Lecture 11 Prima – Melissa ens – recipe 1 - breakdown

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rubaphilos@yahoo.co.nz

Here are my instructions for the first recipe.

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> The Primum Ens Melissae
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(snip first paragraph for brevity)

> "The Primum Ens Melissae is prepared in the
> following manner: Take
> half a pound of pure carbonate of potash, and expose
> it to the air
> until it is dissolved (by attracting water from the
> atmosphere).

The modern chemical name for carbonate of potash is potassium carbonate (similar to cream of tartar yOu mother uses for baking.) Alchemists also called it tartar. Pot' carb' can be easily obtained from any chemical supplier, and it is a very common chemical with no trade restrictions on it. (It is used in home-hobby soap making.) It can also be prepared by hand by simply burning any vegetable material (such as leaves). The ash that results from burning vegetable matter is roughly 90% potassium carbonate ... in other words potassium carbonarte is the 'salt' of the herbal kingdom. (ref: the instructions on the herbal tincture.)

This ash is then dissolved in distilled water, filtered and the filtrate is evaporated to crystalize the near-pure potassium carbonate (in the same way it was done in the herbal-tincture process.)

When I first started working on the ens I used to buy 2kg pails of pot' carb' for about us$15. There are several grades of pot' carb' you can buy from chemical suppliers - 'technical grade' is more than sufficient and a reasonable cost. (There is no point in buying expensive reagent grade.)

If you buy the pot' carb' rather than make it yourself you will notice that it comes in granule form. Before

it is used in the work it helps if you grind it in a mortar until it is a fine powder.

Whichever way you obtain your pot' carb' before you use it it needs to be utterly dried. The easiest way is to place it in a pyrex bowl in the oven, stir it regularly, until it is as dry as desert dust.

Now the recipe says that you need to expose it to to the air so that it can absorb atmospheric moisture. Potassium Carbonate is hygroscopic, which means that it is like a magnet to air-borne moisture. There are various suggestions as to how this could be carried out. One is to put the pot' carb' in a thin cloth bag and hang it over a bowl to catch the drips as the salt turns liquid. But experience will prove this doesn't work well, except in a very damp atmosphere.

The way I found easiest was the spread a thin layer of pot' carb' on a ceramic plate (like a dinner plate). Then when the salt absorbs moisture from the air and turns liquid the liquid is poured off into a jar and stored for later use.

This works best outdoors, although I have got it to work by putting plates in the bath while leaving the bathroom windows open all night. If you leave the plates outside you need to get them in before the sun rises, because the salts will likely dry out again once it gets light.

This process is repeated as many times as it takes to obtain at least (minimum practical requirement) 1 litre of liquified pot' carb (what we call "tartar-water".) This tartar-water then needs to be filtered through a course filter paper. It needs to be course because the liquid is very viscous and will clog a fine filter.

So this filtered tartar-water is stored in a glass jar with a lid on. It is the menstruum (or solvent) of the ens process - a 'saturated' solution of potassium carbonate. It is absolutely essential that the solution is, and remains, saturated. Also, don't store it in a good lab-glass flask. Liquid potassium carbonate eats glass and it will irrepairibly frost the inside of any jar or flask it is stored in.

The tartar-water can be prepared well in advance if you want. In fact this is a good idea because you will find that collecting this water is often not as easy as it sounds and it can take a bit of mucking around.

> Filter the fluid, and put as many fresh leaves of
> the plant Melissa
> into it as it will hold, so that the fluid will
> cover the leaves.

Next you need to have your melissa prepared. The botanical name is actually melissa officinalis (common name - lemon balm.) It is an annual (it dies off ad regrows every year), of the same family as common mint. So seedlings are easy to get (supermarkets often sell them in spring) and it is very easy to grow. If you grow it yourself it is most helpful to let it grow for 1 year and then harvest it the 2nd year, for use.

Many older houses that have good gardens and lots of common herbs like mint, thyme and rosemary will often have melissa growing in them too.

The recipe specifically calls for fresh leaves. I have used dry ones, and although it does work with dry leaves the process for dealing with them is a little more complicated.

For the best effect the fresh leaves should be pulped, so that the plant cells are broken as much as possible. You can do this by beating the fresh leaves in a mortar or, if you have an old 'glass' electric blender (this will probably damage a new one), you can add the tartar-water and the melissa to the whizz and blend it at high speed.

> Let
> it stand in a well-closed glass and in a moderately
> warm place for
> twenty-four hours.

So now you have your pulped lemon balm in its solvent (tartar-water) in a good-sized glass jar. You shouldn't fill the jar more than 1/3rd, so that there is ample air-space above the liquid to allow circulation of gases.

The idea here is that the tartar-water, which is an alkaline (base) solvent, (a lye), will extract the volatile components out of the plant material which is macerating in it. This maceration is best carried out in a warm place. The warmth helps the liquid to move in the jar and it ensures the extraction moves along at a reasonable pace and that all the vegetable matter is extracted.

The end result is that you will end up with a muddy-looking dark brown liquid full of the extracted melissa in your jar.

The suggested 24 hours is a bit short I think. You are probably best to leave it for a good few days - to a week.

> The fluid may then be removed
> from the leaves, and

> the latter thrown away.

The melissa is now extracted and the extracted vegetable matter has no further value, so it has to be separated from the muddy-brown tartar-water (according to the recipe.) This would normally be done by filtering the liquid. But experience will show that filtering the liquid actually defeats the entire purpose of the process.

The reason for this is that the ens-proper is a spirit, of close affinity, in nature, to ethanol, Because of this the ens actually floats on the surface of the tartar-water extraction (I will explain this in detail further down.)

So if you filter this extraction what will happen is the filter paper will soak up the ens and you will loose it.

So the best approach I have found is to use a non-metallic (preferably glass) rod or spatula and to squash the vegetable matter to the side of the jar and drag it up and out of the liquid, grabbing it with big plastic tweezers. The other option is to push the herb down into the jar so that it sinks and stays sunk. This often doesn't work because it wants to float, but the next stage of the process doesn't work as well if bits of vegetable matter are sticking up above the surface of the liquid.

The last option (the best) is to carefully decant the liquid into a new clean jar in such a way that as much of the vegetable matter as possible remain behind in the jar.

> On the top of this fluid
> absolute alcohol is
> poured, so that it will cover the former to a height
> of one or two
> inches,

The alcohol that is used here must be absolutely dry (free of water.) If it is not the process simply will not work and the end result will not be a remedy but instead a poison. This means distilling the alcohol at least 7x and/or drying it with potassium carbonate.

(Note: Pot' carb' soaks up water and it does no mix with alcohol. So if you mix pot' carb' with a water alcohol mixture the salt drinks up the water like a sponge and the pure alcohol floats on top. This process is used to commercially purify alcohol.)

So, if you pour absolute alcohol (pure (water-free) alcohol) on top of a saturated solution of potassium carbonate you will notice that the two do not mix ...

the alcohol floats on the tartar-water. This chemical fact is what makes collecting the ens possible. The reason for this is that the ens itself being (as I said before), of the same spiritus nature as alcohol, like alcohol it floats on a saturated solution of tartar-water. So during the maceration phase the ens rises up in the jar and forms a thin film or small puddle on the surface of the tartar-water.

> and it is left to remain for one or two
> days, or until the
> alcohol becomes of an intensely green colour.

When the alcohol is added it and the ens melissa mix together and you will get, if you have carried out the process properly, an emerald green coloured alcohol.

If you have not carried the process out properly what you will get is a pale-brown coloured alcohol. This pale-brown colour is some of the crude fixed sulphur (principal - the plant resin) rising up into the alcohol. It takes a lot of skill to avoid getting this crude sulphur mixed with the alcohol ... but in fact it does not ruin the end product if in fact you get both the green ens and the crude brown resin together.

Here is an important point then: the ens of melissa is the green spiritus oil ... not the crude brown resin. Anyone who believes otherwise is fooling themselves and has a lot to learn about alchemy. Many people who carry out this work have never managed to see the green tincture in the alcohol, so they have no idea it exists, and so some insist it does not. The problem with their process is that their method is in error.

There are two ways of proving this fact, one of which relies on reference to classic alchemical literature about the nature of plant magisteries, the other which is a way of preparing the ens that allows you to see the ens in its raw state, before it mixes with the alcohol. I will only describe this other technique to anyone who has sufficient proof that they have tried this conventional technique for preparing the ens first.

> This
> alcohol is then to
> be taken away and preserved, and fresh alcohol is
> put upon the
> alkaline fluid, and the operation is repeated until
> all the colouring
> matter is absorbed by the alcohol.

Unless you have started with a huge jar of tartar-water and extract (and of course a lot of herb) I have found that one addition of alcohol usually grabs all the ens there is. On rare occassions (with

small batches) have I seen the green ens still rise into the alcohol after the first try.

> This alcoholic
> fluid is now to be
> distilled, and the alcohol evaporated until it
> becomes of the
> thickness of syrup, which is the Primum Ens
> Melissae;

Of course the amount of ens you get by using the amount of pot' carb' the recipe suggests is very small. Less than 1% of the mass of the fresh herb is its ens, so we are talking very small amounts. If you evaporate the alcohol completely off the ens (in this case) you will find that you are left with a very tiny amount, and it really is not easily noticable that it is syrup-like. On the other hand if you did a large amount and you collected a lot of ens-tincture then it will be obvious that the ens is a type of oil.

> but the alcohol
> that has been distilled away and the liquid potash
> may be used again.

To use the pot' carb' again it needs to be re-calcined, to remove all of the muddy-brown crude resin that is now mixed with it.

> The liquid potash must be of great concentration and
> the alcohol of
> great strength, else they would become mixed, and
> the experiment
> would not succeed."

This last instruction is important. If there is still water in your alcohol then the tartar-water sucks up that water and it becomes unsaturated. Likewise if the tartar-water has too much water the alcohol, when added to it, is diluted. Either way this excess water in the equation allows dissolved pot' carb' to mix with the alcohol and with the ens. Thus, when you concentrate your ens by distilling or evaporating the alcohol off it, the tartar-water mixed in with it concentrates and when you ingest the ens you also ingest liquid potassium carbonate ... after which you will find yourself dehydrating, drinking huge amounts of water and living in the toilet for about four days.

Dosage: Even though there is a very small amount of ens in a large amount of melissa the ens is very powerful. At a 1/10,000 dilution, taken as 3 drops a day in 10mls of water, it will still act as a powerful rejuvinative.

I usually extract my ens in a 4 litre jar. I pack as much melissa into roughly 2.5 litres of tartar-water

as I can get. The alcohol-ens I collect off this amount of extractor I concentrate down to 25mls (and store in a medicine bottle.) I ingest 3-7 drops of this prepation a day, for a month, once a year.

~rubaphilos

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