

SIR WALTER RALEGH'S CORDIAL

Ingredients and Processes

The ingredients and process for making Raleigh's Great Cordial below, have been translated from a Latin recipe by Dr Matthew Nicholls, Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Reading.

Take:

Rasped hart's horn, one pound [*hart's horn is the horn from a male deer*]

Six ounces of the flesh of vipers, with their hearts and livers

Flower of borage and bugloss [*was sometimes used to cure snakebite*], rosemary, marigold, betony, campion, sundew [*lustwort*], gilliflower, elderflower: of each half a pound

Of herbs water-germander, holy thistle [*used in the Middle Ages to treat Bubonic Plague*], lemon balm [*still sold in health shops to cure anxiety*], Cretan dittony, mint, marjoram, betony: of each twelve handfuls

Of the grains of kermes [*a red dye obtained from insects, like cochineal*] recently reduced into a paste or reduction, of cubebs, greater cardamom, juniper berries, mace, nutmeg, cloves, saffron: of each two ounces

Cinnamon, the rind of sassafras bark [*still used in teas today for its flavour*], the rinds of lemons and oranges: of each three ounces

Of the wood of aloes and sassafras: of each six ounces

Of roots: angelica, valerian, carline, fraxinella or white dittony, Virginian snakeroot, turmeric, tormentil, bistort, snakewort, snakeroot, gentian and masterwort: of each one and a half ounces

All these things, cut up and greatly pounded up, and placed in a suitable vessel, are extracted with rectified spirit of wine according to the Art. The filtered tincture is evaporated by distillation in a *bain marie* into a syrup. Let it be burned up and pressed; the repounded ashes are made into an elixir with water, from which a pure salt should be obtained by the law of the Art, which should be blended with the/as an extract [*The references to the Art here are simply a pre-existing familiarity with the medical or alchemical practice*]. With these things thus done, to this extract add, as is of the Art, the following powder and other ingredients:

Take the true Oriental and Occidental bezoar stones, of each one and a half ounces; two ounces of preparation of dissolved oriental pearls; three ounces of preparation of dissolved red coral.

Of Armenian bole [*a red clay*], true terra sigillata [*clay*], unicornu minerale [*'white bole', a fossil-like substance*], deer's horn prepared 'philosophically' and calcined deer's horn, of each one ounce; of very choice ambergris [*substance that originates as a secretion in the intestines of the sperm whale*] reduced to an essence, one ounce; of excellent oriental musk in essence one and a half drams; of tincture of antimony prepared as by Basil Valentine [*a 15th century alchemist*], two drams.

Two pounds of candied white sugar, very finely pulverized [*the sugar presumably masks some of the taste of the previous ingredients*].

Out of all these things mixed and blended by Art is a truly Royal Confection, which is kept for use in tightly closed vessels.

If you would like to find out more about any of these ingredients, then Nicolas le Febure's 'A Discourse upon Sr. Walter Rawleigh's Great Cordial', written in 1664, provides a commentary on the cordial.