

## **Making a Hydrosol/ Essential oil through steam distillation**

**By Glen Nagel, ND**

Hydrosols, also known as floral waters, hydroflorates, flower waters or distillates are products from steam distilling plant materials. Hydrosols are like essential oils but in far less of a concentration. When a distiller brews plant material with water in a large cooker the steam fills the pot and, as it rises, it causes the glands of the plants to burst and release the oils and essence of the plant into the steam. The oil rises through a condenser and collects in a separate vessel. This is what we know as an essential oil, but what about all that fragrant water that was steamed with the original plant material? That is our hydrosol, or floral water. Hydrosols are usually the result of essential oil production as a by-product but the highest quality hydrosols come from the devoted distillers who, with artist like precision steam the floral and plant material strictly to produce a hydrosol. Hydrosols contain all of the essences of the plant in every drop, just like essential oils but in a milder form; making them suitable for all manner of applications where essential oils would be too strong.

Noted author Jeanne Rose is quoted as saying.

"The best comes from a distillation where it is the hydrosol that is being produced rather than the essential oil. Often the best comes from the earliest part of the distillation rather than the body of the distillation. This usually smells bright and pleasantly fragrant. Although, some of the therapeutic part of the hydrosol is also produced at the very end of the distillation, and usually has a rather grassy or vegetative note. As the plants are being distilled, micro-particles of essential oil are in suspension, they give the aromatic distillate its scent and will separate out as the hydrosol cools. There is approximately .02% essential oil in hydrosol".

Clinically, the chemical components in the hydrosol are primarily acids, which are hydrophilic (water-loving). Why do they work? Because they acidify the water or the product, which is beneficial to the skin or in the body. Thus the hydrosol acts as a healing anti-inflammatory and mild, but therapeutic antiseptic. Bacteria do not live well in acidic environments, which is why acidic liquids such as vinegar make good preservatives for food items like pickles, chili peppers and olives. Acidic environments are astringent and so the hydrosols are useful in skin care products as astringents constrict and contract the tissues. Hydrosols can be used externally in skin care products, internally as a douche, taken as a tonic or combined in a beverage. They also make lovely food mists as rosewater has been employed for such reasons for quite some time.

Equipment needed:

- Large enamel pot
- Steamer basket
- Small ceramic bowl
- Large stainless steel mixing bowl
- Ice
- Fresh or dried aromatic herb



Method:

Place water into the bottom of large pot, place in a steamer basket without center piece. Place small ceramic bowl in the center of the steamer. Place herbs around the ceramic bowl in a steamer basket. Place stainless steel mixing bowl on top of the pot as a lid, fill with ice and turn on the heat. (See diagram below)

## Home made Hydrosol Still

- Place herbs in steamer basket with ceramic bowl in center.
- Place the mixing bowl on top with ice
- Bring the water to steam for 15 minutes
- Hydrosol collects in ceramic bowl
- Filter and place in aerosol bottle

