



HERBAL MEDICINE

## ***Dit Da Jow* in the House**

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### **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

- The translation of *Dit Da Jow* roughly means “hit fall wine.” Others call it “iron palm” liniment.
- It is created by soaking specific herbal blends in alcohol. Once aged enough, it’s used as a topical liniment.
- The primary use of this liniment is as traditional medicine to heal external injuries, such as bruises, ligaments, soft-tissue strains and sprains, sore muscles, tendon tears, and even minor fractures.

In 1998, when I first started acupuncture school at the N.Y. College of Health Professions in Syosset, N.Y., I was into mixed martial arts. I always had some kind of minor injury or contusion. My buddy Ron, who was going to the same school, was tired of hearing me whine and complain about all my aches and pains. He suggested we should go to the college apothecary, collect a bunch of herbs and make *Dit Da Jow*.

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I can’t remember the exact herbs we used, but we got the recipe from one of our older Chinese professors, who told us this was the recipe passed down by his grandfather. I’m not sure if he was pulling our legs, but all the same it was pretty cool.

I do remember that it had upward of 30 different herbs. The formula was a variety of Chinese herbs, fungi and insects. We used two big 128-oz mason jars each. We collected the ingredients in the proper proportions, put them into the jars and filled them up with the cheapest gin we could

find.

## Clinical Applications

The primary use of this liniment is as traditional medicine to heal external injuries, such as bruises, ligaments, soft-tissue strains and sprains, sore muscles, tendon tears, and even minor fractures. It has historically been used for thousands of years, mostly by martial artists; but many athletes, especially in high-contact and combat sports, are discovering its benefits.

I don't just use it for my MMA athletes, but also for the weekend warriors, and fitness enthusiasts such as CrossFitters who train intensely, often overtrain, and want to be able to enhance recovery time.

Lately, I've realized that I can use it on any of my patients – active and inactive, young and old – across the many walks of life to manage pain and support the body's healing from injuries. I know of some practitioners who use *Dit Da Jow* as a preventative measure, applying it to areas of the body that are prone to injury to help strengthen and protect the tissues.

There are several different recipes for *Dit Da Jow*, most of which are considered to be “secret formulas” passed down through thousands of years of oral and written history of traditional Chinese medicine and martial arts.<sup>1</sup> The specific ingredients and proportions can vary depending on the individual recipe, but common ingredients may include angelica, myrrh, frankincense, ginseng, and cinnamon. The resulting liniment is typically dark in color and has a strong, pungent odor.

## The Science Behind It

What I discovered after making *Dit Da Jow* is that the same formula I used over 20 years ago seemed to produce better results now than when I had first made the stuff. Doing a little research, I found that the chemical composition of the most common herbs used in the liniment that aged one to five years contain bioactive compounds with analgesic, antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties.

Gas chromatography-mass spectrometry was used to reveal these properties (Society of Ethnobiology, 1970). The aged liniment contained compounds involved in skin elasticity, cell-signaling, and preventing osteoporosis.<sup>2</sup> The results support the traditional knowledge that *Dit Da Jow* contains bioactive compounds that are beneficial for treating impact trauma.<sup>2</sup>

As I mentioned, when I originally made the stuff, I only used it the one time for myself. I thought it was working, but wasn't quite sure. I wasn't using it consistently and it didn't have time to age. I was also getting free acupuncture and bodywork treatments in the student clinic, so it was really hard to tell. I think it all had a synergistic effect.

After using it the one time, I tucked it away for when I started my own practice after graduation. Well, I completely forgot about it and only a few years ago discovered a big box hidden away in my office closet. I opened the box and there sat the two huge mason jars filled with *Dit Da Jow*.

I began adding it to my treatments for my athletes and they swear by it. The problem is I'm running out of the original recipe I made over 25 years ago. The stuff would go a long way and, whenever the jar was half empty, I would replenish it with a stronger alcohol concentration and switch to the other mason jar while the newly replenished jar aged. It's been replenished this way enough times now that I need to remake it with new herbs.

I was planning to just purchase a well-known commercial formula, but discovered that, along with the younger preparations, the commercial formulations (which are often *not* aged) contain fewer bioactive compounds than the older, traditionally prepared liniments, as stated by the Society of Ethnobiology. I lost contact with my old friend and the professor, but have about a year of the original *Dit Da Jow* to find a new recipe – so stay tuned!

### *References*

1. *Dit Da Jow*. Wikipedia.com.
2. Boudell J, et al. “*Dit Da Jow*: Iron Hit Wine in Traditional Chinese Medicine.” Presentation at joint meeting of the Society for Economic Botany and Society of Ethnobiology, 2014.

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