Essiac Tea

Essiac Tea traces back to the 1920s, when Canadian nurse René Caisse learned a blend of four herbs — originally from an Ojibwe medicine man — from a patient, and spent years refining it. She named the formula "Essiac," her own surname spelled backward. Despite newer 6- and 8-herb variations that have appeared over the years, this original 4-herb version remains the standard, carried forward through nearly a century of use.

This is one of the best-known blood-purifying and cleansing blends in traditional herbalism — a combination of roots and bark that works together to support the body's own detoxification through the blood, lymph, and digestive system. It's a formula many members reach for as part of a broader healing program, alongside whatever else that program includes.

This Herbal Combination



Burdock Root — A traditional blood purifier and digestive aid, used for generations to support the body's own cleansing work through the blood and bowels, with a long folk history in skin conditions as well. It's the largest single ingredient in the blend by volume.



Sheep Sorrel — The herb most closely tied to René Caisse's original formula. Traditionally valued for a cooling, cleansing action and for supporting the body's detoxification through increased perspiration and urine flow; historically also used for ulcers and hemorrhage.



Slippery Elm Bark — A mucilage-rich herb that forms a soothing gel when mixed with water. Dr. Christopher called it "so nutritious it will sustain life itself." It coats and calms irritated mucous membranes through the digestive tract, balancing the more stimulating action of the other three herbs.



Turkish Rhubarb Root — Used in small amounts as a gentle digestive stimulant, encouraging the body's own digestive secretions and supporting regular elimination — Dr. Christopher valued it for "stimulating, cleansing, and toning the vital alimentary and intestinal areas."

How It Works

These four herbs are chosen to work as a team rather than four separate actions. Burdock Root and Sheep Sorrel do the heavy lifting of blood and lymph cleansing, encouraging the body to clear waste through its natural channels. Turkish Rhubarb Root supports digestion and elimination, helping move that waste out rather than letting it recirculate. Slippery Elm Bark rounds out the blend, soothing and protecting the digestive tract while the other three herbs do their more stimulating work — which is part of why this combination has held up as a single, balanced formula for so long rather than being used as separate single herbs.

The Traditional Recipe

This amount makes 8 quarts (2 gallons) of dry herbal mix. Cut all amounts in half to make one gallon at a time.

- 6 1/2 cups burdock root (cut)
- 1 pound sheep sorrel herb (powdered)
- 1/4 pound slippery elm bark (powdered)
- 1 ounce Turkish rhubarb root (powdered)

Mix all the ingredients well before placing them in water, and store the dry herbal mix in a glass jar in a dark, dry place. Take out one ounce of the mix per 32 ounces of water (one quart) at a time.





Brewing Instructions

Use stainless steel or cast iron pots for boiling, and glass or ceramic containers for storing.



Step 1: Add the herbs and distilled water to the pot. Simmer, covered, over medium heat for 12 to 15 minutes.



Step 2: Remove from heat; scrape any herbs from the side of the container back into the liquid.



Step 3: Let sit for 12 hours.



Step 4: Reheat to a simmer.



Step 5: Strain into preheated, sterile containers.



Step 6: Store in the refrigerator until used.

Suggested Use

For general immune and detox support, 2 ounces once daily. For more serious or long-standing conditions, this can be increased up to 3 times daily, 3 ounces each time, according to the severity of what's being supported. The refrigerated tea can be warmed or added to hot water before drinking.

Members supporting themselves through a serious illness — including alongside other treatments — have used this tea as a complementary part of their program. As with any deep-cleansing herbal work, Essiac Tea does its best work as part of a fuller healing approach: as much whole-food, organic eating as possible, sunshine, and stepping away from the toxic exposures — in food, household products, and habits — that may have contributed to the condition in the first place. Using Essiac Tea while continuing the same lifestyle habits that contributed to the original problem isn't the best way to get the most from it.

This information is provided for educational purposes as part of traditional herbal practice and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. Always consult a qualified healthcare provider regarding any health condition.

For more on this formula, see my blog post "Essiac: A Four-Herb Cleansing Tea with a Long History" at www.daradietz.me.