



# Douglas Fir Distillation

*Morning Myst Washington | November 2014*

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## Day One ~ Travel.

The first leg of our journey carries us over snow-dusted peaks, the Grand Canyon, and the dream-like salted waters of Utah. It ends with our descent into a sea of smooth white clouds as we land in Spokane. The earth here is sparse, flat and dotted with conifers. It truly encourages deep, expansive breath.

We arrive, just before the first snowfall, into pristine wilderness and the home of our rose geranium, lavender, tulsi and lemon thyme hydrosols.

Once on solid ground, we bundle up into our car and head north, winding along with the Columbia River, amongst the pines, golden larches, and douglas fir, keeping our eyes open for road-crossing wildlife. The sparkling stars and glowing moon above illuminate our path.

When we finally reach our destination, a small town just a few short miles away from the Canadian border, we cozy into our cabins for the night to rest and prepare for the long day of harvesting ahead of us.



## Day Two ~ Full Moon. Harvest Day.

It is no accident our day of harvest was also the November full moon. This is the ideal time of year for harvesting and distilling conifers. As the temperatures drop to freezing ranges, the trees fill their needles and branches with sap. The sap replaces the water they hold onto during the hot summers, and prevents the trees from freezing. The abundance of this sap in the needles makes for a much richer, more powerful and deeply therapeutic distillate. It is also thought that the gravitational pull of the full moon draws even more powerful compounds out of the plant.

In the early morning, we make breakfast together in our cabins, then meet up with our friends and distillers, Jud and Anne, to begin our day with the trees. They take us to a densely forested part of their certified organic property, and we set out to harvest.

It is always our intentions to work with the most natural, responsible and sustainable methods possible, and it's a blessing that we're able to work with farmers and distillers with the same values and practices.

Jud explains to us that not only is our harvest not





hurting the forest, it's actually strengthening it. By minimizing crowding, the remaining trees will become healthier and have greater resources to draw upon, helping them fend off bugs and disease. He tells us fire is the ideal way to thin a forest, since it naturally focuses on areas of the most crowding, and ignites new growth and sprouts because the ash that remains nourishes the soil. At this time; however, there's too much fear around it, so now the method is rarely used. What we'll be doing is the next best thing.

We will only be harvesting young trees. Young trees are, in essence, juicier. They have more abundant new-growth, and a higher water content. And these

two factors create a superior hydrosol. Additionally, harvesting older, more established trees require more machinery. The act of bringing in chainsaws increases the possibility of contaminating the final product with petroleum from the gas and oil it takes to make those tools work. Because of this, we are committed to harvesting completely by hand.

We wade through the cool and misty woods, in search of the perfect, young trees, and when we find the right ones, use a small hand saw to fell them. Next, we work together to bring the felled trees to a clearing to remove the branches. The trunks will be used for firewood.

Working together, we take direction from our skilled





guides. The air is damp, cool and gently perfumed with pure, awakening earth - evergreens, humus and the faint scent of smoke rising from the wood burning stoves of the nearby cabins. The forest is peaceful, and almost silent, save for the dew dripping off the needles of the trees.

Once we've gathered enough plant material, we load our bounty into the truck and take it back to the farm to begin the next step of preparation. We take our time carefully cutting the needles and branch tips into small pieces. Breaking down the hard needles like this helps to release potent aromatic molecules during distillation.





## Into the Stills

These beautiful alembic copper stills look like temples, and in some ways they are. Sacred places where divinity dwells, emanating grace. Here the spirits of the plants are transformed into matter through the mysterious alchemy of the elements that we call distillation.

We pour the freshly snipped needles and twiglets into the twin copper stills and leave them to steep in the warm water overnight. This softens the needles, making them more permeable so we're able to draw the most active constituents of the plant.

When everything is sealed and secured we head back to the farm with our distillers and their children where we share dinner, stories, and lots of laughs.





## Day Three ~ Distillation.

In the morning we bring the stills to a simmer to begin the distillation and sit back as we eagerly await the emergence of the first mists. This heavenly fragrant mist - the first steam that comes off the copper still - is called by some distillers, Angel's Mist. Once the Angel Mist appears, the aromatic waters begin to dribble out.

Artisan distillation is a practice of patience. It requires your full presence and awareness. You must always be there, monitoring pH, tasting the hydrosol as it ripens, and witnessing the transformation take place.

So we wait. We are present. We talk about Douglas Fir.

This ancient tree carries the whole history and mystery of Mother Nature. It moves stagnancy, nourishes, strengthens, and tones. Its sweetness is reminiscent of lemons and butterscotch, but it is, at the same time, resinous and earthy.

*Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Douglas Fir), a species indigenous to western North America, thrives. It grows easily, straight and tall and its roots anchor





it deep into the earth as it reaches its branches up towards the heavens.

As a species, Douglas Fir is easily 20 million years old. And now more than ever, this ancient tree is a true gift to us all in the modern world. It provides us with what we need, and helps our bodies, minds and spirits find their unique balance. It is thought by many herbalists that plants that flourish in our modern high-tech, high-industry world are those that provide us with the most defenses for living in it. (Think dandelion, red clover, ginkgo, etc.) This is a tree that truly thrives and we

take this as a sign of its therapeutic suitability for our human bodies in the modern world.

After several hours of constant observation, the Douglas Fir Hydrosol is complete. We get to work packing everything up and begin to clean out the stills, all of our senses steeped in the warm, fragrant mist as we empty and wash the massive copper vessels. Once everything is cleaned and completed, we have one last meal with our distillers and then begin our long journey home.



The hours and days we spend infused in the essence of Douglas Fir is a truly mesmerizing and enchanting experience. Being with the earth and participating in this ancient practice we are, like the plants, transformed.

We are grateful for the Earth, grateful for the trees, grateful for our friends, and grateful to be able to share such a magical and profound HydroSoul with you.



# Douglas Fir HydroSoul



Hydro-distilled. Hand-harvested from certified organic, wild land in northeastern Washington, using sustainable forestry practices.

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