and mashing with a potato masher to help extract the alkaloids.



Step 2)

Pull the filter cloth over a bucket and secure with a string. Careful pour the water from the pan into the bucket. Like straining boiled potatoes, leave as much poppies in the pan as possible. You will get 3 litres/12.5 cups of water in the bucket. This step will take ages if you made your poppy straw into a very fine powder



Step 3)

Add as much fresh water to the pan as you strained off. In this case it is 3 litres/12.5 cups.

Bring to a simmer and leave for another 30 min. Strain again.



Step 4)

Repeat step 3. Now we have done three extraction which gave us about 8 litres/2.11 gallons of extract. And brown mushy poppies. Throw away the poppies.

Step 5)

This is the tricky part. The problem is this: we have a lot of water to evaporate. But at 85°C/ 185°F water takes ages to evaporate. My solution is to do relative small portions at a time. With a fan blowing dry air over the pots, effectively cooling the solution to safe temps. Stirring the solution also encourages steam. This way no part of the extract is exposed to boiling temps. Use large shallow pans.

Don't let the extract get too thick. If it gets too thick, there is very little water left, so it can easily get too hot, ruining you alkaloids. You have to stop while you can still pour the extract as a liquid. Excess water will eventually be removed once the alcohol is added, they will separate.

For reference: you should have about 1 to 2 litres/4 to 8 cups left.

I am sure there must be much better ways to get water out of an extract. But this one is simple, only requires kitchen stuff, and a day off work.

Maybe the handier types of folk would construct a vacuum rotation film evaporator of cause, which can evaporate at lower temp and with greater speed...



Step 6)

Set up a water bath, preferably with a thermostat, and evaporate most of the last water. With a fan over the liquid it should take about 12 hours to reduce the last one litre/4.16 cups to about 500 ml's/2.08 cups. You can use a boiling water bath, because the evaporating water will cool you solution down (fan!). Make sure your bath does not boil dry! If you have a thermostat bath, set it to 85 °C/ 185°F.

How dry? You don't want a dry crust; we want something we can scoop like thick maple syrup.



Step 7)

Fill jars half with the thick goeey extract and fill up with 80% alcohol. Shake a few minutes. Leave for a day and shake again. Now leave for a week or longer.



Step 8)

In time the alcohol and extract will have separated again, with a dark brown clear upper layer and a lighter murky bottom layer. Now we want the upper without any bottom silt. This can be done by decanting or better: use a big syringe. Keep the clear upper layer in a large bottle.

The jar on the right has the product from step 6 mixed with 80% alcohol and shaken, the jar on the left was left alone for a week and has separated in a layer of raw Laudanum (top) and silt (bottom).



Step 9)

Refill the jar, still half full with sediment, now with 40% (or 50%) alcohol. Shake, wait a day, shake, wait a week and separate like in step 8. Separation has taken place, see that the silt has become lighter in colour because of denaturising of proteins.



Step 10)

This is the same as step 9 but now with 20% alcohol.

After siphoning of the last top layer, you can throw away the slurry. It should be depleted.

The reason I go down on the % of alcohol is an economic one. This way the loss on alcohol in the final sediment layer is minimal. Dutch economics?

Step 11)

Mix the 80%, 40% and 20% extracts together. Now we have about 1.5 litres/6.25 cups of dark brown liquid, which should contain the best part of 1 litre/4.16 cups of 80% alcohol. All we have to do is add some flavour and dilute it in the end to 2 litres/8.33 cups of 40% papaver liqueur.

Step 12)

This is the best part: the flavouring. This is where we can make a difference. Like the difference between moonshine and a 10 year old single malt. Both do the job but they don't taste the same, right?

My personal favourite recipe is (for two litres/8.33 cups):

-20 grams/.70 oz of aniseed,

-5 grams/.17 oz of star anise,

-15 grams/.52 oz of fennel seed,

-200 grams/7.05 oz of sugar,

-350 grams/12.34 oz of dextrose/glucose

And a few other secret taste makers, which are a secret. So I am not gonna tell you!

In the end it will have a real nice soft anise/licuorice taste to it and a hell of a punch!

But don't take my word, get your herbs and spices out and blend your own tasty Laudanum or if you take my final recipe: Laudrum Mollis.

Other good active ingredients are: Ginkgo Biloba or Ma Huang both have a good synergy with the laudanum and they add nicely taste too.

An other variation is to replace the "reclaimed rum" for Ouzo, Pernod or Pastis. You will need three bottles of 70cl though. But you spare yourself the trouble of reclaiming rum. And no need to make the final product to taste: the ouzo and raw laudanum taste good enough.

Shalom,

Shadow_Wing

*Edited by Hedera's Homestead to include imperial measurements in PDF format
<https://t.me/hederashomestead>*