

Moonhawk's Musings

Greetings.

This month I have decided to discuss clay and some of the ways clay can be used to improve health.

The recipe this month is French onion soup. A pot of this soup is currently simmering away on my stove top, so it is very much in my mind.

Wishing you many good things

Moonhawk

Clay



Before talking about clay, I'll explain the image this month. Chickweed – *Stellaria media* – is particularly good as an external treatment for skin conditions such as eczema, urticaria and psoriasis. I've chosen this herb because it makes a good adjunct to clay when treating certain skin conditions.

Clay is usually seen as something used by beauticians in facials. It certainly is an excellent skin treatment, but it is able to do so much more.

Clay is usually described by its colour.

- White – for sensitive skin
- Red – for ageing skin
- Yellow – dry skin
- Green- oily and congested skin

The mineral content will differ for each clay, which helps to denote its use. Clay also has polarity properties that will draw toxins out of the skin.

Green clay is particularly good for drawing out the toxins in pimples and boils, and will cool and soothe the affected skin. One of my aromatherapy colleagues successfully used a green clay poultice to draw out the poison of a white spider bite.

Clay Masks

Clay masks an excellent base for a facial. A simple clay mask is made with 2 heaped teaspoons of clay (choose a clay to suite your skin type), mixed with a little spring water to a paste. Spread this evenly over the face and neck and leave for 15-20 minutes. The mask may dry out and pull on the skin. Gently wash off with warm water. Apply a good moisturiser. My preference is to use a comfrey leaf moisturiser I source from one of my suppliers, but a good quality face cream will do.

Clay takes well to other products. For a softening mask, mix one heaped teaspoon of fine ground oatmeal with 2 heaped teaspoons of clay. Mix to a smooth paste and apply to the face.

You can also add exfoliants to the clay mask.

You don't have to stop at the face. Clay masks can be applied to the whole body. You just have to mix a greater quantity.

Clay also goes beyond skin care. A clay poultice will speed the healing of cuts, and is effective in treating ulcerations. To make a poultice, mix the clay with water to form a past, apply to the affected areas, cover in plastic wrap, and then wrap in a light bandage – not too tight. Leave overnight.

I've used a combination of white and yellow clay to treat eczema. The white because it is good for sensitive skin, and the yellow because it has a certain 'oiliness' to it.

Acne – don't be tempted to treat acne with green clay. Skin affected with acne is usually red and inflamed. While greenclay will draw out infection of individual pimples, too much will dry the skin out excessively, which is not good for skin with acne. White clay is better. Skin with acne needs to be soothed, not aggravated further.

Red and yellow clay are both good for mature skin, or dry skin.

As usual, consult a qualified aromatherapist, naturopath or herbalist to ensure that the clay you choose is the best for you. Contact the [Australian Traditional Medicine Society](#) (ATMS) or the [National Herbalist Association of Australia](#) for a list of qualified practitioners in your area. Contact the [International Aromatherapy and Aromatic Medicine Association](#) for a list of qualified aromatherapists.

Sourcing Clay

Most aromatherapist stock raw clay. They will have sourced it form their professional supplier. It is also available in some health food shops. The Sydney Essential Oil Company and New Directions, are two companies in Sydney that sell bulk clay to the general public. These companies also sell base products for skin and hair care. A quick search of Google will supply a list of other companies that supply clay and base products. As with all things, you get what you pay for when buying clay, so be sure you choose a reputable supplier.

Making Your Own Skin Care Products

If you're interested in making your own skin care products, then hunt down *Do It Yourself Pure Plant Skin Care* by Carolyn Stubbin. This book has a number of easy to make skin care products. *If You Want Great Skin Throw Away Your Skin Care* by Helen Bairstow and [Jennifer Jefferies](#) is another good skincare book.

Reference: *The Earth on Which We Live* by Marijke Vogel. *The Fragrant Pharmacy* by Valerie Ann Worwood. *Aromatherapy* by Judith Jackson. *The Complete Guide to Aromatherapy* by Salvatore Battaglia

French Onion Soup

This is not a soup to be hurried. To make the best soup, the onions need to be gently caramelised over a low heat, which takes some time. The onions then need to be gently simmered in beef stock until quite soft.

30 g butter or 30 ml good quality oil	2 large or 3 medium onions
3 cloves garlic.	
6 cups beef stock	salt/pepper
bread for croutons	grated gruyere cheese.

Peel and thinly slice the onions. Melt the butter in a heavy based pan, add the onions and cook over low heat until caramelised and soft – this could take up to an hour. Stir the onions so they don't stick to the base of the pan. If the onions burn, the soup will have a bitter taste. Add the beef stock. Simmer for 1 hour.

Toast the bread – I like to cut the bread into large rounds with a cookie cutter. Sprinkle with grated gruyere cheese and grill.
Drop a cheesy crouton into a warm soup bowl, add some soup, then serve.
You can add a tablespoon of brandy to the bowl for extra warmth.