

Making Shi Un Kou

Shi Un Kou (紫雲膏, Purple Cloud Ointment) is used with okyu moxa to both protect the skin and to allow for the moxa to stick to the skin.

Traditionally it was used for healing the skin, close wounds, burns, cuts, eczema, rashes, frost bites, etc. Some Japanese practitioners use it on the tips of their fingers with the belief that it makes their fingertips softer and thus more sensitive to pulse taking.

Making Shi Un Kou is easy (and cheap), but it can be messy and can smell up your kitchen. Be prepared to scrub well the pans and to air out the space used. The quantity produced is quite large, so it might be a good idea to share it amongst friends and have a Shi Un Kou cooking party.

The official ingredient list:

1 kg sesame oil

100gm Dang Gui (当归, Angelica Chinese) – use whole slices, do not crumble

100gm Zi Cao Gen (紫草根, Lithospermi root) – note this is the purple root of Zi Cao Rong)

350gm bee's wax

Some people use toasted sesame oil, but I find it is too smelly, and I use regular sesame oil. The original recipe also calls for 25gm of lard which I have never used. I use 32 fluid ounces of sesame oil.

Modifications:

I tend to use 150 to 200gm of each of the herbs (Dang Gui and Zi Cao Gen).

I then add a third batch of mixed herbs that total no more than 150gm, all combined.

Typical added herbs would be:

Da Huang (大黄, rhubarb root), Di Yu (地榆, Sanguisorba)

Huang Bai (黄柏, Phelodendron) or Huang Lian (黄连, Coptis)

Sheng Di (生地, Rhemannia), Mu Dan Pi (牡丹皮, Moutan) or Dan Shen (丹参, Salvia)

Sang Ji Sheng (桑寄生, Mulberry twigs)

Huang Qi (黄芪, Astaraglus) or Shan Yao (山药, Dioscoria)

These are chosen for the clearing heat properties as well as for generating skin abilities.

The herbs should not be crushed or powdered.

Slowly heat up the sesame oil in a large pan (use a larger pan you think you will need because it can easily boil over when adding Zi Cao Gen to the mix. When it is bubbling, lower the flame.

Dip in the Dang Gui first, and wait for all bubbles/reactions to stop.

Dip in the Zi Cao Gen. Now the mixture will bubble like a witch's brew. Wait for the reaction to subside.

Dip in the extra herbs (all together must be less than the Dang Gui or Zi Cao Gen)

Take off flame and let it cool.

Pass through a cheese cloth and squeeze all the liquid.

Mix in the bee's wax, and keep churning until it cools fully and solidifies (The original recipe mixes the bee's wax with the oil as it is heating)

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To put into oral syringes (available at any pharmacy) – just pull out the squeezer and insert the cream into the syringe. Do not attempt to such the cream in, it cannot be done!