A step by step pictorial)

Part 1

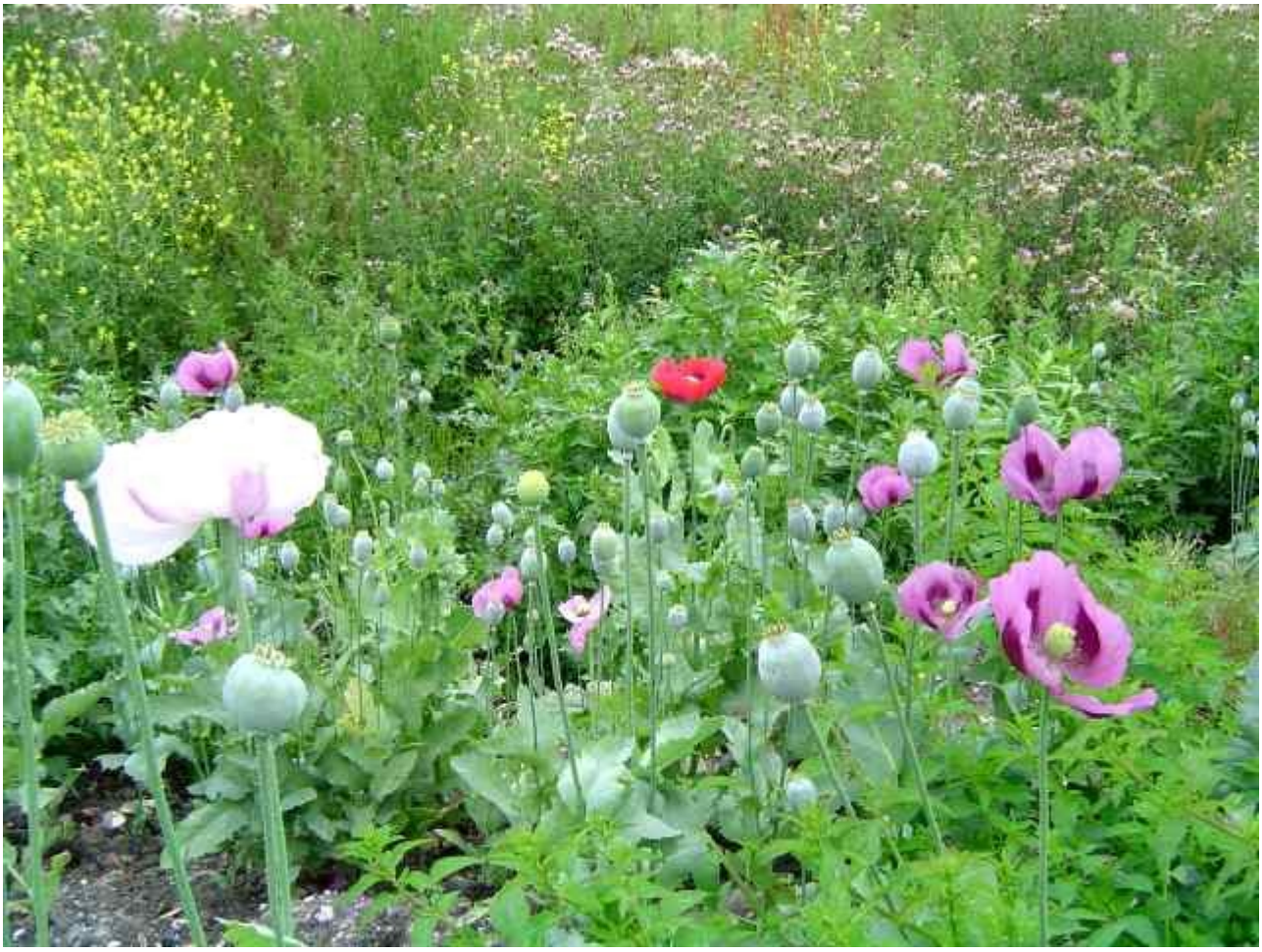
Introduction:
Real Laudanum was made with opium and many other ingredients. Among which were henbane, nutmeg and lots of others. My type of Laudanum is actually an alcoholic extract of concentrated poppy tea. That is why I wouldn't label my bottles Laudanum but the made up name: Laudrum. There are numerous ways to make such a concoction. I don't claim mine is the best or even any good. But the result of the following is a nice tasting liqueur with a good opiate buzz. And the best thing: no chemicals or fancy equipment needed.
The pictures are actually of two batches being made. You can see that several of the steps take place at the same time. So don't get confused by this!

To make two litres of Laudrum you need:

Ingredients:
1) dried poppies (ca. 2.3 kg with seeds = 1.0 kg without the seeds)
2) alcohol (1 litre 80%)
3) aniseed, star anise and/or fennel
4) sugar and dextrose (=glucose)
5) water

Materials:
1) several big pans
2) filter cloth (old t-shirt)
3) several plastic buckets
4) several glass jars
5) stove
6) water bath
7) some cutlery, spatula's etc (do ask you SO!)
8) 50ml syringe or turkey blaster (optional)

1, Poppies:
This is my recipe and I don't buy poppies. I grow poppies. So get some seeds, find a deserted plot somewhere in suburbia, and spread them. By the middle of June till July your poppies will look like this:



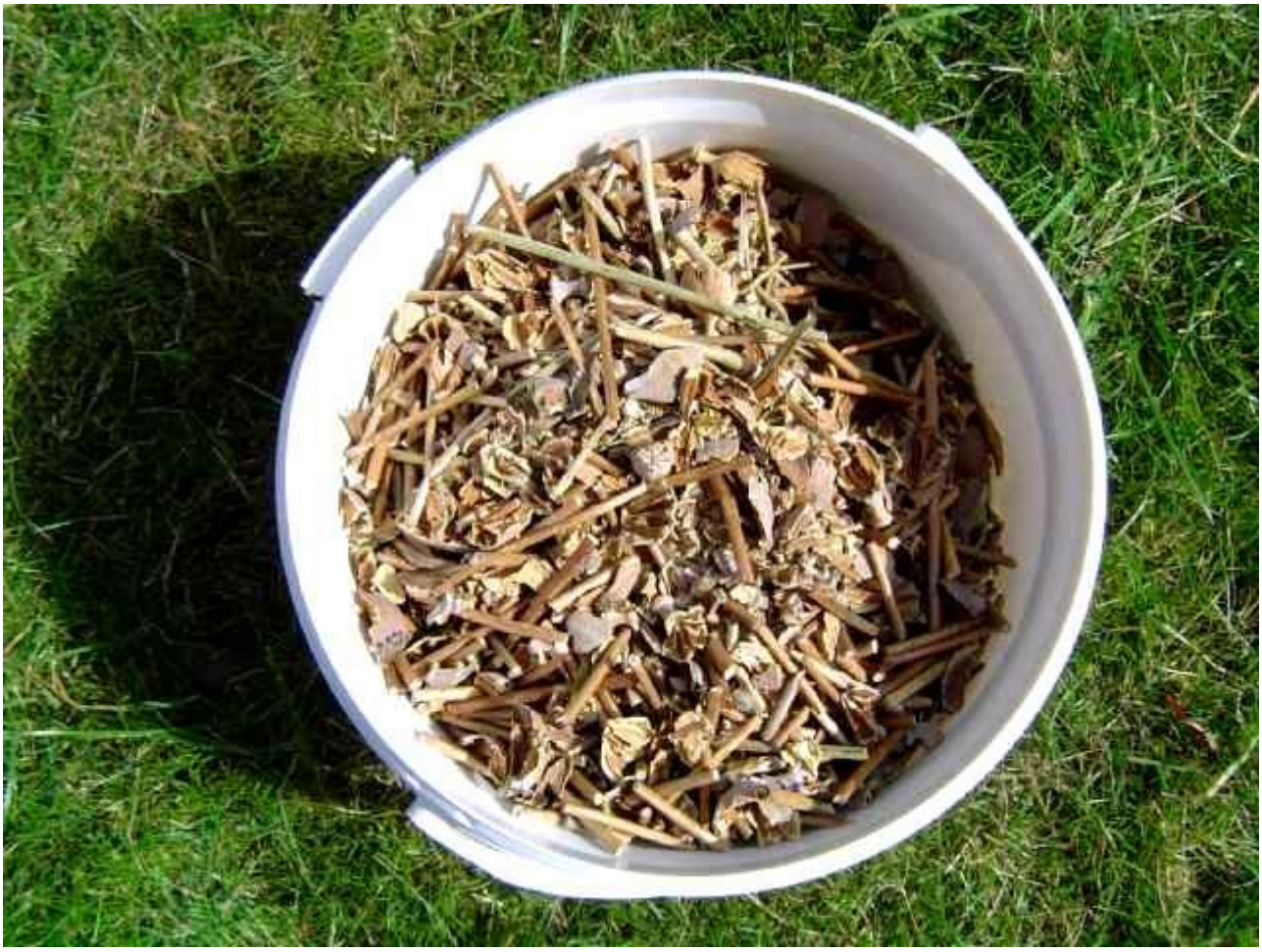
somniferums come in several pretty colours

Now you can either harvest them now and dry them at home, or let them dry in the field. They will be dry about one month after they bloomed. But beware: heavy rainfall will flush all goodies from your pods.
Now you have dried poppies.

the ones with stems were dried in the field while the others were harvested fresh

Crush them. Separate the seeds from the straw by using a kitchen sieve. Use the seeds for food or next years harvest.

You can use a blender to make the straw even finer. But you don't want it to be too powdery as this will make it harder to filter in a later step.



this is about the coarseness you need

2, Alcohol:
Americans can use Ever-Clear. I use 80% Stroh Rum. The rum is mixed with activated charcoal, from the fish-pond-store, and left for a week or so. The rum should be clear and colourless after this, with no smell other than that of alcohol. This I call “reclaimed rum”.

3, and on:
“Look around and thou wilt find”

Okay now we have everything we need. Let’s get started.

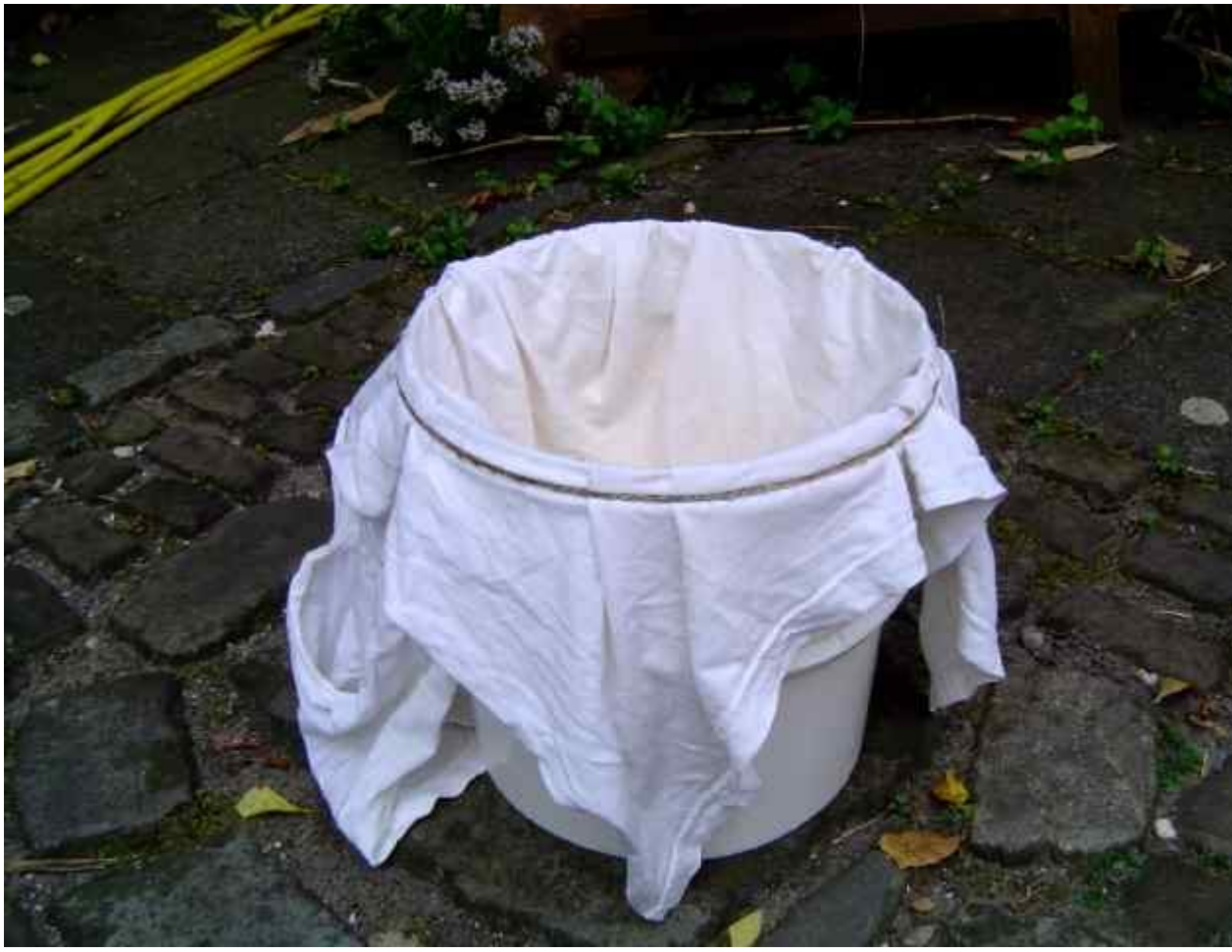
Step 1,
Get a pan that holds your poppies, maybe 10 litres. Or get several pans. Put your poppy straw (1kg) in the pan(s) and cover with water (about 7 litres). Bring to a boil and let simmer for 30 minutes max.

these bits are pretty coarse, smaller would be better

End of part 1

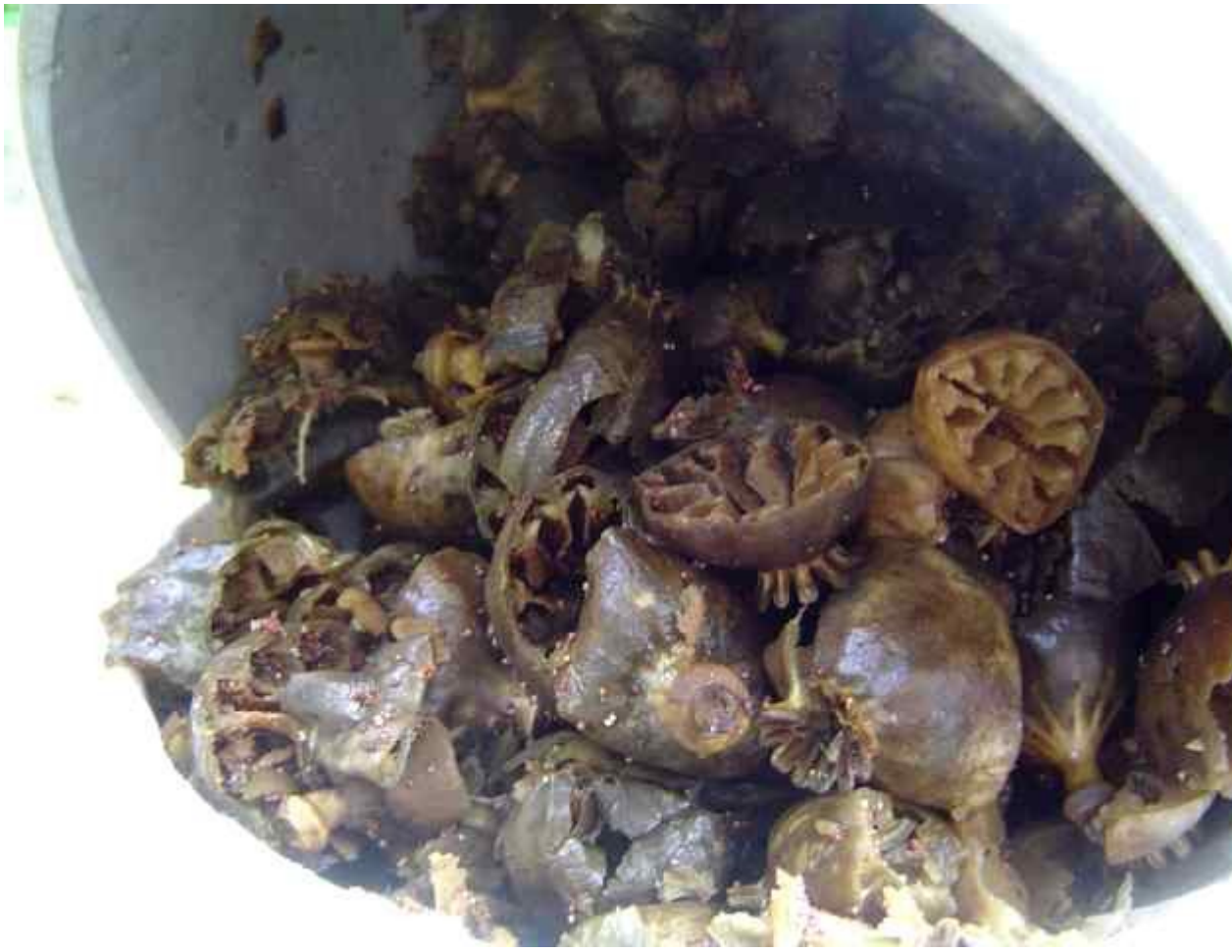
Part 2

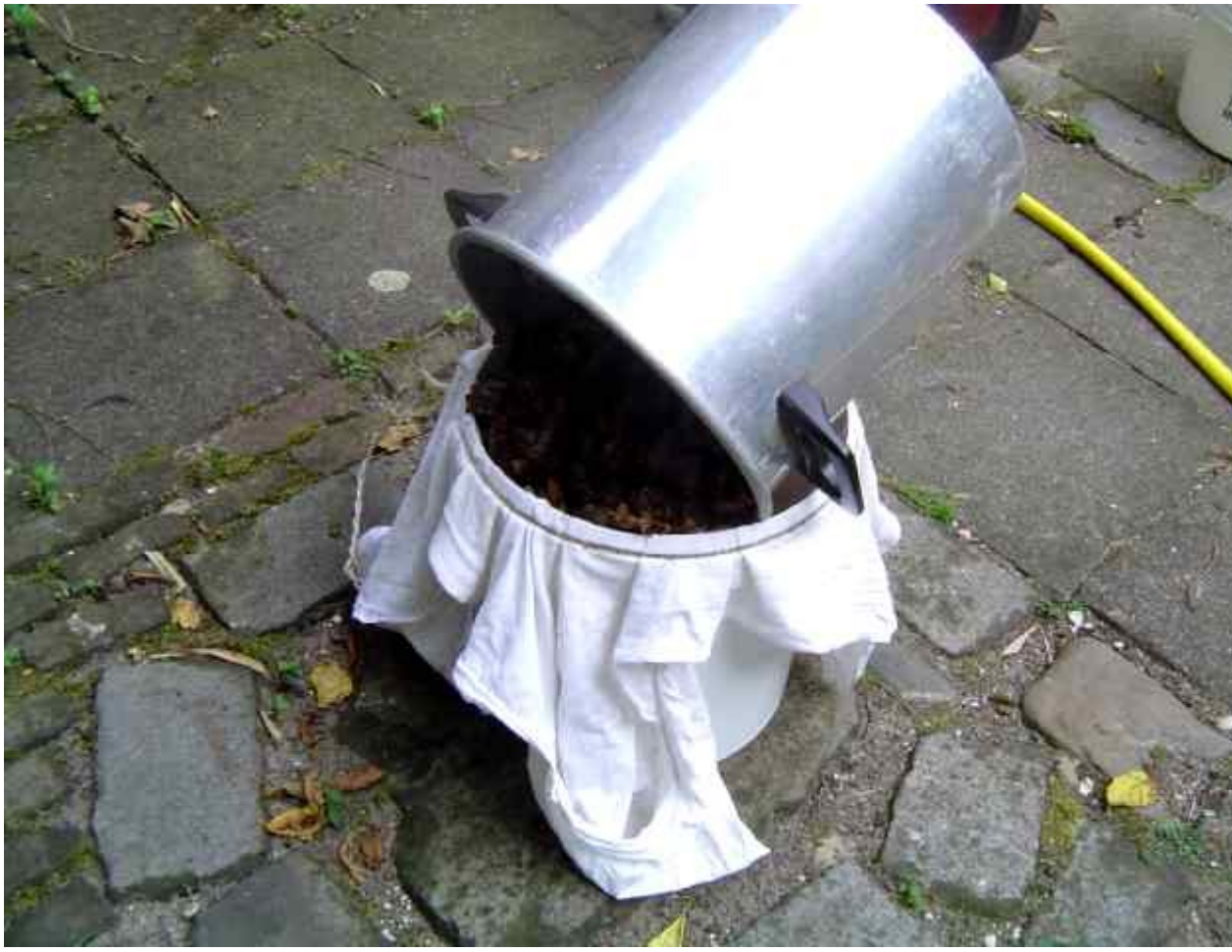
Step 2,
Pull the filter cloth over a bucket and secure with a sting.



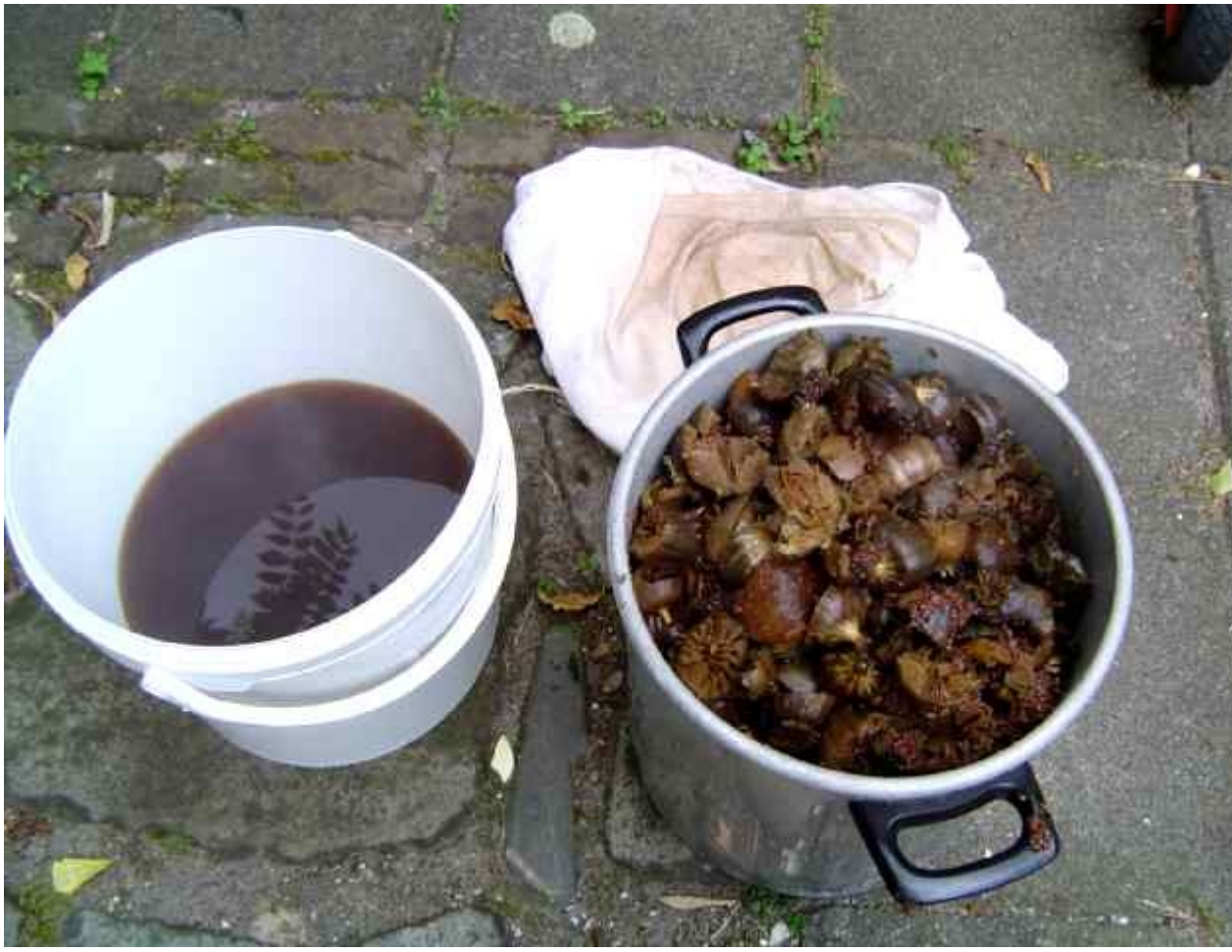
filtration setup

Careful pour the water from the pan into the bucket. Like straining boiled potatoes, leave as much poppies in the pan as possible. You will get 3 litres of water in the bucket.



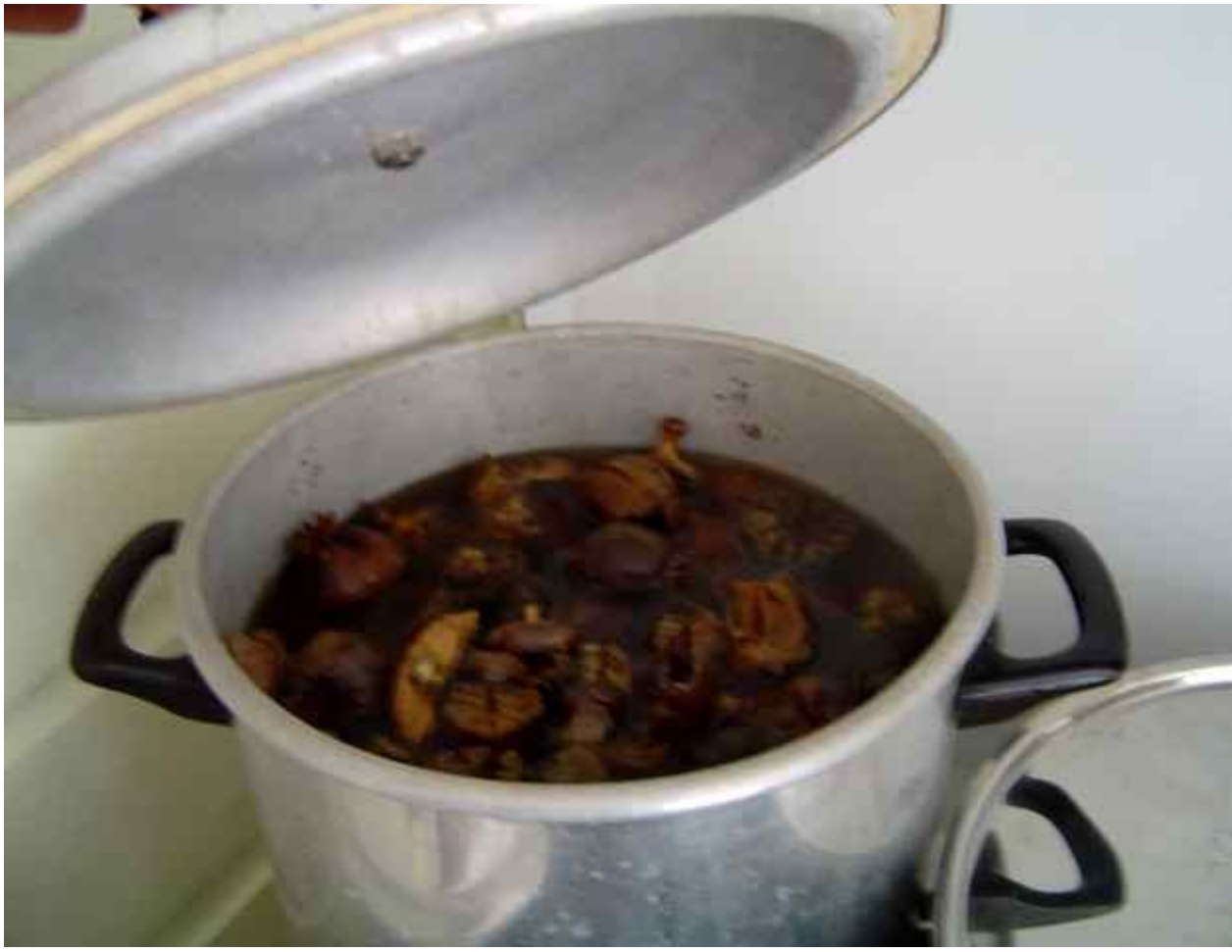


this step will take ages if you made your poppy straw into a very fine powder

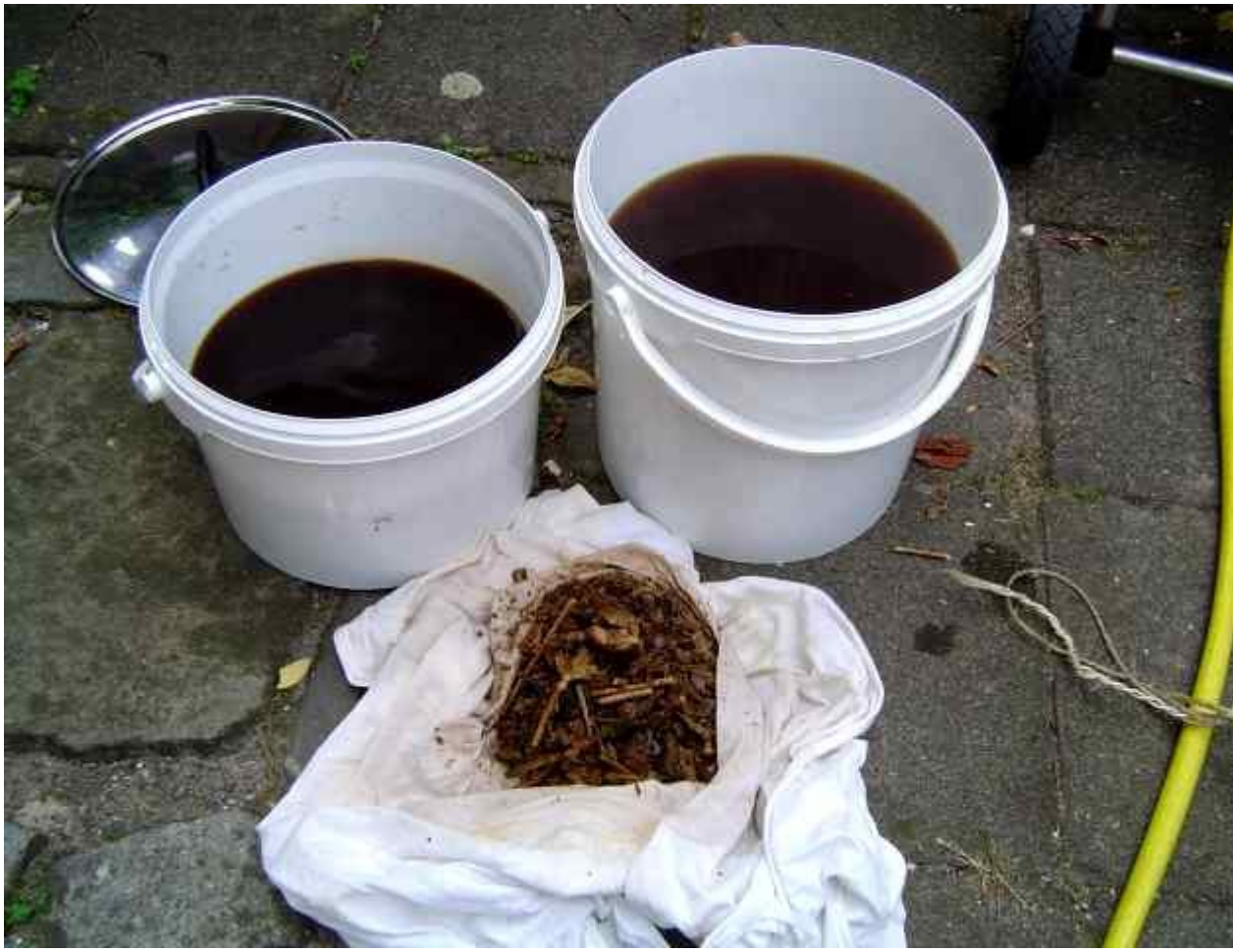


left: extract nr 1, right: mushy poppies

Step 3,
Add as much fresh water to the pan as you strained off. In this case it is 3 litres. Bring to a simmer and leave for another 30 min. Strain again.



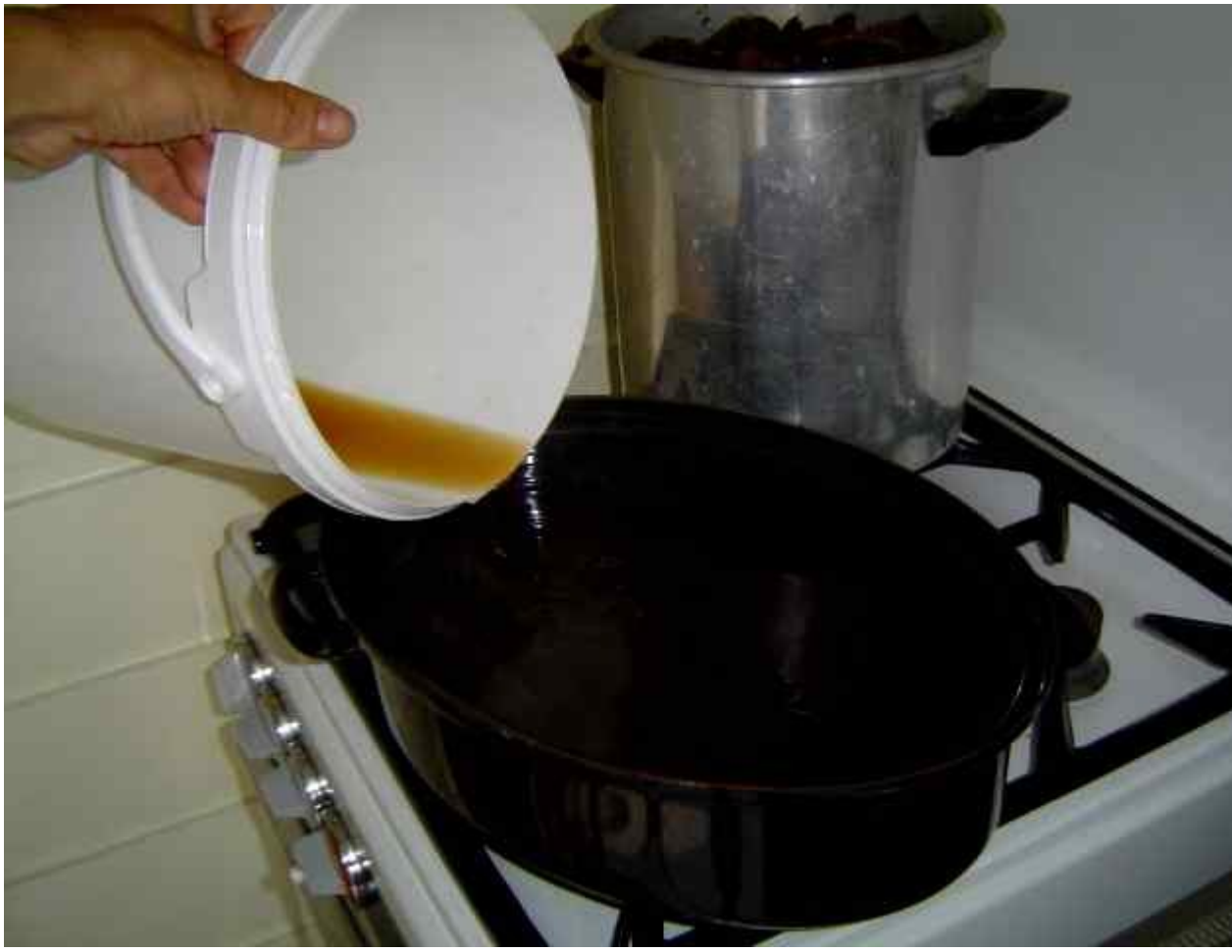
Step 4,
Repeat step 3.
Now we have done three extraction which gave us about 8 litres of extract. And brown mushy poppies. Throw away the poppies.



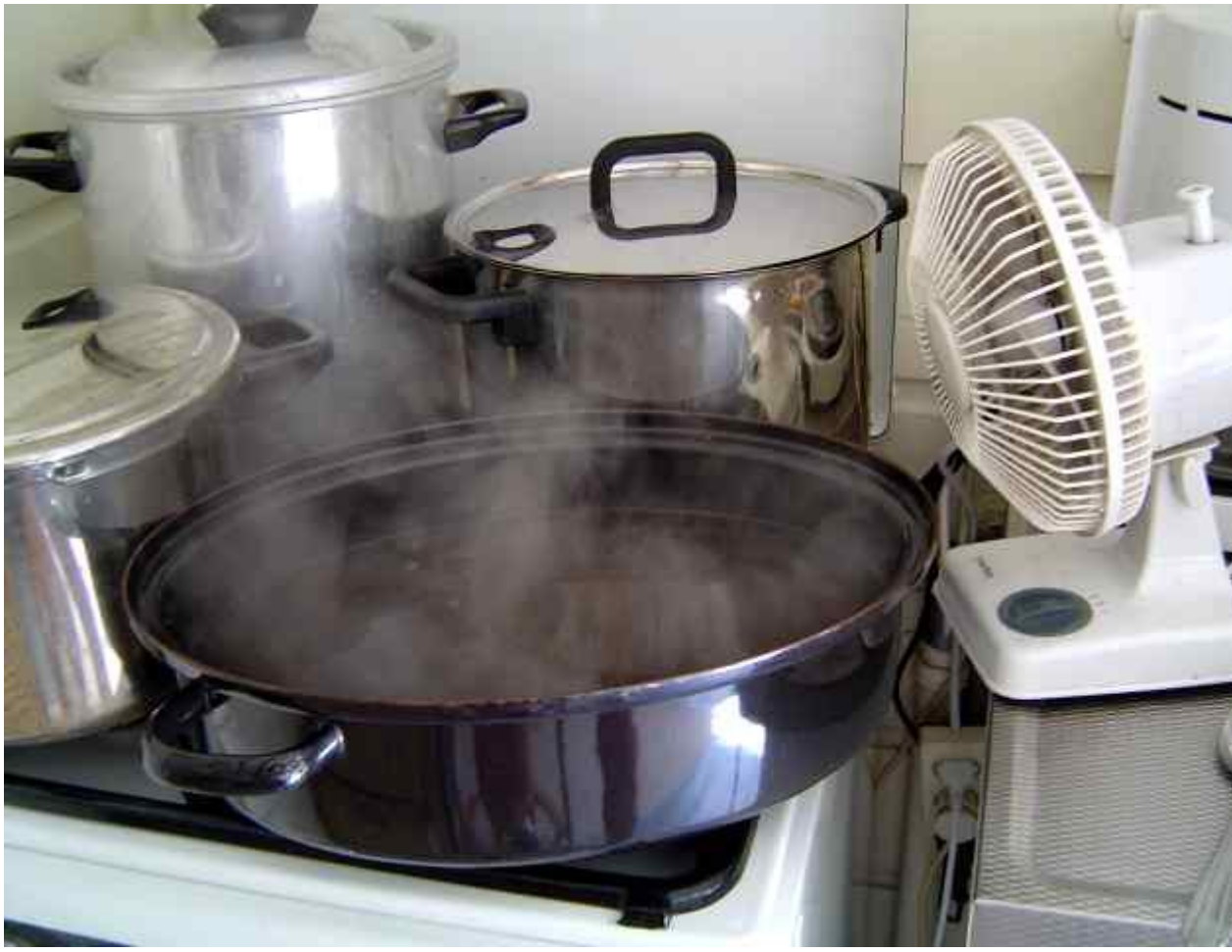
extract and worthless poppies

Step 5,
This is going to be tricky. The problem is this: we have a lot of water to evaporate. Water boils at
temperature at which morphine becomes instable. What chemical reaction takes place at these tem
is a mystery to me, but it is no good. A temperature of 85 °C seems to be a safe upper limit. But at
85 oC water takes ages to evaporate. Tests -done by me- have shown that M doesn't rot away
immediately at 100 °C, it takes time. So we can boil this water off as long as we do it fast! My
solution is to do relative small portions at a time. With a fan blowing dry air over the boiling pots,
effectively cooling the solution to almost sub boiling temps by evaporation of…. water. This way
no part of the extract is exposed to boiling temps for more than 15 minutes or so. Use large shallo
pans, maybe the lids of pans.
Don't let the extract get to thick. If it gets too thick, there is very little water left, so it can easily g
too hot, ruining you alkaloids. You have got to stop boiling while you can still pour the extract as
liquid.
For reference: you should have about 1 to 2 litres left.

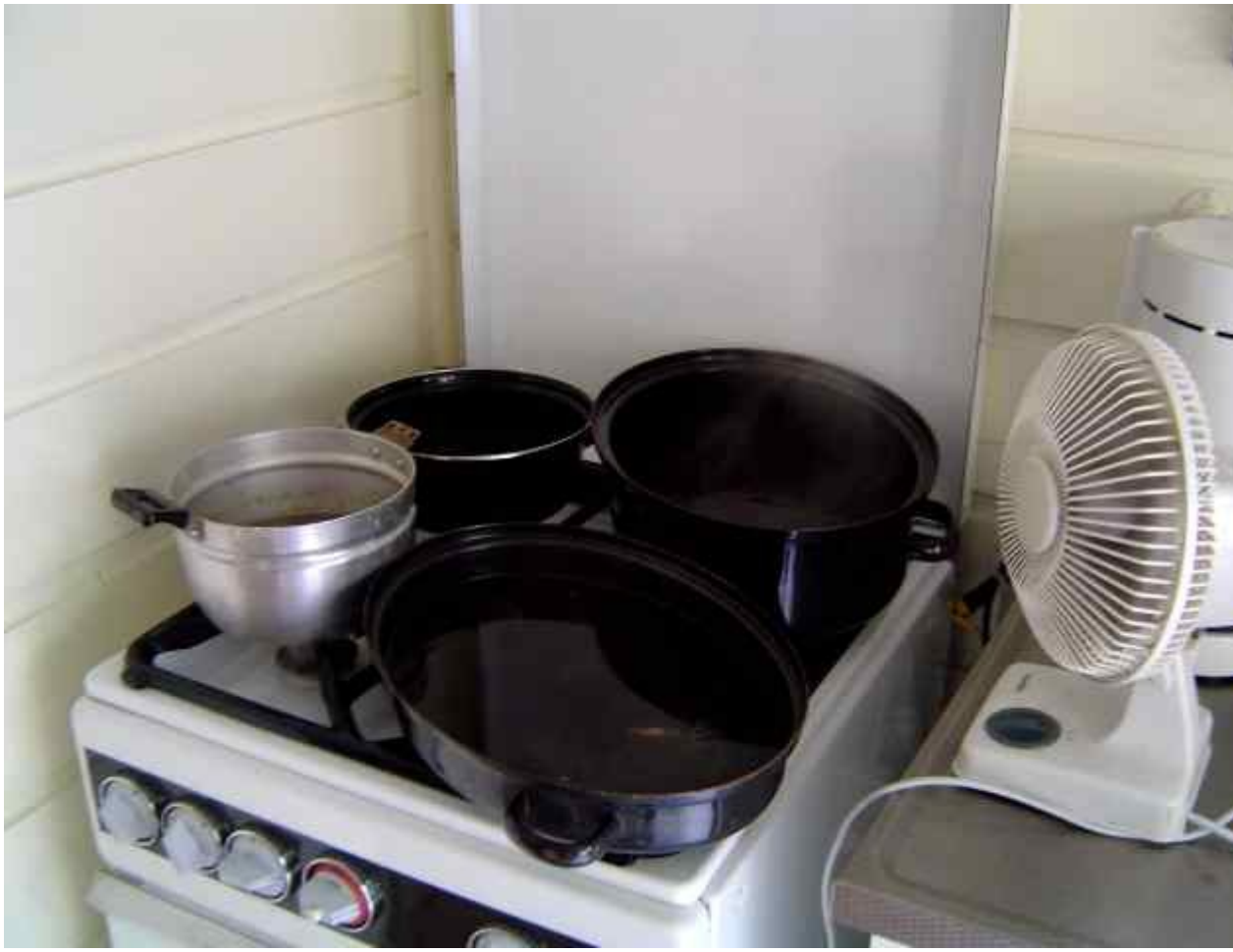
I am sure there must be much better ways to get water out of an extract. But this one is simple, on
requires kitchen stuff, and a day off work.
Maybe the handier types of folk would construct a vacuum rotation film evaporator of cause, whic
can evaporate at lower temp and with greater speed…



use a broad, shallow pan, or a lid of a pan in this case



a second batch is being made in the back

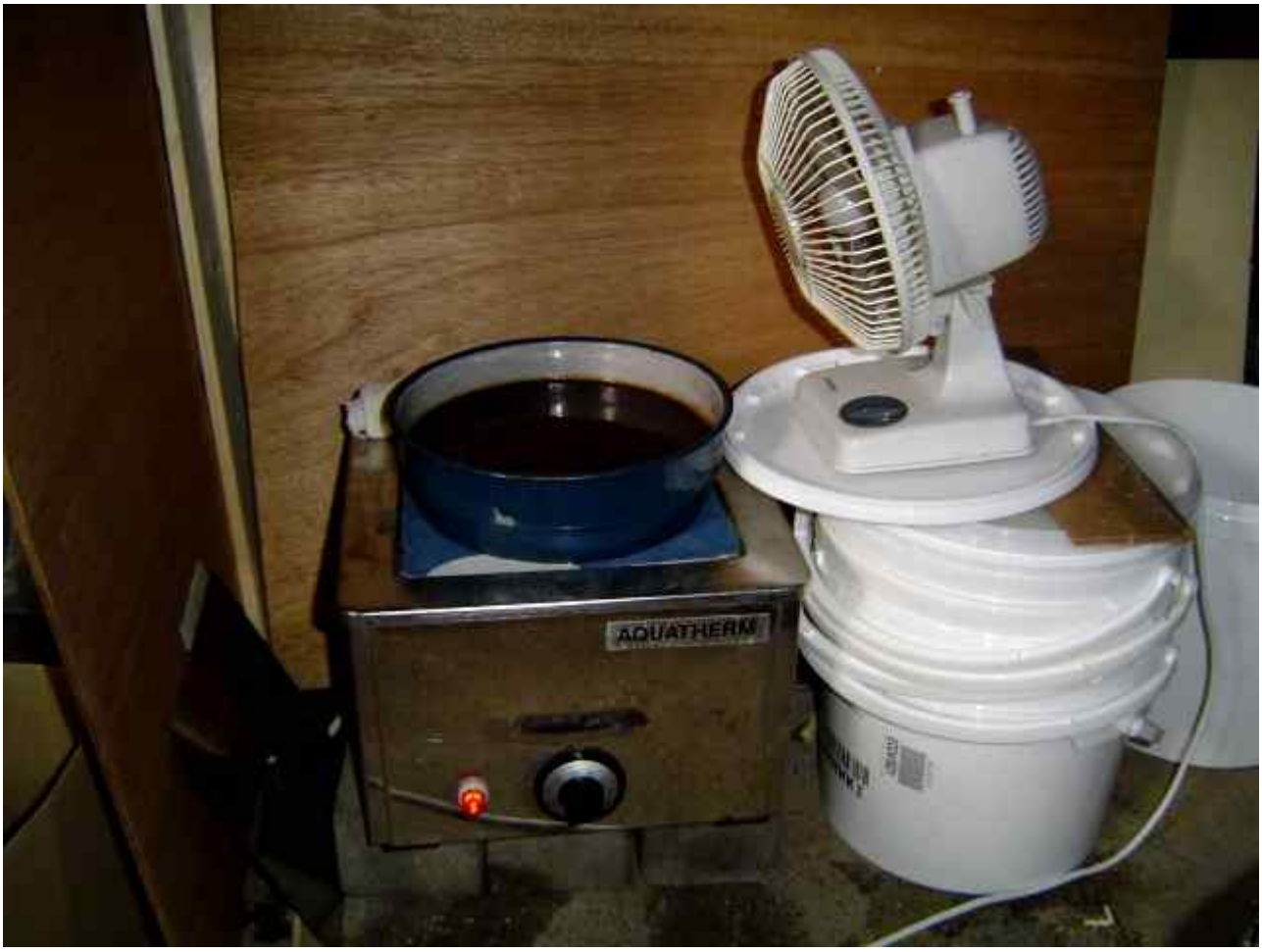


all batches boiling in, simultaneous

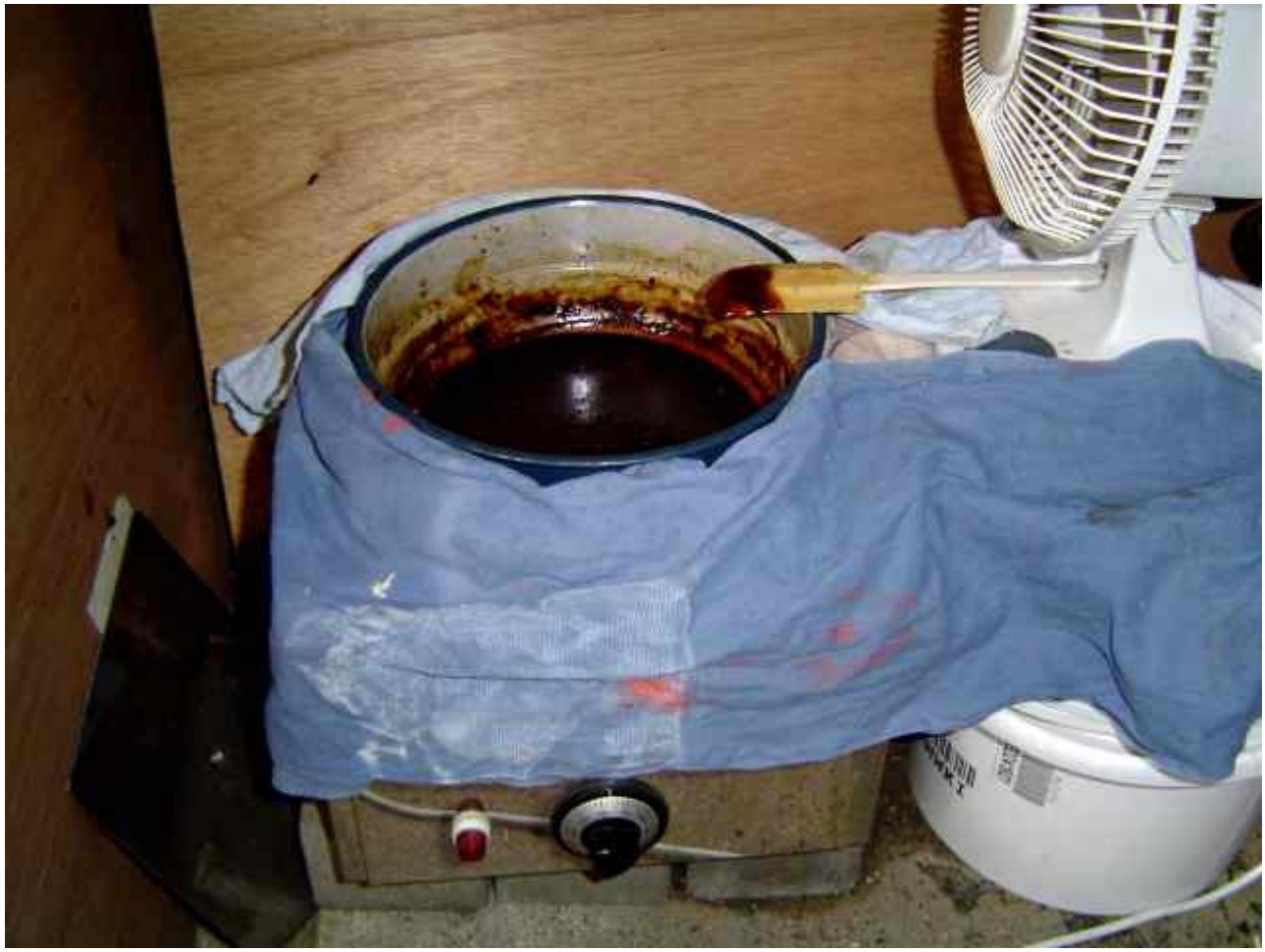
End of part 2

Part 3

Step 6,
Set up a water bath, preferably with a thermostat, and evaporate most of the last water. With a fan over the liquid it should take about 12 hours to reduce the last one litre to about 500 ml's. You can use a boiling water bath, because the evaporating water will cool you solution down (fan!). Make sure your bath does not boil dry! If you have a thermostat bath, set it to 85 °C.
How dry? You don't want a dry crust; we want something we can scoop like thick maple syrup.



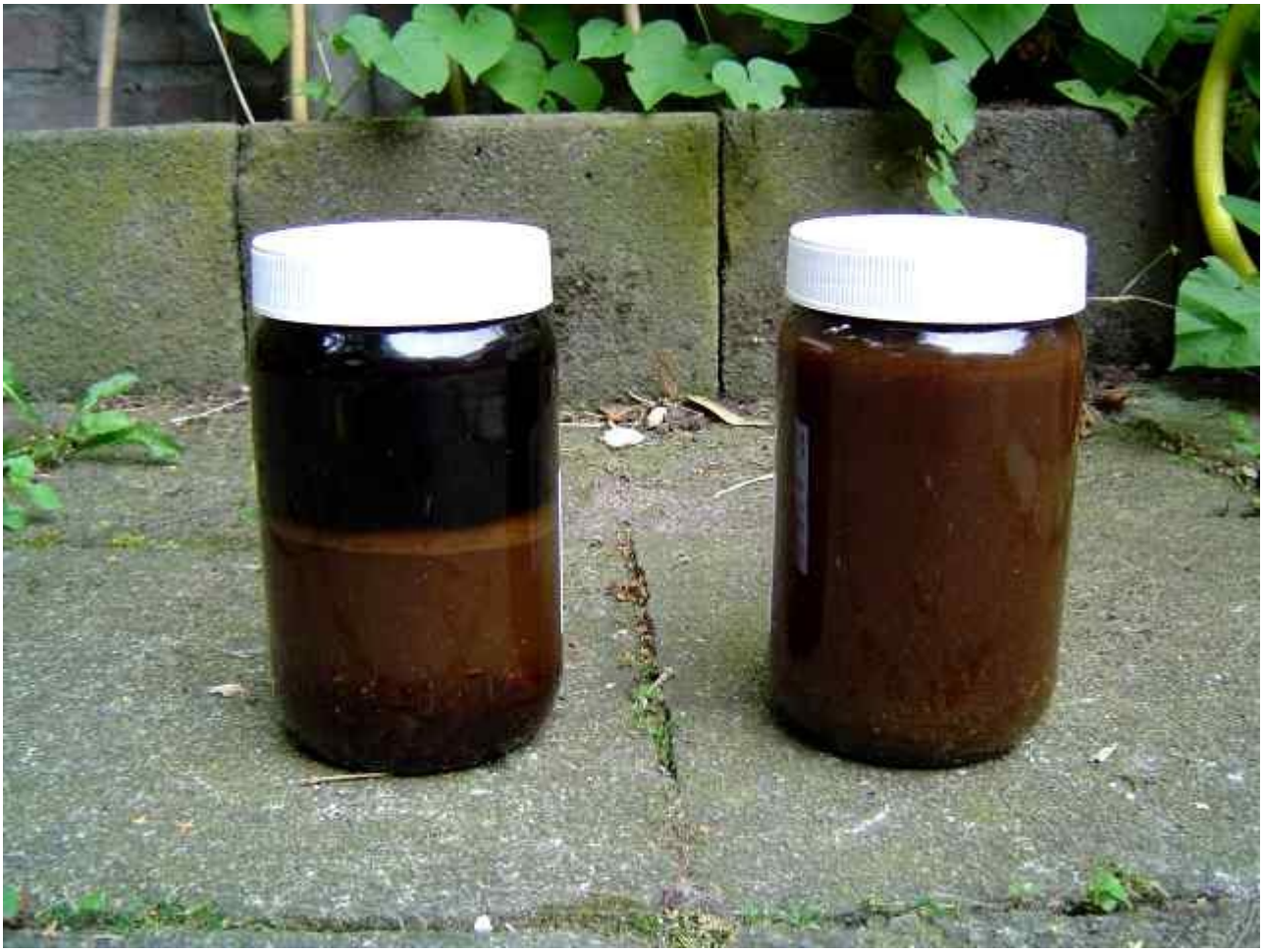
a water bath setup in beginning



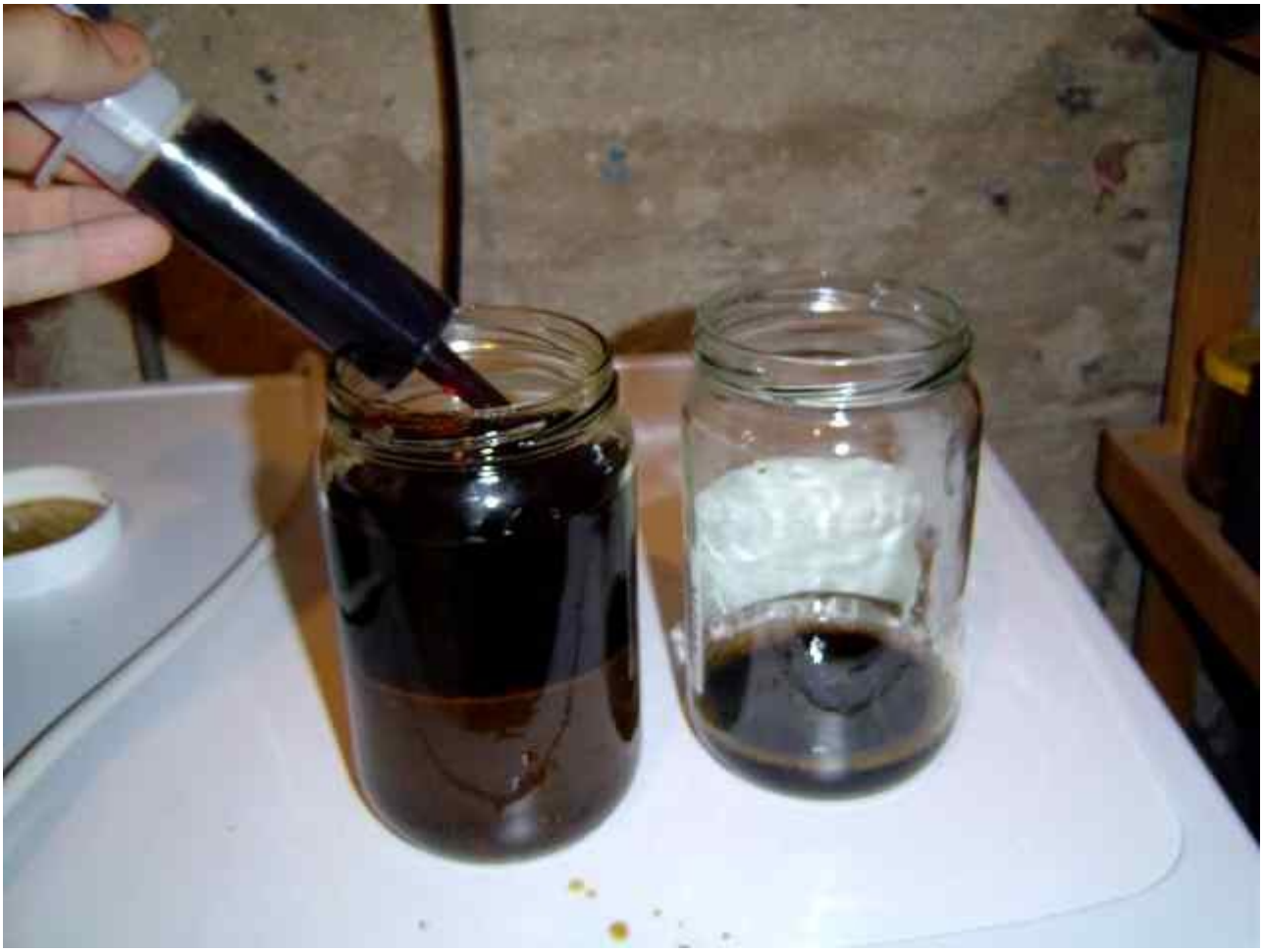
the same setup after about 12 hours

Step 7,
Fill jars half with the thick gooey extract and fill up with 80% alcohol. Shake a few minutes. Leave for a day and shake again. Now leave for a week or longer.

Step 8,
In time the alcohol and extract will have separated again, with a dark brown clear upper layer and a lighter murky bottom layer. Now we want the upper without any bottom silt. This can be done by decanting or better: use a big syringe. Keep the clear upper layer in a large bottle.



the jar on the right has the product from step 6 mixed with 80% alcohol and shaken, the jar on the left was left alone for a week and has separated in an layer of raw Laudanum (top) and silt (bottom)



siphoning the top layer of with a big syringe

Step 9,
Refill the jar, still half full with sediment, now with 40% (or 50%) alcohol. Shake, wait a day, shake, wait a week and separate like in step 8.

adding alcohol to the silt

separation has taken place, see that the silt has become lighter in colour because of denaturising of proteins

Step 10,
This is the same as step 9 but now with 20% alcohol.
After siphoning of the last top layer, you can throw away the slurry. It should be depleted.

The reason I go down on the % of alcohol is an economic one. This way the loss on alcohol in the final sediment layer is minimal. Dutch economics?

Step 11,
Mix the 80%, 40% and 20% extracts together. Now we have about 1.5 litres of dark brown liquid, which should contain the best part of 1 litre of 80% alcohol. All we have to do is add some flavour and dilute it in the end to 2 litres of 40% papaver liqueur.

.
Step 12
This is the best part: the flavouring. This is where we can make a difference. Like the difference between moonshine and a 10 year old single malt. Both do the job but they don't taste the same, right?

My personal favourite recipe is (for two litres):
20 grams of aniseed, 5 grams of star anise and 15 grams of fennel seed
200 grams of sugar and 350 grams of dextrose/glucose
And a few other secret taste makers, which are a secret. So I am not gonna tell ye!
In the end it will have a real nice soft anis/liquorice taste to it and a hell of a punch!
But don't take my word, get your herbs and spices out and blend your own best tasting Laudanum or if you take my final recipe: Laudrum Mollis.

final product and one of the flavouring and as a finishing touch; make an old fashioned style label

Other good active ingredients are: Ginkgo Biloba or Ma Huang both have a good synergy with the laudanum and they add nicely taste too.

An other variation is to replace the "reclaimed rum" for Ouzo, Pernod or Pastis. You will need three bottles of 70cl though. But you spare yourself the trouble of reclaiming rum. And no need to make the final product to taste: the ouzo and raw laudanum taste good enough.

This is when two of my hobbies meld and become one. Ah, how beautiful…. Darn, gotta keep off the stuff, this is too good.
Be careful!

Just a quick recap:
1) Simmer grinded poppy straw in water for a maximum of 30 minutes
2) Filter
3) Do step 1 and 2 a second time
4) Do step 1 and 2 a third time and combine filtrates
5) Boil of excess water quickly in small batches with a fan blowing over the surface
6) Evaporate the last bit of water with a water bath, direct heat would get too hot
7) Fill a jar half way with the extract, add alcohol, shake, wait a bit, shake, wait a week

8) Siphon of the top layer = raw laudanum/laudrum
9) Add fresh alcohol, shake, wait a bit, shake, wait a week for the second time and separate like in step 8
10) Add fresh alcohol, shake, wait a bit, shake, wait a week for the third time and separate like in step 8
11) Mix all the alcohol extracts together and dilute to about 40%
12) Bring to taste, make a nice label and you are READY!
Get your vintage copy of DeQuincey´s Confessions out, and travel back to Victorian England!

End of part 3