

# DIY Herbal Elixirs

## for Cheer and Good Health

A photograph of two glasses filled with a dark, amber-colored liquid, likely an herbal elixir. The glasses are set on a dark, textured surface. A vibrant red chili pepper is placed diagonally across the top of the front glass. To the right of the front glass, there is a small bowl containing a bright red, finely ground powder, possibly cayenne pepper. The background is dark and out of focus, with some blurred lights. The overall lighting is warm and focused on the glasses and the red chili pepper.

**Chris Dalziel**



# DIY Herbal Elixirs

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FOR CHEER AND GOOD HEALTH

Christine J. Dalziel

Joybilee Farm Media  
Greenwood, BC





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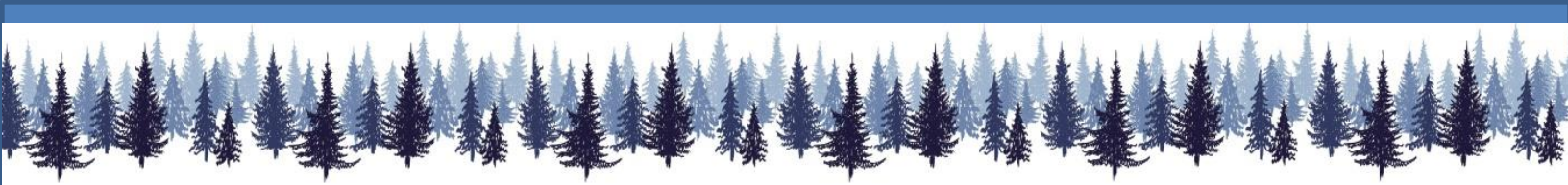
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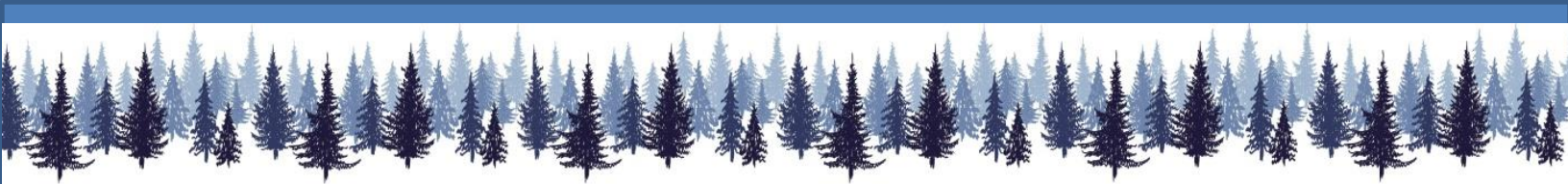
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## DIY Herbal Elixirs for Cheer and Good Health

Herbal elixirs, syrups, and bitters are a convenient, effective, and easy to use herbal preparations that can be used on the go. The preparation is done ahead of time. It can be packaged in a convenient bottle with a drop reducer to inhibit spills. It can be used for travel. Keep it in a 100ml or smaller bottle for airline security checks.

Herbal elixirs, syrups, and bitters are also used as cocktail mixers to aid digestion and add other herbal benefits to pre-dinner and after dinner drinks. Alcoholic drinks at one time were medicinal preparations.

In this DIY Herbal workbook we'll take a look at making herbal elixirs, syrups, bitters and other preparations that can be taken as is, used as a beverage mixer, or blended in hot chocolate or coffee drinks, before dinner drinks, or cocktails. They are used not just for entertainment but also to provide health benefits.

In this workbook we are using master recipes. From these master recipes you will be able to create your own herbal elixirs, syrups, cordials, and liqueurs, based on your favorite ingredients and the herbs you have on hand. You won't have to mail order ingredients and wait for them to arrive before you can begin. You will be able to create your own unique recipes and blends based on what you have close to home or can forage easily.

There is room at the back of this workbook for you to write out a few creative recipes to try, as well. If you've never created your own herbal recipes before this is a good place to begin. Herbal elixirs and syrups are very forgiving. Making these will give you an opportunity to develop an intuitive sense of which herbs go well together. As well as a deeper understanding of how they taste and how they affect you and your family members.

I've also given you a few recipes based on the master recipes but using fresh conifer needles and cones. This will help you bring what you learned in the Conifers in my Kitchen master class to fruition.

Get ready to explore a whole new category of herbal awesomeness that will help you bring herbs into every part of your lifestyle. Even if you don't drink, herbal syrups and elixirs can be beneficial as a convenient carrier for the medicinal benefits of herbs. For instance conifer needle syrup is a beneficial cough syrup and decongestant, as well as being rich in vitamin C and tasty.



## **What is an herbal elixir?**

An elixir is a clear, sweet flavored drink that is the carrier for medicinal herbal benefits. It is made by infusing herbs in alcohol and water, with sugar or honey. The mixture is strained after several weeks and then served on its own by the teaspoon, or as a mixer for cocktails or mocktails.

## **How does an herbal elixir differ from a cordial?**


A cordial is an herbal mixture infused in water, similar to an elixir, but the cordial has a higher sugar content and a lower alcohol content. It may have no alcohol at all. The cordial is preserved by the sugar syrup and just a small amount of optional alcohol, making it stable at room temperature. While an elixir is preserved by the alcohol content and the sugar is added to sweeten the medicine.

In some countries a cordial is non-alcoholic and is similar to an herbal syrup. Alcoholic herbal mixtures can also be called liqueurs.

Cordials are often cooked down to reduce the herb/water mixture before the sugar is added. The alcohol is added at the end and is not cooked.

## **How can you use herbal elixirs?**

Herbal elixirs, syrups, and bitters can be added to cocktails and mocktails. They can be used before dinner as a digestive, after dinner as a relaxant, or any time as a way to get more herbs. The sweetness of the elixir makes it more conducive to offering to neighbors and friends. They are a great introduction



to herbal benefits. They can be more easily assimilated into a person's lifestyle as a first introduction to herbs.

Keep in mind that herbal elixirs and herbal syrups are medicinally active herbal preparations and contraindications may apply. Understand the actions of the herb before you offer herbal syrups or elixirs to vulnerable people.



## The Master Recipes

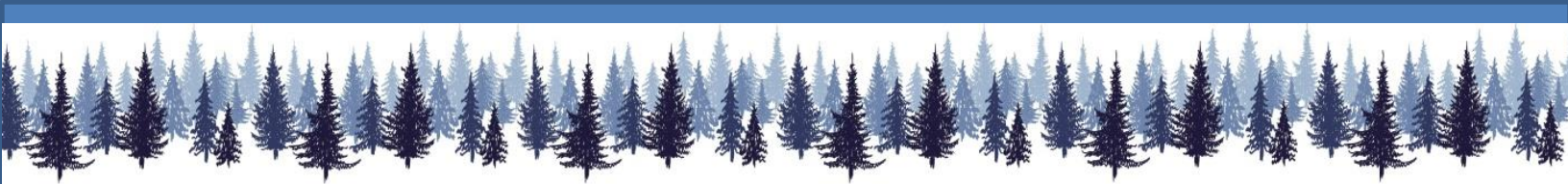
In this workbook we'll begin with just a few master recipes and then explore variations that can make your own herbal recipes unique and inexpensive. By using a master recipe as a foundation you can create your own recipes based on the ingredients you have on hand or that are seasonally available in your garden or close to home. You are no longer limited to what you can find at your local market. Once you master these easy herbal techniques you'll be ready to create a pantry of amazing flavors with added health benefits.

### Herbal syrup master recipe with honey

***Yield: 2 cups***

- 1 ounce of herb of your choice, dried or 2 ounces fresh herbs
- 2 cups of water, boiled
- 1 cup of honey, raw





### **Directions:**

Simmer herb(s) with water over low heat until the liquid in the decoction is reduced to 1 cup. This will take about an hour. Remove from the heat. Strain the herbs from the liquid. Return the liquid to the saucepan. Liquid should be about 1 cup.

Add 1 cup of honey. Stir to completely dissolve the honey. Do not heat above 110 F. Pour into sterilized jars or bottles.

Mixture should be refrigerated. Shelf life is about 6 months.

Shelf life can be extended by adding 1 cup of alcohol based herbal tincture to the 2 cups of syrup.

## **Herbal syrup master recipe with organic sugar**

***Yield: 2 cups***

- 1 ½ cups of water boiled
- 1 ½ cups of sugar
- 1 cup of fresh herbs

### **Directions:**

Place water and sugar in a saucepan over medium heat and bring to a gentle boil stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Remove from the heat and transfer to a glass bowl.

Allow the syrup to cool slightly and while the syrup is still quite warm, add fresh herbs and allow to steep for 24 hours. After 24 hours, strain out herbs, bottle the syrup. Label and date.

Store in the refrigerator. Shelf life 1 month.

## **Herbal elixir master recipe**

***Yield: 2 cups***

- 1 cup herbs, dried or 2 cups fresh herbs
- 1 cup brandy
- 1 cup honey

### **Directions:**

Place herbs in a sterilized wide mouth pint jar. Pour brandy over herbs. Stir to combine. Pour honey into jar. Stir to completely mix herbs, brandy, and honey.

Cap the jar. Label with the contents and date. Place in a cool, dark place.

Set aside for 6 weeks. Stir the contents once or twice a week if you remember.

After 6 weeks, strain the herbs from the mixture. Retain the liquid.



## Herbal liqueur master recipe

***Yield: 2 cups***

- 1 cups herbs, dried or 1 ½ cups fresh
- 1 ½ cups vodka or brandy
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup sugar

### **Directions:**

Place herbs in a sterilized wide mouth pint jar. Pour alcohol over herbs. Cap tightly and place in a cool, dark cupboard. Shake the jar once or twice a week for 3 weeks. Strain the herbs. Reserve the liquid.

Make a simple syrup using equal parts sugar and water. Add to strained liquid to make 2 cups.

Bottle. Label and date.

Allow the flavors to mingle before serving.

**Tip: When making herbal liqueurs, a blend of herbs can be used rather than just one or two herbs. Herbal liqueurs are medicinally active and normal cautions and contraindications apply.**



## Herbal cordial master recipe

A cordial is similar to a syrup. In the USA cordials commonly contain alcohol. In Europe and UK cordials are non-alcoholic and a similar beverage with alcohol is called a “liqueur”.

Yield 2 cups

- 2 cups dried berries or herbs, or 4 cups fresh
- 6 cups water
- 1 cup honey or sugar

### Directions:

Place herbs and water in a saucepan. Simmer over medium heat, uncovered for 30 minutes. Strain the liquid from the herbs. Measure the liquid. You should have 2 cups.

Return the liquid to the saucepan. Add honey or sugar. Simmer for an additional 10 minutes. Allow to cool slightly. Pour into sterilized bottles. Cool completely. Cap. Date. Shelf life: 1 month if kept refrigerated. Cordials and syrups may be frozen .

Optional: Extend the shelf life. Add ¼ cup of vodka or tincture for each cup of syrup. This makes it shelf stable for up to a year.

## Herbal bitters master recipe

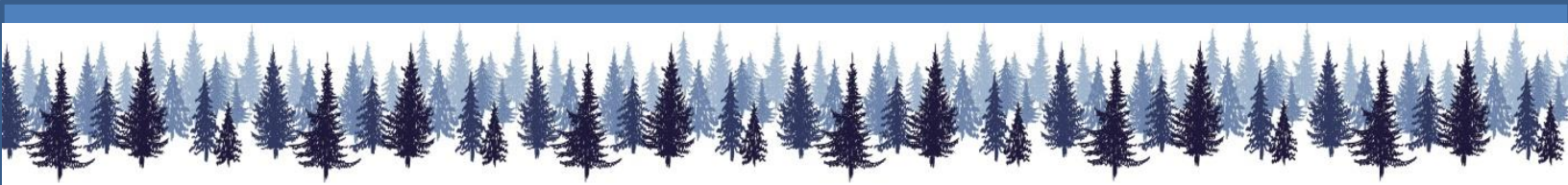
**Yield: 2 cups**

- 2 cups of brandy
- ½ cup flavorful herbs, dried
- ¼ cup bitter herbs, dried
- 2 tablespoons digestive spice
- ½ cup simple syrup or honey

### Directions:

Add dried herbs of your choice to wide mouth pint jar. Fill with brandy. Label and date. Set aside for 4 to 6 weeks. Shake a few times a week if you remember.

Strain the herbs from the jar. Add simple syrup or honey mixture. Shake to combine. Bottle.



## How to use the master recipes

Choose herbs or berries of your choice. You can use more than one herb. Similar to blending an herbal tea, you can blend herbs for their benefits in herbal syrups, elixirs, and cordials. A famous German herbal liqueur, Jagermeister, with the recognizable flavor of fennel and mint uses a proprietary recipe of “56 selected botanicals” to create its traditional liqueur. It is sold as a liqueur but it was originally marketed as a cough suppressant, cure for the common cold, and digestive aid. While the recipe is a secret, it is known to contain citrus peel, cinnamon, ginger, saffron, fennel, anise, peppermint, licorice, ginseng, poppy seeds, juniper berries,

Use a main herb for its flavor or benefits.

Add a secondary herb at  $\frac{1}{2}$  the weight of the first herb for flavor or benefits.

Add a third herb at  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{8}$ <sup>th</sup> the weight of the first herb for flavor or synergy.

## Douglas fir elixir

Douglas fir is a pseudo fir. It has a citrusy flavor with just a hint of resiny bitterness. It’s my favorite evergreen to use in these kinds of herbal preparations. Using herb scissor can make the work of harvesting the needles quick and painless. Any other edible conifer can be used in the place of Douglas fir.

The flavor varies throughout the growing season with spring buds being milder than winter branches. There is also flavor variation between trees, so taste a bit before harvest.

### ***Yield: 2 cups***

- 1 cup Douglas fir needles chopped finely
- Zest and juice from 1 orange
- 1 cup brandy
- 1 cup honey

### **Directions:**

Place fir needles and orange zest and juice in a sterilized wide mouth pint jar. Pour brandy over herbs. Stir to combine. Pour honey into jar. Stir to completely mix herbs, brandy, and honey.

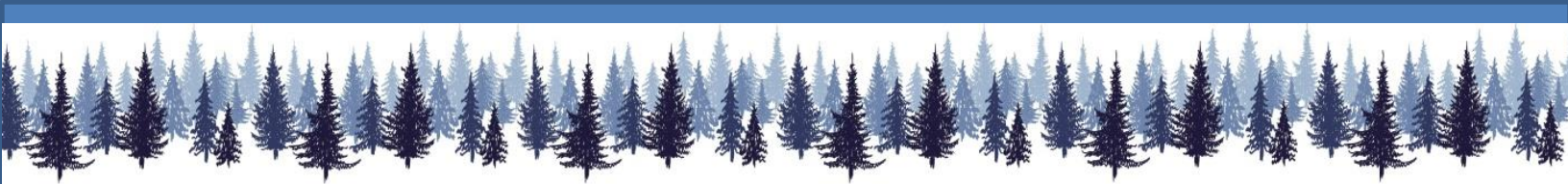
Cap the jar. Label with the contents and date. Place in a cool, dark place.

Set aside for 6 weeks. Stir the contents once or twice a week if you remember.

After 6 weeks, strain the herbs from the mixture. Retain the liquid.

Bottle, label, and date. Serve with sparkling water, over ice. Pour in coffee to flavor. Add to cocktails and mocktails.





## Spruce bud syrup

This recipe uses the lime green spring growth of spruce branches. Harvest these in May or June. When they are ready to harvest depends on how quickly spring advances in your region.

***Yield: 2 cups***

- 1 ½ cups of water boiled
- 1 ½ cups of sugar
- 1 cup of fresh spruce buds

### Directions:

Place water and sugar in a saucepan over medium heat and bring to a gentle boil stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Remove from the heat and transfer to a glass bowl.

Allow the syrup to cool slightly and while the syrup is still quite warm, add fresh spruce buds and allow to steep for 24 hours. After 24 hours, strain out herbs, bottle the syrup. Label and date.

Store in the refrigerator. Shelf life 1 month without alcohol. The shelf life can be extended by adding ¼ cup of vodka for each cup of herbed syrup.

## Pine needle syrup

***Yield: 2 cups***

- 1 cup pine or fir needles
- 2 inch piece of cinnamon stick
- Zest from 1 orange
- 2 cups of water, boiled
- 1 cup of honey, raw

### Directions:

Simmer conifer needles with water in an open saucepan, over low heat until the liquid in the decoction is reduced to 1 cup. This will take about 30 minutes. Remove from the heat. Stir in cinnamon stick and orange zest. Wait 15 minutes. Strain the herbs from the liquid. Return the liquid to the saucepan. Liquid should be about 1 cup. Add more water if there is less than a cup, to make 1 cup.

Add 1 cup of honey. Stir to completely dissolve the honey. Do not heat above 110 F. Pour into sterilized jars or bottles.

Mixture should be refrigerated. Shelf life is about 6 months.

Shelf life can be extended by adding 1 cup of alcohol based herbal tincture to the 2 cups of syrup.

## Pine cone syrup

This recipe uses the green tightly closed pine cones of spring. It is based on a traditional Caucasus area recipe.

**Yield: 2 cups**

- 3 cups of green, closed pine cones
- 2 cups sugar
- 5 cups water

Wash pine cones well under running water to remove insects, debris, and dust. Place the clean cones in a saucepan with water. Stir in sugar until it is fully dissolved.

Simmer over medium heat in an open pan, stirring occasionally to keep the pine cones from sticking. (You could also do this in a slow cooker or an Instant Pot on the slow cooker setting. )

Simmer over medium heat for 2 to 3 hours. Pine cones will change color and the liquid will thicken and become darker. The actual time needed depends on the temperature of the pot. Cook until the syrup takes on a dark amber color. Cook over low heat until the liquid thickens. Strain through a sieve. Pine cones will be soft and can be eaten.

Retain the syrup. Pour into sterilized jars. Syrup can be used in cocktails, as a coffee syrup, or in dessert.

There is a commercial pine cone syrup made from the pine trees in the alps that is also based on the traditional recipe.





## Juniper leaf and berry liqueur

This is gin that is made with juniper without distillation. It has a slightly bitter flavor and is strongly diuretic.

### ***Yield 3 cups***

- 1 cup of juniper leaves, cut using herbs scissors
- ½ cup of dried juniper berries
- Zest from 1 lemon
- 3 cups vodka
- 1 cup of sugar

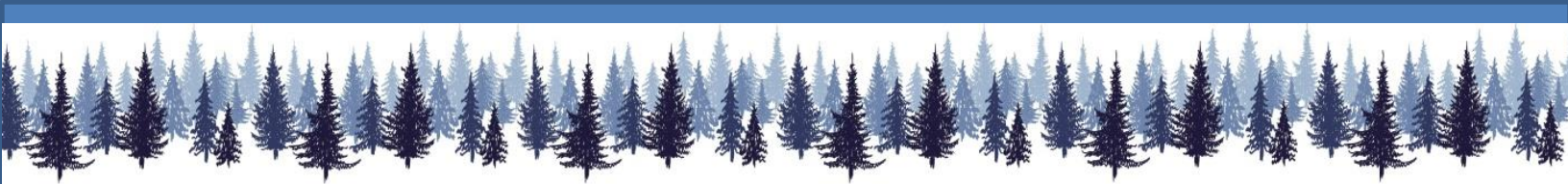
Wash juniper leaves and berries. Trim juniper leaves with herb scissors to make 1 cup. Place juniper leaves and berries in a wide mouth glass jar. Add lemon zest. Cover with vodka.

Cap tightly. Set aside in a cool, dark cupboard for 3 weeks. Strain. Retain liquid.

Stir in 1 cup of sugar. Stir until sugar is fully dissolved. Cap tightly and label. Set aside for 1 week to allow flavors to mature.

Serve as a mixer or on its own. Can be used as a bitter.





## Evergreen Bitters

Yield 2 cups

- 1 cup fresh pine, fir, spruce, cedar leaves
- 1 tablespoon fennel seed
- Peel from one grapefruit (including pith) cut in ¼ inch strips
- Peel from a clementine or tangerine (organic), cut into ¼ inch strips
- 1 vanilla bean scraped
- 3 cups vodka
- 1 tablespoon honey

### Directions

In a sterilized, wide-mouth canning jar, place pine needles, fennel seed, citrus peels, vanilla bean. Pour vodka over everything. Use a knife to release any trapped air from the jar. Stir. Cap tightly. Set aside in a dark cupboard for 2 weeks.

Shake a few times a week if you think it.

Strain. Reserve liquid. Stir in honey till it is well mixed with the bitters. Pour into dark glass bottle.

Label and date.

Use just ¼ to 1 teaspoon before meals. Or mix with cocktails to add the bittering agent.





## Ways to use your herbal syrups, elixirs, and bitters

- Italian soda
- Coffee drinks
- Hot cocoa
- Cocktails
- Mocktails
- Hot and cold alcoholic beverages
- Rum toddy
- Whiskey sour
- Whiskey smash

### In dessert

- Trifle
- Over ice cream
- Over rice pudding or bread pudding
- Flavor smoothies, milk shakes,
- Flavor icing
- After dinner drinks and coffee beverages

### Appetizers

- Pre-dinner cocktails and mocktails
- In dips and relishes

### In the main meal

- In drinks and cocktails
- Added to sauces, dips, and relishes

### Between Meal Snacks

- As a base for candy
- Marshmallows
- Cough drops
- Nougat
- Fudge



## Health benefits of herbal elixirs, syrups, and cordials

These herbal preparations are convenient and easy to use as part of a healthy and varied menu plan. They can be incorporated into your entertaining and into your everyday meal planning.

They provide herbal benefits according to the herbs used in the recipe. They are medicinally active. Use the same precautions with herbal syrups, elixirs, and cordials as you would for the herb itself.

## Using herbal syrups and elixirs with children

Generally a child's dose or serving size would be based on the child's weight. An adult dose is based on a 150 pound adult. If a child weighed 50 pounds they would receive  $\frac{1}{3}$  the adult dose. If the adult dose is 1 tablespoon, the child dose would be 1 teaspoon. (1 tablespoon = 3 teaspoons). A child weighing 15 pounds would receive  $\frac{1}{10}$  of the adult dose. Or 1.5 ml or about  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon if the adult dose was 1 tablespoon. This is the scientific answer.

However, in the DIY Herbal Fellowship building the herbal intuition muscle is one of our key values. Use your intuition. Nutritive herbs have a wider margin of safety than potent medicinal herbs. I would give a child a larger dose of elderberry syrup if the smaller dose was ineffective, for instance. But there are a few hormonally potent herbs that I would not use with a child at any dose. So it's important to strength



**Your recipes based on Master Recipes**

Recipe name: \_\_\_\_\_

Kind of Recipe: \_\_\_\_\_

Herbs used:

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Yield: \_\_\_\_\_

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Recipe name: \_\_\_\_\_

Kind of Recipe: \_\_\_\_\_

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris is a teacher, author, gardener, and herbalist with 35+ years' of growing herbs and formulating herbal remedies, skin care products, soaps, and candles. She teaches workshops and writes extensively about gardening, herbal crafts, scratch cooking, and medicinal herbs on her blog at [JoybileeFarm.com](http://JoybileeFarm.com). Chris is the founder of the [DIY Herbal Fellowship](http://DIYHerbalFellowship) and an instructor at the [Joybilee Academy](http://JoybileeAcademy). Chris believes in giving her readers a quick win because each quick win builds confidence and empowers intuition for further self-reliance and joy.

Chris is the author of the *The Beginner's Book of Essential Oils, Learning to Use Your First 10 Essential Oils with Confidence* (2015) and *Homegrown Healing, from Seed to Apothecary* (2016), and “*The Beeswax Workshop, How to Make Your Own Natural Candles, Cosmetics, Cleaners, Soaps, Healing Balms and More*” (2017)

Chris empowers women to reclaim their intuition and inner strength in nourishing and healing their families, deeply rooted in their homes, with joyful, intentional, self-reliance.