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Field Notes - A Year of Experiments

I've been struggling with a topic for this issue. It is always with immense gratefulness that we end each year and look forward to the next, and this one is no different. All of our writers, advertisers, and of course subscribers have made this another banner year for TEH. Each year it becomes clearer and clearer that this is a vibrant community effort and I get to be the hub that keeps the wheel going 'round. Every mention or "share" on social media is appreciated. All of the discussions on the Yahoo! group bring us closer and those conversations teach us all new things every day.

As I was working in the kitchen bottling up the gallon of experimental elderberry mead made in July, it occurred to me just how full of experiments this year has been, and that in many ways life is just a series of experiments. Some of them turn out beautifully (the magazine comes to mind here), and some are lessons in what not to do again (there were some truly disgusting fig cookies that I'd like to forget). Each time we decide to give something a shot for the first time, it is an experiment.

This year one of my favorite experiments was the mini-magazine. That has been great. Over 8500 of them went out to various festivals, gatherings, and herb groups. They were very well received and many new names were added to the mailing database. It went so well that we'll aim for 15,000 for next year since we ran out of them by the middle of June.

We broke down and finally started to offer the electronic version of the magazine (actually the second year), and this year it has sort of taken off, now making up about 8% of our subscriptions. We added downloadable back-issues and many of our books. That was challenging for me because it meant learning new technical stuff which I drag my heels on, but so far, so good. Another great experiment turned into "An Elder Gathering" in which a group of friends each wrote a portion of an e-book, and then after it was assembled we each got the file to do with as we wished. Eventually we banded together to get some of them printed as well. It was a fun project to work on.

Working with Farm at Coventry's Susan Hess on The Roots & Wings Fall Fest is another experiment. The way that whole thing fell together between Maryanne, Susan and me was almost stunning. With almost no fear, we all jumped in hoping for the best. This issue will be in the mail as that takes place, so we'll report on that later. We expect a smashing success and getting to meet so many folks from around the Mid-Atlantic region will be an amazing bonus. The weather today makes me think that we should all probably bring blankets along...

Expectations are a big part of whether or not experiments are viewed as successes or failures. If my expectations had matched those of my partners in the very first issue, that would have been the end of it. So often we want things to happen right now, and that isn't very often realistic. My sister and I often joke about business, figuring that the key to our successes is that we're just too stubborn to quit. We have managed to find "jobs" that focus on what we love. Doing that is the first priority, the first success. Financial reward comes in a very distant second.

I know from talking to so many of you over the years that you have goals of making herbs at least a part of the way you make a living. It is what you love. I have come to believe that small cottage businesses will become a greater part of the economy in years to come. Many times we talk about why we can't do things the way we want to do them. What we need to be doing is thinking about how we CAN do them. How could it work? What if we tried this? Or that? In the years (13!!!) since TEH first rolled off the press, so many means of starting out that involve little or no financial risk have emerged, and I would urge everyone who really wants it to try. Experiment. Make it happen. If you can do it because you love it without worrying too much about it being a huge success, it will BE a success because it makes you happy.

Peace,

Tina

If this number is beside your name on the address label, this is your final issue and it is time to renew.
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Written by, for, and about herbie people and the things they love—Herbs!!!

Tina Sams, Editor in Chief
Maryanne Schwartz, Layout Director

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The cover photo was taken and submitted by Susan Hess of FarmAtCoventry.com. She has spent several years studying the history and symbolism of Pennsylvania German Folk Healing. One of the more memorable (although not as common and visible as it once was) sights in some of the south and central counties of PA would be a Hex Sign, or an array of them across the side of a barn, usually overlooking the livestock bay, but not always. Susan shared one of her favorite designs depicting abundant movement through the seasons. In western and north parts of PA, wooden barn stars are more common. Our friend Fred Will makes reproduction wooden barn stars, and to my knowledge they do not have the same symbolism of protection that the colorful hex signs possess. Mostly, they are all considered "Chust for Schee" or just for pretty.

Years ago, most barns had them painted directly onto the wooden slats. Large, several feet in diameter, these were easily visible from the roadway. Nobody gave them a second though, but a shift in social mores changed all that. Now we are occasionally treated to the sight of faded signs. Rarely do we see "real" hex signs or barn stars, now they are silk-screened onto laminated fiberboard.

Common themes and shapes include crescent moons, the ever popular distelfink or thistlefinch (gold finch) and other birds, hearts, drops of water, leaves, rosettes, scallops, stars, suns, tulips and wheat. The colors used were also thought to denote meaning. In any case, they are some of the most beloved decorative folkart from my childhood memory.

for more information, Hex Signs – Myth and Meaning in Pennsylvania Dutch Barn Stars by Patrick Donmoyer.
It all started while I was visiting my good friend in early December. Her house was totally decorated for the holidays. Every year she insists on having a Balsam Fir for her Christmas tree. I never asked her why. But this year as we sat in front of a warm fire and enjoyed a glass of eggnog, I asked her. I learned that she saves the needles and makes oils that she uses in the wonderful soaps she sells locally.

Then I mentioned to another friend that I was planning to write an article on Balsam Fir. She just lit up and starting telling me how her mother-in-law (from upstate New York) had given them a pillow made with Balsam Fir needles back when they were first married and that she had shown her how to make one. She said it smelled just like Christmas.

These conversations inspired me to learn more about Balsam Fir and I have found some interesting information.

Balsam Fir essential oil used for aromatherapy can be uplifting and help you stay grounded and alert. Balsam Fir essential oil can also be added to a carrier oil and used as an analgesic when massaged into sore muscles and arthritic areas.

The origin of the name Balsam is attributed to the Hebrew bot smin meaning "chief of oils" or alternatively basam, balm, or besem, sweet smelling.

To identify Balsam Fir look for flattened needles that are about 3/4 inch (2cm) long and blunt or notched at the end. The Balsam Fir needles are dark green on top and silver-blue on the undersides. The green resinous cones stand vertically and are two or three inches long. The bark is grayish-brown and smooth with raised blisters containing a sticky resin or pitch. It can reach heights up to 80-ft with a very narrow crown.

The Balsam Fir is the only fir tree that is native to Northeastern Canada and the United States.

While other coniferous trees such as pines and spruces exude pitch from wounds, balsam firs have pitch contained in easy to access blisters so there is no need to find a wounded tree in order to obtain pitch.

Simply open a blister. The outer covering of the bark blisters keeps the pitch pure by protecting it from insects and foreign matter. To harvest Balsam Fir pitch from the tree, simply open the blisters using a sharp stick or knife. Be careful not to pop the blister since putting its contents under pressure may cause the pitch to suddenly shoot out and enter an eye or get all over your clothing and gear. Balsam fir pitch is clear, runny, and very sticky with a pleasant balsam smell that reminds one of the forests.

The Balsam Fir was very important to Native Americans as both a food and as a medicine. The inner bark was peeled away and made into bread; the outer bark chewed for its sweet flavor and mucilaginous texture.

Medicinal uses of the Balsam Fir by the Native Americans were diverse, varying according to the custom of the tribe. The Iroquois made a warm liquid from the sap that they used in the treatment of gonorrhea. A decoction of roots and branches was used to create sweat baths to alleviate pain from rheumatism. The Ojibwe, Micmac and Potawatomi used the pitch as a salve to treat wounds and swallowed fresh balsam pitch to treat colds. The Chippewa melted the pitch on a warm stone, inhaling the fumes to treat headaches.

The Balsam Fir pitch has great antiseptic and healing properties. Special substances in the pitch that protect the tree from infection and aid in the healing process will do the same for humans. An easy way to take advantage of the medicinal benefits of Balsam Fir pitch is to simply dab it on cuts, abrasions, sores, and wounds as a salve. The pitch will form a protective cover that aids in healing and destroys organisms that would otherwise find the area an hospitable place to grow. Because the Balsam Fir pitch is so sticky, it can be used to glue cuts together so that the healing process is accelerated while it keeps the wound clean. Medicinal uses of pitch from Balsam Firs used by Native Americans and early settlers to the region include topical salves with analgesic antiseptic properties for healing cuts, abrasions, burns, sores and chapped areas.

Balsam Fir pitch can also be used as a fire starter when you are camping or needing a fire outdoors. The most common problem is damp wood and kindling. A glob of Balsam Fir pitch smeared on the wood will usually burn long enough to dry out and ignite the tinder, which will start the main fire. You can smear the pitch on tissues, dryer lint, or cotton balls and use them as fire starters too.

Isn’t it amazing all the gifts Nature gives us!
Flavors of the Season
Jackie Johnson ND
Planhigion Herbal Learning Center

As fall wanes, and we’re satiated from our Thanksgiving flavors....our taste buds turn to the Christmas season and its alluring tastes and smells.

Most of the spices of the season are warm, which seem to help us ease into the season and the cooler (colder) temperatures.

The most common spice of the season is the sweet, spicy and pungent Cinnamon. Who doesn’t have at least one favorite recipe that includes cinnamon? Is it cinnamon or cassia? Both belong to the same family but which is which? I was told once that cassia’s bark curls two ways and true cinnamon curls only one way. Cassia is more reddish, more aromatic, and more bitter, whereas true cinnamon is lighter in color and milder. Usually what we purchase in ground form is a mixture of them both. Once nearly as expensive as gold, much research is going on with cinnamon, so enjoy your treats, cuz it’s all good! Is cinnamon tea with honey really a hardship for anyone?

Typically considered the second most valuable spice in the world (to saffron) is cardamom. Most people don’t use it much, but maybe this sweet, pungent and warming spice should be. In the ginger family, try substituting a teaspoon of cardamom in your cinnamon sugar. As with cinnamon, when cooking, it should be added early.

Here’s an old family favorite my grandmother used to make. (If I’ve infringed on someone’s recipe, I apologize, but this is how it came handwritten about 30 years ago.)

Spiced Seafoam

3 large egg whites
1 C white sugar
1/2 t cardamom
1/2 t cinnamon
1/4 t cloves

Beat the egg whites until stiff. Add the sugar a little at a time (while still beating). Then hand stir in the spices (which have already been mixed together). Drop in small mounds on a parchment covered baking sheet and put in an oven already at 250 degrees, for 90 minutes. Then turn off the oven and let them sit in there over night. Remove in the a.m.

Cloves are yet another favorite – whether they’re in stuck in oranges or added to teas. It’s another warming pungent spice that should be added early and sparingly in recipes. If really too strong for you, snip off the tops and grind the “stem” for a milder version.

All the spices so far are good for digestion and nausea; cloves can also help adult toothache pain (not kids) when smashed and placed around the tooth until you can get to the dentist.

Fenugreek, relatively new to the popular spice circle around here, is one of the oldest of the cultivated spices. Good for gas, heartburn, inflammation and respiratory problems, watch for more medicinal research on this one too. As a tea it’s about 30% mucilage, it can act as a laxative. I use ground fenugreek with ground cinnamon on my oatmeal. If not buying ground, it should be lightly dry-fried before grinding to bring out the flavors. It was considered an aphrodisiac by the ancients, so plan ahead.

If you make a syrup out of fenugreek, you might be surprised to find it tastes more like maple syrup than many of the maple syrups on the shelves!

Coriander (the seed of cilantro) should also be dry-toasted to release its flavor. Unlike the others, it should be added near the end of the cooking cycle. Like fenugreek, it was considered an aphrodisiac.

Ginger is one of my favorites. It was once said that “every good quality is contained in ginger”. I like to start growing this in the early spring so I have my own available in winter. Just put a piece of the root (with an eye) in a pot. Don’t let it get frosted, but set it out in the summer (takes about 10-11 months). Each batch you grow from the last one is less strong than its predecessor but it’s easy and fun to grow. (I also slice ginger root into quarter size pieces and freeze it. When I don’t feel well, I’ll pull out a couple of ginger root pieces, a couple of frozen lemon slices and put them in a quart jar with hot water add honey and drink it all day.)

A Christmas staple, but gingerbread was also a favorite of General Lafayette after George Washington’s mother served it to him in 1784. Here an easy recipe adapted from several.

Gingerbread

2 1/4 C flour
1/3 C sugar
1 C black strap molasses
3/4 C hot water
1/2 C shortening
1 egg
1 t soda
1 t cinnamon
1 t ginger
1/4 t salt

Blend all the above by hand for about 30 seconds and then with a mix (I don’t think they had mixers during the Revolutionary War, but they do make life easier) for about 3 minutes. Pour into a greased and floured 9 x 9 pan, and bake at 325 degrees for about 50 minutes. I’ve found it comes out of the pan easier when it’s cool. (It’s cake-like.)

Allspice is a single plant, but smells like a blend of others. We make Swedish Potato Sausage every Christmas, and the only flavorings included are salt, pepper and allspice. Allspice isn’t a favorite of mine so I omitted it one year, and it definitely wasn’t as good. (If you want the recipe, email me at scentedgardens@msn.com)
A rather unique way to enjoy allspice:

**Rum Punch**

- 8 – 10 allspice berries
- 2-3 cinnamon sticks
- 5-7 C apple cider (or juice)
- 3 T dark rum (Malibu works too)
- 2-3 T brandy (I use Korbel)

Heat all the BUT alcohol for up to an hour on low – then add alcohol, simmer a bit and serve warm.

Mulling spices are popular during winter. Recipes are as varied as those who throw them together and are dictated by taste preferences. Don’t be afraid to experiment.

Favorite #1:

- Cinnamon sticks
- Orange peels (dried)
- Allspice
- Cloves
- Ginger

Favorite #2

- Cinnamon
- Allspice
- Orange and Lemon peels (dried)
- Nutmeg
- Star Anise (just a little)
- Cloves
- Ginger

These can be mulled in apple cider or juice, or wine depending on your crowd. Most are served warm, but sometimes I mull in apple juice, cool, add cold orange juice and ginger ale. If you want a “Wassail” use a red or fruit wine in a crockpot and add some brown sugar, honey and maybe a little brandy.

Sometimes I’ll put the cloves in a small orange or lemon and plunk them in the crockpot. Don’t cover the fruit with them, just a trail or two of them.

All of these drinks make the house smell wonderful while heating them up. We usually serve them in a crockpot (that can be hidden in pretty Christmas fabric with greens and cinnamon sticks tied together around it).

Another family favorite that does double duty as a house deodorizer is a fruit soup. There are all kinds of recipes for these, but I’ve found that anything goes – use what you have.

**Swedish Fruit Soup**

Start with 5 – 10 cups of water (depending on what you put in)
- Prunes
- Dried apricots
- Raisins

Let this simmer for hours or until everything is blended. You can add a small amount of tapioca at the end if you like, but I’ve found it isn’t necessary. This can be served warm or cold. If you eat too much, you’ll find it’s a great ‘cleanser’.

Chai mixes are popular during the holiday seasons. They’re warming, good for digestion and aside from making teas, I add the mixes I make up to scone recipes, apple pies etc.

A basic chai recipe usually starts with a black tea and then adds cardamom, cinnamon, clove and black peppercorns (just a couple) to taste. Some people add coriander or nutmeg, or allspice. To sweeten sugar or honey can be used, but molasses is fantastic in chais. We also add some milk to mellow the whole thing (or half/half)

A friend of mine makes the following one in bulk (I don’t know where she got the recipe):

**Instant Chai**

- 1 ½ C instant tea powder
- 2 C powdered non-dairy creamer
- ½ C dry milk powder
- ¼ C brown sugar
- 1 t ground ginger
- 1 t ground cinnamon
- 1 t ground cloves
- 1 t ground cardamom
- 1 t ground allspice
- 1 t vanilla powder. (This is expensive so she substitutes vanilla sugar – a couple of teaspoons)

Mix the instant tea, creamer, milk powder and sugars in a food processor. Add all the spices and vanilla powder (or sugar). Process for 2 minutes or until quite fine. Store in an airtight container. Use 4 teaspoons in a mug and fill with hot water.

I’ve only touched on a few of the commonly used spices. Enjoy your season, and drink the spiced drinks knowing they’re healthy for you.

Happy Holidays however you celebrate it!
**An Elder Gathering**

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**Fun, Sillies and Puns for the Happy Herbalist**

Jessica Morgan, Herbalist
www.morganbotanicals.com

I saw something similar to moss the other day, but I didn't know what to lichen it to.

In some conifer forests, you can't cedar wood for the trees.

The apple crossed the street because he wanted to get to the other cider the road.

Scarecrows are always garden their patch.

Why did the toilet paper roll down the hill? To get to the bottom

On organic farms they till it like it is.

Those who plant trees be-leaf in the future.

The couple grew fruit trees and lived to a ripe old age.

Have you heard about the superhero 'Wood-Man'? He has an Alder ego - known as Spruce Wayne.

Did you hear the one about the redwood? It's tree-mendous!

Why was the cat sooooo afraid of the tree? Because of its bark!

You know you’re a redneck gardener when........you convert your junked conversion van into a greenhouse.

You know you’re a redneck gardener when......you plant the driveway and sidewalk beds with collards and poke weed.

You know you’re a redneck gardener when............you edge your flower bed with beer and wine bottles.

What’s brown and sticky? A stick!

My sewer was blocked by a root
I bypassed the thing with a chute
now sure, my trees smell
but God, they grow well –
though I'm too scared to eat any fruit!

My blood plums were early this year
which brought the whole neighborhood here
with polite servitude
I got them all stewed
not the plums-the neighbors-with beer!
Recipes for making Kale
A regular part of your diet

Carey Jung
Carey’s Flowery on Etsy

By now Kale has entered the radar of most people, at least within the United States. It’s risen from the lowly status of being recognized only as that fluffy green decoration at the supermarket and salad bars to being touted as the “New Beef”. I’m not so sure I agree with it being the new beef, but it is definitely a tasty vegetable if you want an easy-to-prepare, reliable source of nutrients. I know a lot of you Essential Herbal readers eat wild greens, and these recipes can easily be adapted to their preparation, but the cooking time would be much less for most of them.

There are many varieties of Kale. Russian Kale (a.k.a. Winter kale) and Dinosaur Kale (a.k.a. Lacinato Kale) are my favorites. Curly Kale is the most common kind found in supermarkets, and can be rather tough unless it is harvested in early Spring or early Autumn. At those times it is crisp and sweet. Cooler weather is Kale’s best friend and in general, Kale becomes sweet and crisp and delicate during this time. I’ve grown Kale through the Winter (Winter Kale) and have harvested it when there is snow piled on the ground.

Kale is a superb source of calcium and iron, vitamin A and C, and chlorophyll. It has an abundance of vitamin K (one cup of chopped Kale has over 600% your daily need for this one), and provides the trace minerals copper, potassium, manganese and phosphorous.

I began eating Kale about 20 years ago, after I moved to NYC. I had gone to a vegan restaurant one night for dinner and ordered a black bean and sweet potato casserole served on a bed of garlicky sautéed kale. The combination of the sweetness of the sweet potato, and the olive oil coated garlicky greens was delectable and I was hooked for life! Learning how to prepare it took some dedication, because at that time it seemed only the natural foods restaurants ever served it and the natural foods cookbooks weren’t as readily available. Neither did we have the internet back then. Through trial and error I discovered there is a presence and attention needed when cooking with this leaf, somewhat similar to the attentive gentle touch required of cooking pasta, and this is what I hope to share with you today, along with a few of my favorite recipes.

Choosing your kale ~

Look for leaves that are the darkest green you can find, and don’t purchase any from the store that are turning yellow in spots. This means they are losing their nutrients and are not fresh. They will taste icky as well. If you buy kale from a farmer, or grow your own, the yellow edges are okay and are a reflection of the growing conditions, most likely heat stress, rather than loss of their nutrient content. When you touch the leaves you want to look for leaves that are springy, and perky. When you touch them they will feel crisp, and say “Life! Vitality! Juicy!” They won’t feel tight and stiff. (This happens mostly with the curly variety.) Droopy leaves, unless at the farm stand are not ideal, but sometimes if you get to the greenmarket late, they will have drooped a bit. This is okay, just take them home, snip the ends, place in a large jar of water like a bouquet of green flowers, cover with a bag and place in the refrigerator. They will perk right back up.

Washing kale ~

Get a big bowl or pot, or your sink if it is sparkly clean (mine is not!) and place your kale in it. I like to run the water over each leaf a little, to make sure any clinging critters have a chance to escape before the cooking. As you are rinsing and filling up your tub, you can hold the kale by the stem, gently grab the leaves and pull the whole thing with your hand, down the stem, toward the tip and remove the leaves from the stem. Some people cook the stems but I only cook the tender ones from the Lacinato variety. My guide is - if the stem is as big as a pencil, off it comes. Once you’ve removed the stems, take all the leaves and gently plunge them in the water, sort of like washing your clothes. Then, repeat this two or three times, depending on how clean the water is after the plunging, each time changing the water. Sometimes I can get away with one wash, especially if it’s from a farmer who washes her greens before market. Store bought greens always get three washes.

Prepping Kale ~

After your Kale is all clean and de-stemmed if necessary, move it to a large cutting board. Here you can either stack them into piles and chop into a chiffonade fashion, or take the whole pile and chop into ½ inch or 1 inch long pieces with your largest, sharpest knife, cutting it all in one direction and then again, perpendicular to that which you just cut. It can be cut to suit your recipe or your mood! Now you are ready to go.

Recipes:

(Continued on page 12)
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MOUNTAIN ROSE HERBS
Basic Sautéed Kale

1 bunch kale prepared as above, water droplets still on the leaves.
2 large or 3 small cloves garlic (or 1 shallot) chopped, or sliced
3 T Olive oil (or good quality butter)
sea salt or tamari

Two wooden spoons or wooden salad tossers
Large skillet or large wok
Optional: vinegar

Heat your fat in a large skillet, add the alliums and sauté until their edges turn golden, then quickly add all of your kale at once. It will make a loud racket as the water hits the oil, it’s okay, just watch your arms and try not to get splattered. Then tossing the kale with your two wooden spoons, just like you’d toss a salad, keep turning them so they all get into the oil. You want to be careful not to let your oil or butter get too hot before you add the kale, or it turns rancid, and can also burn your garlic. Toss and sauté the kale just until it has darkened and become bright green in color, it will also have wilted and now fits better into the pan. (When they stop bouncing out the pan they are close to being ready.) Then turn off your heat source. Sprinkle with some tamari, or sea salt, and then I like to add a dash of brown rice vinegar, herbal vinegar, or apple cider vinegar. This will help boost your body’s absorption of the iron and calcium and give the dish a lift and balanced tang. Toss all of this together again and yum!

Cold Kale Salad (made with leftovers)

Leftover sautéed kale
Sesame oil (1 tsp or to taste)
Hot pepper oil ** optional
Herbal or apple cider vinegar (1-2 tsps.)
Tamari (½-1 tsp.)

I do this if we have any leftover kale and prepare the salad as I am putting the leftovers away. The overnight refrigeration pulls all the flavors together. I like to eat my leftovers this way because kale, reheated, seems to lose its pizzazz and all that cooking reduces its nutrients. In your storage container, toss your sautéed kale with the sesame oil, vinegar and tamari. Eat this for breakfast or lunch the next day!

Sesame Kale

**Adapted from Feeding the Whole Family by Cynthia Lair

1 bunch Kale, washed and prepped
1 large pot of boiling water

Sauce:
2 t maple syrup
2 t brown rice vinegar
2 t toasted sesame oil
1 t hot pepper sesame oil

Root Soup with Kale

1 pound sausage (I prefer pork sausage for this recipe)
1 onion chopped
2 cloves garlic
2 T olive oil

Whatever combination of the following to fill your soup pot:
Root Vegetables, chopped up (my favorites are rutabaga and parsnip)
1 fist sized sweet potato
1 large russet potato (or any other variety)
Mushrooms (shitake or maitake are my favorite for immune boosting)
Slice of dried astragalus root
Cubed winter squash
Frozen corn (added at very end just before you add the kale)

Bone broth (or water, but stock will yield a richer more nutritious soup) – to cover your root vegetables by 2 inches
The equivalent of 1 cup chopped plum tomatoes
White wine – 3 Tbs to a ½ cup – to taste

2 cups chopped kale

Salt and pepper – as needed at the end, especially if you are not using the sausage.

(Continued on page 31)
The practice of herbal medicine can be traced to ancient times when humans learned from trial and error that some plants were acceptable to eat, others were not, and some had healing power. As knowledge of herbs and populations grew, it became vital to log the data for identification purposes.

Texts known as “herbals” that described the medicinal uses of plants were first produced in Mesopotamia, China, India, and Egypt. The first written accounts of plants for treating sickness dates back over 5,000 years to the Sumerians. Ancient Sumerian medical texts on clay tablets document the use of plants such as caraway, laurel, and thyme for healing. These ancient people came from the highland of present day Turkey or Iran and settled in the lower part of Mesopotamia (present day Iraq.) Around the same time, or perhaps even earlier, herbal traditions were being developed in China, India, and Egypt.

The earliest Chinese compilation on pharmacology, the Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing, dates back to 2,700 B.C. The text is reputed to be the work of the legendary emperor Shen-Nong (3737-2697 B.C.). The book includes 365 medicines, 252 of plant origin, 67 animal parts, and 46 from minerals. Shen Nong is said to have sampled the many herbs, barks, and roots brought in from the swamps, woods, and fields that are still being used today.

The herbal tradition in India is nearly as old as China. India’s practice of herbal medicine was developed from the Vedas, epic poems written about 1500 B.C., containing rich material on herbal lore of that time. It was followed by the Charaka Samhita, written by the physician Charaka around 700 B.C. His works identified 1,500 plants, 350 described as important medicine.

Egypt was evolving their herbal traditions around the same time as China and India. In ancient Egypt, magic, spells, prayers, and sacrifices were linked with herbal medicine. Interestingly, one of the best known and most important pharmaceutical texts comes from ancient Egypt. In the Valley of Tombs near Luxor, in 1874, the world’s oldest surviving medical record, dating back to 1500 B.C. was discovered. The sixty-five page “Ebers Papyrus” (named after its founder, Georg Ebers) lists over 700 herbal remedies, including popular herbs of today such as aloe and garlic. It is now in the collection of Leipzig University (Germany). Herbal knowledge of Mesopotamia, Egypt and to a lesser extent India and China spread through the Mediterranean as healers from Greece and Rome went to study in Egypt. The classical Greek and Roman writings began to separate medicine from the magical and spiritual world. Renowned healers emerged such as Hippocrates, Theophrastus, Dioscorides, and Galen. They separated herbal medicine from the magical and spiritual world. Their works became the foundation of western medicine and the early authorities on European herbalism. It was not until the sixteenth century when a new world of plants brought back by early explorers forced a revaluation of botany and medicine.

Hippocrates (460-377 B.C.) the Greek father of medicine believed that illness is a natural rather than a supernatural phenomenon. He felt that medicine should be delivered without magic or ritual ceremonies. Hippocrates had in-depth knowledge of herbs, describing over 200 of them, all of which he personally tested. Theophrastus (371-287 B.C.), an early Greek natural scientist is called “the father of botany” due to the completeness of his work. His Historia Plantarum “History of Plants” mentions nearly 450 plants, categorizing them as trees, shrubs or herbs, and dealing with the medical qualities and peculiarities of herbs.

Dioscorides, a first century Greek physician and pharmacologist comprised the most influential of all ancient herbals, De materia medica. Written in 5 books in about A.D. 78, this work has excellent descriptions of nearly 600 plants including water hemlock, cannabis, and peppermint. His work became a strong influence on Western medicine, being the main reference used in Europe, until the 17th century. After the invention of the printing press, it was one of the first published works.

Galen (A.D.130-200) the foremost scientist in his day drew his inspiration from Hippocrates. Galen practiced and taught both pharmacy and medicine in Rome. His principles of preparing and compounding medicine ruled in the western world for 1,500 years. Galen wrote extensively about the equilibrium human health requires between the four principal fluids — or humors within the body: blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. His teachings still survive in Unani medicine, practiced in the Muslim world and India.

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Herbal Gifts:  
Home Made Herbed Vinegars and Oils Will Make Special Gifts This Holiday Season.  
Jean Smith, fordragnfliesandme.wordpress.com

Tis’ the season for all things herbs! What can be more special than a home made gift created from the bounty of herbs harvested out of your own gardens? There’s something about watching loved ones open the package... their eyes get wide with excitement... and then the, “Oh that is SO thoughtful!”

People love receiving gifts that were made just for them... Knowing that you took the time and didn’t opt for the easy cookie cutter gift from the big box stores.

Herbed Vinegars and Oils are easy and inexpensive to make, especially when you’ve grown most of the ingredients.

Here’s the how-to, along with several wonderful recipes for herbed vinegars and oil combinations!

How to make Herbed Vinegars
Use the leaves, seeds and flowers, singly or in combinations of freshly picked herbs when making herbed vinegars. The vinegar should be the best of the cider or wine varieties available, as herbs will not disguise the sharpness of a bad vinegar.

1. Pick the herbs early in the morning after the dew has dried but before the heat of day has driven off the essential oils which give herbs their flavor. Use only perfect leaves and flowers, discarding any that have tuned brown or show signs of having been eaten by garden pests.

2. Bruise the herbs slightly before putting them in a glass bottle or ceramic crock with a tight fitting top. Use 1/2 cup of herbs for each pint (2 cups) of vinegar, more if you want a stronger taste.

3. Follow one of these two traditional methods:
   A. Pour the vinegar over the herbs in a clear glass bottle and close tightly. Set the bottle in a sunny window for two weeks, turning it frequently.
   B. Heat the vinegar to just before boiling; next, pour the hot vinegar over the herbs in a glass bottle or crock and close tightly. Let steep overnight.

Whichever method you choose, you’ll want to strain and re-bottle the vinegar at the end of the steeping time. Add a fresh, un-bruised sprig for decoration.

Here are some good combinations to try.

*Tarragon is most common used alone but lemon thyme, basil, chive blossoms and burnet can be added. This works well in salads.
*Burnet and borage – add borage flowers to white vinegar;

Here are some yummy vinegar recipes to try!

**Spiced Vinegar**
3? cinnamon stick
1 whole cracked nutmeg
4 C red wine vinegar
1 T whole cloves
1 T allspice

it’ll tint it a lovely pale blue while giving it a subtle cucumber flavor.
*Dill with whole seed head intact ~ add a bit of lemon and garlic for delicious variety.
*Mint for lamb dishes and fruit salads.
*Lemon thyme for fish.
*Basil for tomatoes ~ add borage and burnet for a fresh twist.
*Sage for marinating rich meats and fowl.
*Chive blossoms for a faint oniony flavor.
*Nasturtium buds, flowers and leaves for a lovely peppery flavor.
*Oregano, fennel and garlic.
*Lemon thyme and garlic.
*Raspberry leaves and lemon balm... delightful for a salad.
*Garlic... for everything!
1 T black peppercorns

*Choose one of the methods above; let steep 4 weeks in a cool place; when ready strain the mixture and bottle. Store in a cool, dark space.

**Rose Petal Vinegar**
3 C white wine vinegar
1 rose bud to place in bottle
5 C rose petal, lightly crushed

*Choose one of the methods above; steep 4 weeks in cool place; when ready strain the mixture and bottle. Store in a cool, dark space.

How to make Herbed Oils
Herbed oils can be as simple or as complex as you like. To make you own, simply add the desired herbs and spices to the oil (extra-virgin olive oil is best); steep in a closed bottle or container in a warm but not hot place for a few weeks before using. It can also be steeped right in the refrigerator (safer). Herbs must be completely dry prior to use, and finished oil should be refrigerated.

Oil ideas:
*Thyme and rosemary make a quick pasta oil to toss the noodles with.
*Garlic, chili peppers, rosemary and thyme make for a yummy barbeque oil that is wonderful to marinade and baste your grilled meats.
*Peppermint, garlic, cumin, coriander, cloves, mace and fennel adds a taste of the Middle East.
*Thyme alone is wonderful to brush on veggies for the grill and chicken.
*Fennel and garlic are yummy on fish.
*Garlic, thyme and a bit of sage go well with grilled veggies.

These are just a few combinations that I could think of... use your imagination and taste buds to create your own!

You can make this seasons gift giving extra special with your home grown herbs.

Go ahead, make memories that'll last a lifetime.
Most of us generally feel more upbeat and positive with a spring in our step when the weather is sunny and bright. When the weather is gloomy, cold and dismal, our moods slump and we feel a bit down and beating seasonal depression can be difficult. However, in some people these mood shifts develop into a type of depression that accompanies seasonal changes and affects their ability to function normally.

Medically speaking, Winter blues are known as winter-onset seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a type of depression triggered by the change in seasons. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, some 500,000 Americans have the full-blown condition; another 10% to 20% of us experience a milder form. It’s more common in women and residents of northern states, where winters are longer and drearier.

The checklist of symptoms includes:
- Change in appetite, especially a craving for sweets or starches
- Weight gain
- Fatigue
- Tendency to oversleep
- Difficulty in concentrating
- Irritability/anxiety
- Avoidance of social situations
- Increased sensitivity to social rejection

Body functions affect mood -- Fluctuating sugar levels
Our sugar levels play a significant part in mood swings. The culprits are refined carbohydrate foods like most bread, pastries and flaked breakfast cereals which are over-refined, full of sugar and salt, with little substance or fiber. The trick to keep our sugar levels even all day is to eat slow-release foods for breakfast like oats, nuts and seeds for good energy and mood right through till lunch, then add some beans or whole grains to your lunch to last the afternoon. A big breakfast and lunch can do wonders to our mood and dealing with stress by buffering the effects of our stress hormones.

The liver plays an important part in mood - think how a hangover feels. The liver’s role is to eliminate toxins, process and clear chemicals that your body no longer needs (e.g. hormones) and regulate blood sugar levels.

Viruses can bring you down, not just because you feel ill, but at an emotional mood level too.

Digestion - A large proportion of the neurotransmitter serotonin is made in the gut. A well-balanced digestive system optimally absorbs all the necessary nutrients available and eliminates unnecessary products effectively.

Sleep is crucial to a positive outlook and perspective, as well as body repair. So is quality dreaming time, to allow you to process the issues and feelings you deal with in your waking world. Especially make sure to nourish yourself with good sleep and dreaming time in winter.

Exercise - Get some fresh air! Exercise is one the most effective ways to combat depression and fatigue. 30 minutes a day will do wonders for your body and your mind!

Healthy Eating
A healthy diet is an important weapon in the battle against seasonal depression. Getting the proper amount of vitamins and minerals into your diet will help your mind and body perform more effectively and efficiently. A diet high in caffeine, fat and sugar, on the other hand, can often make matters worse.

- Eat more slow-release foods like beans & wholegrain to keep blood sugar levels even and feel nourished.
- Eat a filling breakfast & lunch for good mood and energy and avoid hunger and snacking, and eat a lighter evening meal or smaller portions.

Supplements and vitamins

**Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine).** B6 is essential for both physical and mental health and is intrinsic to more body functions than any other vitamin, mineral, or nutrient. Brain function, red blood cell formation, the central nervous system, absorption of fats and proteins, immune system function and the synthesis of DNA and RNA all require this vitamin. B6 is essential to the manufacture of serotonin (a chemical nerve transmitter in the brain) and low levels of serotonin are thought to be linked to depression. People with low B6 status usually respond well to supplementation. B6 deficiency may result from low dietary intake of vitamin B6, excess protein intake, consumption of yellow food dyes (hydralazine), alcohol consumption.

**Vitamin B12.** B12 prevents nerve damage and anemia, and aids in cell and blood formation, proper digestion, fertility and growth. Long term vegans and those with digestive disorders are susceptible to B12 deficiency. B12 is useful for nervousness, insomnia, memory loss, depression, fatigue, and menstrual pain.
Vitamin C Helps to make the hormones adrenaline and cortisol and the neurotransmitter noradrenaline. Neurotransmitters are critical for proper brain function and mood. Vitamin C aids proper adrenal and thyroid function. Plant sources of vitamin C include citrus fruits, kiwi fruit and rosehips. High sugar diets can inhibit the body’s use of vitamin C and can affect both our immune responses and mood.

Vitamin D The sunshine vitamin! The best source of vitamin D is sun exposure, which is needed for the body to synthesize vitamin D and though very little exposure is needed for this conversion, even that is hard to obtain in the winter months in most parts of the country. The fact that vitamin D deficiency is widespread (over 70% of the US population is thought to be vitamin D deficient) the need to utilize supplements to obtain adequate vitamin D levels seems like a necessity. These low levels may also underlie the winter blues. The Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey found that likelihood of having depression in people with vitamin D deficiency is significantly higher compared to those whose levels are sufficient.

**EFAs (essential fatty acids, especially omegas 3 and 6)**

Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) and omega-3 EFAs It is understood that EFAs (omega-3, omega-6, and omega-9) are a healthy part of the diet. There are many functions in the body that depend on these important fats, and to omit them would eventually lead to serious health problems. Of the three types, it is the omega-3 EFAs that are often deficient in our modern diets where fish is often avoided due to concerns with pollution. Omega-3 EFAs are needed to keep nerve cells and brain cells functioning properly. When there is a deficiency of the omega-3 EFAs, and an excess of saturated fats in the diet, the membranes of these cells are less fluid. Fluidity is an important feature of any cell. It allows nutrients to move easily into the cell, and waste products to get out. Without the proper ratio of omega-3 EFAs in the diet, cell membranes tend to “stiffen”, they become less fluid and the cell’s internal environment suffers. When this happens to brain cells, it is postulated that an insufficient of omega-3 oils in the diet will lead to depression. This hypothesis of depression has been supported by research showing that omega-3 fatty acid concentration in the blood of depressed patients is lower than that in control patients. This is further supported by the fact that the brain is the richest source of fatty acids in the human body, and since proper nerve cell function is critically dependent on proper membrane fluidity, a diet that is poor in the omega-3 fats will have an impact on behavior, mood, and mental function. These form a key part of our nerves, cells and immunity. Some studies suggest that eating foods rich in EFAs improves our mood. Sources are: oily fish eg. sardines, mackerel, herring, salmon, avocados, nuts and seeds.

Folic Acid. Depression is the most common symptom of a folic acid deficiency. Folic acid deficiency is the most common nutrient deficiency in the world. In studies of depressed patients, thirty-one to thirty-five percent have been shown to be deficient in folic acid.

**Inositol** (a B-vitamin). Levels of inositol have been reported to be lower than normal in depression. They are essential for cell metabolism, central nervous system maintenance and they also help to increase energy levels. Vitamin B12, Vitamin B6 and Folate in particular have been found to be associated with a lower prevalence of depressive symptoms. Melatonin For some, but not all SAD sufferers, especially people 40 years and older, 1-2mg of Melatonin at bedtime can be helpful in relieving symptoms. Melatonin levels tend to drop as we age.

**Tryptophan** Eating tryptophan rich foods such as fish, turkey, bananas, nuts and avocados can help boost serotonin levels. Serotonin is a chemical in the brain that people who have depression may not have enough of. Serotonin is made of tryptophan.

**Herbs**

Whenever you sense the symptoms of an overworked, overindulged, or stressful body and mind, remember these following herbs – known for centuries because of their mood-boosting properties:

*Borage Used by the Vikings, this herb has a reputation for cheerfulness and as a tonic for the adrenals, which govern the stress response. There is an expression ‘Borage for courage’!

*Chamomile Flowers Chamomile has been used historically to help calm nervousness and irritability. Getting a good night sleep will help combat those winter blues, however, in the winter there is said to be a delay in circadian rhythms with respect to the sleep/wake cycle. Many studies have shown chamomile’s calming effect and most recently a University of Pennsylvania study revealed that chamomile reduced the symptoms of anxiety and depression. Chamomile has also been found to be effective in helping with insomnia.

*Cayenne Herbalists used to add a pinch to every prescription to stimulate circulation and accelerate oxygenation of cells. It is ‘rubifacient’, stimulating blood flow to the local area, and vit C rich.

*Cocoa This ancient food/medicine of the Mayans and Aztecs is relatively unknown in the European medical tradition, but it contains medicinal constituents including flavonoids, theobromine, serotonin and phenylethylamine. It is good for cardiovascular health; the bitterness is stimulating to the digestive system; and it may have a positive impact on mood. Dark chocolate - It’s good for your mood – in moderation, of course.

*Dandelion The root gently stimulates the liver, supporting clearance of toxins. It may help regulate blood sugar levels.

*Eleuthero (Siberian Ginseng) Root While working on the nervous system, in general eleuthero root is well known as a powerful adaptogen – that is an herb that helps the body properly respond to stress and is a powerful adaptogen that strengthens and stimulates the immune system. An adaptogen is a substance that helps the body adjust to environmental stress of all kinds. Ginseng is also known to increase energy and vitality and builds resistance to stress.
*Ginkgo Biloba* May help maintain mental clarity and attention. Studies suggest ginkgo is capable of improving cognitive function; increased mental sharpness, better concentration, and improved memory. All of which suffers greatly when experiencing the blues.

*Lavender* Traditionally used for stress, insomnia, headaches, depression, anxiety. Also to calm the digestion and as a breath freshener.

*Lemon Balm* Loved by gardeners and herbalists for its fresh minty-lemon aroma, is known for its relaxing and calming effects and great flavor. Lemon balm is wonderful in combination with milky oats and chamomile as a relaxing after-dinner tea. Supports the nervous system as a mild sedative and anti-depressant. Naturally treating symptoms of depression, stress, headaches, migraines, anxiety, and tension.

*Milk thistle* Previously known as ‘Holy thistle’, it became fashionable when research highlighted that it stimulated the regeneration of liver cells. By supporting the liver, it supports brain function.

*Mugwort* Traditionally sewn into pillows to help with remembering dreams, mugwort plays an important part in the European tradition as a liver herb and promoting menstruation. Culpepper used it to help with opium addiction.

*Nettle Leaf* Nutritive infusions function for many as an immune system booster, sedative, and pain reducer. You can’t help but feel your spirits lifted when consuming this blend of herbal tea!

*Oatstraw* Highly nutritious, containing many antioxidants and minerals (minerals such as Magnesium), this herb is instrumental when used in mood-enhancing herbal preparations.

*Oregano* It is a wonderful immune supporter. Good for cooking too! Keeping your body healthy and your spirits lifted will help you ward off the winter blues as well as the common cold.

*Rosemary-* Is ‘for remembrance’, to quote an old expression. It stimulates the flow of blood to the head, improving concentration and memory. It can ease headaches and migraines and improve hair growth. A good uplifting remedy for those dull, sluggish and depressive feelings.

*Shiitake Mushrooms* Low selenium levels have been linked to anxiousness and irritability. They are packed with selenium and can be just the thing to get you out of a funk—plus, they’re perfect for a creamy, wintry soup.

*St. John’s Wort* It is one of the most well-known herbal remedies for depression. It has been the focus of many scientific studies, but the evidence of its effectiveness has been inconsistent. The general consensus seems to be that it can be healthful for mild forms of depression but lacks the ability to treat more severe depression all by itself. This makes sense, since herbs, though potent, are not drugs and any herbal protocol for serious issues should have a broad and multi-tiered approach. That said, individuals have had positive results taking St. John’s wort, and it has a long history of use, especially in Europe.

*Turmeric* This bright yellow spice and powerful anti-inflammatory has been shown to help you feel less stressed. Turmeric is one of the main ingredients in curry powder. Valerian root has relaxing qualities that can also be used in conjunction with the previously mentioned herbs. As a tincture or oil, it’s often mixed with lemon balm or other similar herbs to mask the root’s odor. It’s tranquilizing effects help one relax and get a good night’s sleep without side effects. It’s effectiveness peaks within two or three weeks of use. But its extended use is not recommended. Occasionally, there’s a reverse effect of hyperactivity.

**Uplifting Herbal Tea**

**Ingredients**

3 parts Lemon Balm  
2 parts Chamomile Flowers  
2 parts Nettle Leaf  
2 parts Eleuthero (Siberian Ginseng) Root  
1 part St. John’s wort  
1 part Oatstraw

**Method**

Measure the parts of each of the herbs listed and mix in a large bowl until well combined. Grab your tea accessories, tea infusers, and/or tea pots...and brew a cup! This herbal tea blend will keep stored in a cool, dark place for approximately 6 months. (Note: I like to store all of my teas in glass jars with tight-fitting lids.) This tea is mild enough to use daily or as a wonderful pick-me-up during those unexpected times of need.

**Aromatherapy**

Studies have shown that one possible cause, which could play a role in SAD, could be related to a lack of serotonin and serotonin polymorphisms. Serotonin is the “feel good” hormone in the body and when the uptake of this hormone is challenged by the change in circadian rhythms, then symptoms like depression can set in. Conventional medicine would prescribe an anti-depressant that blocks the uptake of serotonin in the body, leaving higher levels for the brain. But often, conventional medications can have detrimental side effects. And this is where aromatherapy’s essential oils can help for depression! Essential oils, when inhaled, head straight for the limbic system, which because of its relationship to the endocrine system allows for balanced hormone production and release. When we stimulate the hypothalamus part of the limbic system, we return it to “set point” much like a thermostat adjusting hot and cold. Among other things, the hypothalamus regulates hunger, thirst and response to pleasure and pain, which are key factors in depression.

There’s hope and there’s help! There’s aromatherapy to the rescue! Try these 3 as single oils or even blend them for a real boost to good tidings. The emotional impact of blending...
these 3 oils is grounding yet uplifting, centering, antidepressive, stilling the mind from worry, agitation, over thinking, harmonizing, helping to “let go” repressed negativity and a sense of expansion. Don’t we all want this? Experiment and blend the oils to suit you – one drop at a time if you have no or little experience doing this. Inhale the aroma after each addition to find out what works for you. This combination is great, works efficiently and is very well liked.

*Spruce, Black (Picea mariana) - Coniferous/woody/earthy, fresh, airborne disinfectant, respiratory tonic, muscle ache and joint pain, poor circulation, immune stimulant, may stimulate thymus gland, calms solar plexus spasms, anti-inflammatory, grounding yet uplifting.

*Frankincense (Boswellia Cateri) - Resinous, slightly citrus and camphoraceous, antibacterial, immunostimulant, antioxidant, has been used in alternative treatments for cancer, antidepressive, anti nervous depression, centering, stills the mind from worry/agitation.

*Fragonia (Agonis fragrans) - Lightly camphoraceous with slight sweet undertones, anti-inflammatory, decongestant, Immunostimulant, helps with respiratory infections from nose to lungs, analgesic, helps to relieve emotional and physical blockages, harmonizing, helps to “let go” repressed negativity, expansive.

The clean crisp woody smell of Black Spruce brings to mind the stimulating yet calming scenario of evergreens on a snowy mountain. The resinous and camphoraceous smell of frankincense partners well with black spruce. Frankincense has deep symbolism – one of the Magi’s gifts to the holy child. It is one of the most powerful immune boosting agents around and in ancient times was considered as valuable as gold – a true sign of prosperity. Lightly camphoraceous with slightly sweet undertones, fragonia blends well with the crisp clean woody aroma of black spruce and the resinous camphoraceous aroma of frankincense.

Quick reference for desired effects:

To move stagnant qi (liver), encourages adaptability and positive attitude/optimism and a sunny positive disposition. They are usually well accepted by most people and have a bright lively aroma that freshens the air and lifts the mood. Some quite sharp such as lemon or grapefruit, some are sweeter in aroma mandarin, sweet orange and lime. Some are even particularly good for stress, such as bergamot.

Assist in relieving depression are basil, bergamot, chamomile, clary sage, geranium, jasmine, lavender, melissa, neroli, patchouli, rose, sandalwood, and ylang ylang.

To stimulate and awaken our systems are rosemary, peppermint, lemon, basil, ginger, tea tree and cypress.

For anxiety, irritability and fitful sleep patterns chamomile, lavender, marjoram, clary sage and linden berry, celery seed and rose can help calm and reduce stress.

To Assist in building self-worth and confidence, bringing a more positive attitude are frankincense, cedarwood, sandalwood, ylang ylang and neroli.

For connection to others, many of the winter spices also appear to increase interest in others, and these are cinnamon, ginger, cloves nutmeg and allspice.

The aphrodisiacs like neroli, patchouli, sandalwood, jasmine, ylang ylang, and rose can stimulate sexual arousal, raising the libido and encouraging more social interaction. Appetite suppressants that help with over-eating and over-indulgence are bergamot, juniper, lavender and celery seed oils.

Combat the feeling of cold Warming spicy oils such as black pepper, ginger, cinnamon leaf and clove bud are great in oil burners and many are also good antiseptic oils as a bonus! They generally blend very well with the citrus oils, to further enhance their benefits.

Try some of these blends in your vaporizer or experiment with your own combinations:

**Winter Blues 1** - Blend 1 3 drops sweet orange 2 drops lemon 2 drops grapefruit

**Winter Blues 2** - Blend 2 2 drops ginger 3 drops sweet orange

**Winter Blues 3** - Blend 3 3 drops bergamot 1 drop ylang ylang 1 drop clary sage

**Winter Blues 4** - Blend 4 4 drops lemon 2 drops eucalyptus

(Continued on page 30)
I was fumbling through a group of recipes and found a few clever crafty ideas for herbal items you can make as gifts. Either as a last minute idea for the holiday or for a winter birthday celebration these will show off your herbal talents in many ways. So grab your herbs and get crafting!

**Shaving Balm** (for men or women!)

- 2 T dried comfrey
- 2 T dried chamomile
- 2 T dried calendula
- ¾ cup witch hazel
- 1 T vegetable glycerin
- One 1000 – IU vitamin E capsule

Place dried herbs in a jar, add witch hazel. Seal securely. Store in a cool dry place for 2 weeks, shaking daily. Strain liquid, pour into a bottle. Add glycerin and contents of Vitamin E capsule. Label jar.

TO USE: Shake well and pat onto skin after shaking.

**Exotic Herb Rice**

Holiday cooking is usually about traditional recipes, but why not make the meals in between the holidays a bit special with something with an exotic and unique flavor.

- 1 cup rice
- 1-3 T dried calendula
- 1 umbel of fennel (flowers) or ¼ tsp. seeds
- 1 T chervil, fresh or dried
- 1 T tarragon, fresh or dried
- 1 T salad burnet, fresh or dried
- 1 T sweet cicely, fresh or dried
- 4 T chopped chives
- 1 t dry bouillon (chicken, beef or vegetable depending on preference)
- 4 T Butter

Add calendula while cooking rice using typical directions, and then add herbs, bouillon & butter before serving. You can also make this as a mix leaving out the butter and give as a gift.

**Herbed Mustard**

A gentle healthful warming herb that is great to cook with all year, but is especially nice when the weather gets cooler in winter is turmeric. This antioxidant herb can help increase HDL (good) cholesterol while lowering overall cholesterol as well as assisting with inflammations, ulcers and gallstones. This recipe can be used on green salads, steamed broccoli or cauliflower. It is especially good on bitter greens (like chicory or radicchio) often enjoyed in the winter.

- 3 to 4 T extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 ½ T rice or mild wine vinegar
- 1 to 2 t lemon juice
- 1 to 3 t honey
- 1 ½ t Dijon mustard
- ½ t turmeric
- 1 clove garlic mashed
- Salt & pepper to taste

Whisk the ingredients to mix. Place in a cruet and keep in refrigerator until ready to use.

TO USE: Pour over greens and serve. Or pour over steamed broccoli or green beans and refrigerate for up to 4 hours before serving.

**Energizing Herbal Bath Tea**

Need more energy this holiday season? This combination of energizing herbs could do the trick. Create this blend of herbs and use it for yourself or make up a batch with your family and give them as gifts. The recipe makes 8 cloth bags of bath blend.

- ½ C lavender flowers
- ½ C peppermint
- ½ C spearmint
- ½ C lemon grass
- 8 drops lavender essential oil
10 drops lemon grass essential oil
5 drops peppermint essential oil
5 drops spearmint essential oil
Combine all herbs in a plastic bowl. Add oils by the drop and stir with a plastic spoon or spatula (not with your hands.) Allow to meld for an hour and then place about ¼ cup in a cotton muslin bag or heat sealed tea bag.

TO USE: allow bath bag to steep in hot bath water for 3 to 5 minutes before bathing.

**Black-eyed Pea Soup in a Pint Jar**

1 ¾ cup dried black eyed peas

Seasonings: (place seasonings in a small zip seal bag)
1/4 cup minced onion, dried
3 T chicken bouillon granules
1 T Parsley
1 ½ t sugar
1 t minced garlic
1 t savory
½ t chili powder
½ t onion powder
¼ t pepper
¼ t garlic powder

Place all items in a pint mason jar with the following instructions:

**Black-eyed Pea Soup**

Remove peas from jar, setting aside seasoning packet. Place peas in a colander and rinse with water. Place in a microwave safe bowl and cover with water at least 1 to 2 inches over the peas. Cover dish loosely with plastic wrap and Microwave on high for 15 minutes. Drain and rinse peas well. Add 6 cups of water and 1 ¼ ounce can diced or crushed tomatoes. Add seasonings from packet. Stir well. Bring to a boil. Lower heat, cover and simmer 1 ½ hours or until peas are tender, stirring occasionally.

**Snow Flakes**

This recipe is a fun craft with kids. It does not technically have any herbs in it, but it is fun anyway.

I love snow. My favorite decoration item is snowflakes. I have silver ones, lighted ones, and snow flake dust to put on the mantle. So these snowflakes you can make at home are just fun.

You will need:
Pipe cleaners or thin bendy wire
Very hot water
*Epsom Salts (how much you need depends upon the size of your glass jar)
Glass jar
A pencil or wooden stick
A 6 inch piece of string or ribbon

* you can use Borax instead of Epsom Salts if you wish

Directions: Cut your pipe cleaners into a length of about 2.5 inches. You will need 4 pieces of pipe cleaner in total. Twist the pieces together to form an eight sided star shape. Tie your piece of string or ribbon to the very top of the snowflake.

Pour very hot (just boiled) water into the jar or glass container so that it is three quarters full. Add your Epsom salts (or borax) and stir until dissolved. Keep adding more Epsom salts and stirring until you have saturated the liquid and no more can be dissolved. It is fine to have a few Epsom salt crystals lying on the bottom of the jar.

Add a drop of food coloring in the water if you want colored snowflakes and stir into the water (add more if you want darker colored crystals).

Place your snowflake shape into the liquid in the jar so that it is immersed completely. Tie the ribbon or string to the pencil (or stick) so that the snowflake is suspended in the jar and not touching the bottom.

Leave the snowflake in the jar and wait. In 24 to 48 hours you will see the crystals start to appear.

**Recovery Milk Bath**

This is more a treat for yourself, but don’t you need that with all these gift preparations! You can put some in a bath and lie there letting the aroma gently soothe you, or rub it onto your body and wait for the magic to work in the shower.

3 T powdered milk
1 T salt (or Epsom salts)
2 T runny honey
5 drops rosemary essential oil
3 drops peppermint essential oil
3 drops lemon essential oil
1 drop ginger essential oil

Directions:
Blend the powdered milk, salt and honey in a bowl. Add the essential oils and mix well. Keep in the refrigerator and use up in no more than 5 days.

TO USE: Bath - Place the mixture into the bath under running water. Lie back and relax for at least 15 minutes

Shower - take a handful of the mixture and gently rub over your arms, legs and tummy in small circles
After a full weekend of teaching classes which focused on ‘Bringing in the Herbal Harvest’, the tables and baskets are heaving with drying herbs. More herbs are wilting on the chopping block, waiting to be added to honeys, vinegars and sundry-other libations. The careful collection of seeds of calendula, coriander, holy basil, borage and zinnias has also begun. We gather with a vague urgency but feel content in the knowledge that these preparations will sustain us in the months ahead. A sudden chill in the air and low slung fog over my garden this morning whispers another reminder that this growing season is coming to a close. In the midst of all of the gathering, two phone calls from two distant friends announce a family death and a new life. The life force and spirit of living plants is, of course, different from those of humans, but I can’t help but reflect and compare the never-ending cycle of life, death and rebirth in all sentient beings and find comfort there.

I have many friends who experience the end of the growing season with sadness or despair. The days grow short. Darker mornings and evenings force us indoors. The vibrant green beings that have been lovingly nurtured, pruned and plucked have served their intended purposes. Leaves are fading, flowering and fruiting wanes. All agricultural societies understood that the cold and dark months of the year are time for physical rest and putting the land and seed to rest. There are many ancient ceremonies to celebrate the turning of the seasons in cultures around the world. The distant ancestors of my PA German heritage celebrated the Kannesege (Corn Ceremony) on or around February 2nd (Groundhog Day- Grundsaudaag). When the corn was cut for grain and fodder at the previous harvest season, a few stalks were gathered and stored for use in the Kannesege months later. Often leaves of the elder bush were added to the grain bin to keep pests from destroying the seed. When the days would begin to grow longer and winter dreaming turned to thoughts of warm fertile soil, the corn shocks and seeds came out of dry storage to create der Butzemann – a ‘scarecrow’ imbued with remnants of the sleeping life force of the plants who carries his ‘children’ into the new growing season ahead.

Der Butzemann is built using the corn leaves, stalks and a small selection of various seeds and roots that are sewn into a symbolic ‘heart’ pouch and placed at the center of his chest. This is considered a sacred acknowledgement of the ‘children’ that he produced the year before and to honor the life that he gave producing them. During the creation of the Butzemann, he is welcomed to the growing season, awakened and ‘activated’ by songs and given a special name. He is decorated by flowers and brought offerings of milk, honey, mead or incense. Before the Butzemann is ushered outside to begin his duties, he is symbolically given the ‘breath of life’ to stimulate his life force and of the seed children inside of him.

The Butzemann is ‘dressed’ to keep him put together, and is then paraded around the perimeter of the land designated (Continued on page 32)
The Wheel of the Year spins eternally. The cycle of birth, death and rebirth is most felt at Yule. Snow blankets the cold nesting earth. Enjoy creating a Yule wreath this season and add decorations that are meaningful. You may wish to invite friends or family to help you. Gather your artificial fruit, pinecones, berries, pine needles or small boughs, if you wish, red velvet ribbons and varnish.

If you choose to use organic pinecones from outside, bake them in the oven at 250 degrees for twenty minutes. The pinecones will shine, the wax melts, and this preserves them for the wreath. Baking them in the oven kills mites and germs.

Purchase some florist’s wire or twine from an art supply store. Set out everything you need on a table or desk. Put newspaper down on the table. Once you have all of your supplies, you are ready to work on your wreath. Experiment with how you want to arrange the items on your wreath. Meditate on the meaning of Yule. Once you have decided how to arrange the objects, set them in the design of your choosing. Take your time with this step.

Secure the pinecones, artificial fruit, and berries by wrapping the twine or wire around them. Secure the largest pinecones first then go back and work in the smaller cones. Preserve the wreath by spraying it with shellac or varnish for shine. Once the pinecones and wreath has dried, include more decorations such as bayberry, holly, ivy or dogwood.

Use organic natural found items. They possess the scents of Yule and a fresh minty scent from your wreath takes some beating.

Decide where to place the wreath. Hang the wreath on your door or on a wall where it is sure to attract attention. Pine needles, once dried, fall everywhere. Keep a broom and dustpan handy.

The plants of Yule have symbolic meaning. Keep this in mind as you create your wreath. Bayberry symbolizes good fortune and wealth. Evergreens symbolize eternity and everlasting life. Holly represents winter magick, life, and protection. The ivy symbolizes immortality. The mistletoe is fertility, healing, and protection. Pinecones suggest endurance and longevity.


Gemstones that correspond with Yule have powerful meaning. Bloodstone, cat’s eye, crystal quartz, garnet and ruby are associated with Yule and offer protection and wealth.

Refrain from adding and lighting candles on your wreath as a precautionary measure.

Consider using a wreath as a centerpiece on your table. Make smaller wreaths to use as centerpieces for a fancy Yule dinner with friends and family. Enjoy your beautiful wreath and the festive season.
**Holiday Lathers**  
Marci Tsohonis

Winter winds, rain and snow flurries are coming! Since you’re going to be spending more time inside, how about making some non-caloric holiday treats for special friends and family? Mint Chocolate Truffle Soap comes to mind...

Ah...Chocolate. Smooth, velvety, melting deliciousness! Alone, or paired with mint, I cannot resist it. I’m sure you know of those flat, creamy mints that are next to the punch at catered weddings? The ones that compel you to saunter by the table repeatedly so you can nab just one more thin mint? Ha! Thought so. Mint Chocolate Truffle soap is enticingly like those mints; smooth and melty, without any of those dreaded calories. It is a divine stocking stuffer for any female old enough to understand it isn’t edible. It really does smell good enough to eat.

First, though, a little applause for Theobroma cacao, a small evergreen in South America, and its fruit, the Cacao Bean, for gifting the world with Chocolate and Cocoa Butter.

Early civilization left behind vessels containing traces of Cacao Bean powder, which appears to have been used for ceremonial or ritual drinks as early as 1900 B.C. The Mayan culture used Cacao Bean powder, Capsicum and Maize as staple foods, often served in combination. The beans were a required tax currency to the Aztecs, a drink, whipped frothy with honey and water, and chewed as a stimulant by Aztec warriors. By 1570, Cocoa was popular in Europe as a medicine and as an aphrodisiac. By 1624, Cocoa was denounced in Vienna, as an aphrodisiac inflamer of passions! Monks were forbidden to use it. Culpepper’s Complete Herbal of 1863 names Cocoa as an aphrodisiac. Casanova allegedly claimed Chocolate was as good as Champagne in the art of seduction. Chocolate has inspired loyal aficionados in every corner of the globe. Seldom is it met with indifference. It is found in baked goods, candies, drinks, ethnic dishes, personal care products, room scents and I know more than a few wise women who have a hidden stash of Chocolate for soothing monthly hormonal spikes.

Cocoa Butter is the fat pressed from the seeds inside the Cacao pod. Though it is a staple in personal care products today, I was unable to find any documented reference to early use of Cacao fat to soothe and protect the skin. However, women were likely responsible for processing the Cacao fruit to obtain the powder for ceremonial use. Their hands would have been coated with the richly scented emollient fat. Who could resist?

**Mint Chocolate Truffle Soap**

This Cold Process soap recipe makes 100.4 ounces of soap.

You should have a basic understanding of soap making safety precautions and procedures before attempting this recipe. If you do not, please visit The Essential Herbal Magazine page. You will find a link to Basic Soap Making safety by Alicia Grosso posted on the right side of the page.

**Ingredients:**
- 35 oz Olive Oil
- 2 oz Shea Butter
- 4 oz Palm Oil
- 6 oz Cocoa Butter
- 4 oz Coconut Oil
- 1 oz Olive Oil (set aside in a one cup container)
- 21 oz Distilled water
- 9.50 oz Sodium Hydroxide
- 21.50 oz Sodium Hydroxide granules
- 3 TBSP powdered Baking Cocoa (whisk with 1 oz. Olive oil in a 16 oz. bowl or container & set aside)
- 1-1.5 oz Peppermint Essential Oil (weigh and set aside in small, lidded jar)

Mix Lye Solution in plastic 2 qt. pitcher with secure lid.

Wearing chemical proof gloves and face protection, weigh the Sodium Hydroxide. Using long handled stainless spoon, slowly add the Sodium Hydroxide granules to the water, stirring constantly. Vapors will rise briefly as the water heats up. Carefully secure the lid onto the pitcher. (I leave the area for a few minutes till vapors clear) Allow to cool to room temperature.

Place the fats and oils in a stainless kettle, and melt over low heat until all are liquified together. Cool to about 115-125 degrees.

**Make soap!**

Wearing face and neck protection, and chemical proof rubber gloves, carefully remove the lid of the lye solution pitcher. You will be using the stick mixer as a manual stirring tool, first, while adding the lye solution to the fats and oils (Don’t plug it in, yet!). Rest the top of the pitcher of lye solution lightly on the edge of the kettle. Add the lye solution in a steady, thin stream, stirring in a constant, gentle motion with your stick mixer till all the solution has been added. Plug in the stick mixer and press the low speed button. Keeping the stick mixer in contact with the bottom of the kettle, begin to mix in a figure 8 or circular motion. After about 4-5 minutes, take your finger off the power button to stop the motor again on the stick mixer. Lift the mixer blade above the surface of the fats and oils, and wave the stick mixer over the surface, allowing a drip to create a thin trail over the surface. If it falls back in, turn the mixer on and continue mixing another minute or two. Repeat until the drip trail is barely visible on the surface of the soap batter. It will be thin and flat at light “trace.” Try to keep your trace as thin and light as possible for best results with this recipe.

**NOTE:** Full trace is when the contents of the soap pot thicken to resemble pudding or applesauce. A very definite glop or trail will mound up on the surface. You can still swirl the chocolate into the rest of the soap but you’ll need to do it quickly!

**Make your Chocolate Swirl mixture:**

Remove about 1 cup of soap from the main pot and stir into the bowl with the whisked together baking cocoa and the one ounce of Olive Oil. Mix well.

Add the Peppermint Essential Oil (or Fragrance Oil) to the...
soap in the large kettle. Combine by hand with spatula or spoon, without over stirring, as that will thicken the trace and make it more difficult to achieve an even swirl. Pour or scrape contents of the kettle into a lined, flat mold. Place the approximately 1 cup of Chocolate soap mixture in a hair dye bottle. Holding the hair dye bottle about 6 inches above the mold, apply pressure to squeeze and trail the chocolate over and into the soap in the mold. Either do straight lines in both directions, or use a curly-q squiggle design, and squirt a little along the edges of the mold as well. Use a chop stick or other tool to swirl the chocolate soap into a pleasing pattern. You can put the chop stick into the mold all the way to the bottom, and drag it in a swirl pattern throughout the mold without lifting it, or, put the chop stick all the way to the bottom of the mold and use a lift and scoop method to drag slinky shaped swirls throughout the soap. Either way, it is going to look amazing!

Carefully place a freezer paper cover over all, then lay a wooden cover on top. Insulate with a wool blanket. The soap should heat up by itself under the blanket in about 30-40 minutes. I peek under the blanket and wooden lid to see if there is a dark oval shape visible under the freezer paper and if it is hot to the touch. Gel begins in the center, and will continue all the way to the edges of the mold. I usually remove the blanket and the wooden lid once the gel phase has reached the edges so the chocolate swirl part does not overheat. A soap that has gelled is usually firm enough to slice once it has cooled to room temperature. The amount of Cocoa Butter in this soap makes very hard bars. Don’t delay slicing for more than a day or two. Once sliced, stack the soap on a shelf with good air circulation. It will be ready to use in about 3 weeks.

HOLIDAY BONUS! Here is an alternate soap version for Almond lovers...

Chocolate Almond Truffle Soap
Follow the Mint Chocolate Truffle recipe above, except: Instead of Peppermint EO sub either Bitter Almond EO or Almond Fragrance Oil
Place 4-6 oz of crumbled Almond Paste into a two cup bowl. Set aside. When you reach light trace, place 1 cup of soap into the bowl with the Almond Paste. I use a potato masher to goosh the soap into the Almond Paste. Then return the mixture to the soap kettle. Add Essential Oil to the kettle, stir by hand till combined, and pour into mold. Then, swirl the chocolate mixture into the mold following instructions for the Mint Chocolate Truffle soap. MUST then DEDUCT that from the total water portion of the recipe. Add the six oz of milk just after the lye solution and oils and fats are combined. It’s a little trickier than the first version, but once you have a little experience, do try it!
I wish all of you a lovely winter season! Marci
As we move through fall, we notice nature’s greens have turned to crimson and gold — as chlorophyll departs and the hemisphere dips toward winter. As nature adapts; so our bodies begin to prepare for the slow cool changes within and without. Taking daily herbs can be as easy as brewing a pot of tea. In fact, most of the medicine we need can be derived from the foods that we consume. Starting the day with a pot of tea is as “old as thyme.” In earlier editions of TEH, we discussed the five seasons: Spring, Summer, Late Summer, Autumn, and Winter. In those discussions we talked about how certain foods uplift us during those times—how they can build energy and immunity as well as defeat illness. To correlate with that concept it may be helpful to think about teas — not only as refreshment but also as nourishment.

To sustain you during season’s changes, utilize herbal teas. For the most part, teas should be made by the pot (or quart) and drunk throughout the day. Brew your pot as you rise in the morning or before bed in the evening; then store your tea in the refrigerator. Refrigerated tea will last for several days. You can drink teas hot, cool, iced or even frozen (as in “pops” for children). The act of making tea is itself soothing — the ritual of blending, brewing, and ingestion begins the healing process. Although teas are not as potent as tinctures or capsules by the dose; by imbibing medicinal tea in sustained amounts throughout the day, you are strengthening your response to its purpose. Even the act of inhaling vapors from your cup involves not only the olfactory centers in the nose that respond to subtlety in fragrance, but also the mucous membranes of the respiratory tree which begin absorption of herbal properties.

There is an “art” to making healing herbal tea. The very concept of “taking tea” connotes a slow sustained refreshment of your body over time. Teas effect healing properties for both chronic and acute problems, but they can also be utilized to bring the body in balance during the seasons. There is nothing as refreshing as a flavorful cup of tea. We often think of Medicinal Tea as unappealing in taste or is nothing as refreshing as a flavorful cup of tea.

There is an “art” to making healing herbal tea. The very concept of “taking tea” connotes a slow sustained refreshment of your body over time. Teas effect healing properties for both chronic and acute problems, but they can also be utilized to bring the body in balance during the seasons. There is nothing as refreshing as a flavorful cup of tea. We often think of Medicinal Tea as unappealing in taste or fragrance; this is where the “art” comes in. Mary Poppins said: “A spoonful of Stevia makes the medicine go down!” (I think she said something like that.)

We have within our means the way to create our own medicine!

Each season brings its own demands to our systems:

Spring is the awakening — demanding the liver to oppose the sluggishness and toxic buildup of winter.

Summer is the metabolic push — Heating up the constitution— placing demands on not only the muscles but also the heart.

Late Summer is the assimilation of harvest — The body concentrates on digestion of nature’s bounty— stressing the spleen.

Autumn is the period of preparation — Nature’s forces are slowing, cooling- Its changes make our bodies rebel with allergies, colds, and constipation. Changes are felt in the lung and large bowel.

Winter is the somnolent sorcerer — Cold, dark, and mystifying; it keeps us within the boundaries of our clothing, homes, and clocks. Deepest nourishment of the kidney is essential.

Blending herbal tea is a creative endeavor that involves realizing that there are three layers or “notes” that we include in each sip— not unlike the process of creating fragrance by blending essential oils. The top note- is light, flavorful and attracts you by fragrance. The middle note- blends both flavor and quality to give body to the blend and to have a balancing effect. The middle note is not always immediately evident; may take a couple of minutes to be noticed; and links the top to the base notes. The base note- sustains the flavor (provides deep medicinal drive).

We set proportions to Tea Layers similar to the way we blend essential oils.

Top Layer is 15 - 25% of the blend; Middle Layer is 30 - 40% of the blend; and Base Layer is 45 - 55% of the blend. Or, you can use the Simpler’s way of measuring: Top layer 2 Parts; Middle layer 3 Parts; and Base layer 5 Parts. [“Part” being whatever we designate -- Scoop, Tablespoon, or Cup] We want to provide both medicinal benefits as well as refreshment with our Tea.

Blending your own remedies may sound complicated. You will be the “master blender” making your own medicine! If you are tentative about blending teas for medicinal purposes; start simply. Choose flavors that appeal to you. I like the flavor of honeybush, so I use it often as a baseline flavor in many of my teas. For those of us who are familiar-albeit “habituated” to the flavors of our medicinal herbs -- remedial teas excite. However, if you are not certain that you enjoy the bold flavor of medicinal herbs, start with the flavors you enjoy and add medicinal herbs to those blends.

Medicinal value of tea is sustained over time; you can really make your tea delicious as well as soothing! You may find that you are not in possession of all the ingredients you want in your blend at first.

The following chart is just a collection of seasonal suggestions. Remember: we only need to prepare for the present season. Start simple- gather ingredients and plan for next season -- one season at a time. Perhaps you will plant or sow some of next season’s herbs now. You may have a few of this season’s herb tea ingredients on hand or nearby. Goldenrod growing in the meadow? Dried Elderberries on the shell? You can utilize dried or fresh herbs you have on hand, and add to your ingredients as you progress. You
I usually make a large jar of my favorite seasonal blend that lasts a month or two. You may want to start with small batches that make a pot or two and taste until you are satisfied. Don’t forget to make an ingredient label/card for each season. That way you will remember the ingredients you will need as you plant and harvest throughout the seasons in the years to come. When you love the blend you’ve made, give it a wonderful name and celebrate yourself with a cup!

You can add Stevia to any of the blends - remembering that Stevia is MUCH sweeter than sugar - add sparingly.

Unless otherwise noted, you will not use all of the ingredients in each category; just the ones that appeal to you. You may find that your favorite ingredients are not listed here. You should add them, as well.

**Note** [You can make a special recipe for colds and influenza by adding Elderberries, Peppermint Leaf and Yarrow to any of your blends.]
**Kitchen Spice Rope**

This project makes a nice fall decoration for the kitchen. It is also fun and easy to put together, making it a nice choice for those special folks on your holiday gift lists.

**Supplies:**
- 72 bay leaves
- 6 whole nutmegs, drilled
- 10 orange slices
- 15 apple slices
- 5 cinnamon sticks, drilled
- 5 pieces whole ginger root, drilled
- Macrame cord (shiny type is easiest to work with)
- Hot glue
- Ribbon (your choice)
- Large-eyed needle
- "D" hook hangar

**Assembling:**
Cut a piece of cord 1-1/2 yards long. Wrap one end around the flat part of the D hook and knot it in the center of the straight side, having rest (long piece of cord) hanging down. Secure the knot with a good dab of hot glue.

Start threading the spices, etc., on the cord in the following pattern:
- One nutmeg
- 3 bay leaves
- 3 apple slices
- 3 bay leaves
- 2 orange slices
- 3 bay leaves
- One piece of ginger root
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 bay leaves

Continue this pattern until all materials are used up, ending with the last nutmeg. Tie a knot under the nutmeg and then tie several knots around and over it until it is large. This may be secured with hot glue.

Decorate over top and bottom knots with ribbon of your choice (the plaid holiday ribbon is nice).

I make these every fall and they are very popular at my big craft fair.

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**BUTTERY SPA SCRUBS**

Marci Tsohonis

In essence, these are buttery, scrubby bath melts filled with skin softening ingredients.

This recipe was the direct result of "winging it" with a sampling of ingredients I had in my cupboard. I needed a quick hostess gift for a party last December, and had no plan and no time to shop for it, either, as I had also committed to making an appetizer for the party. I had written the wrong date on my Calendar! (I'm sure you have never done that)

What to do? I knew I had a failed batch of grainy, Shea based Whipped Body Butter in my concoction refrigerator. I thought I’d make Sugar Scrubs, but I was out of Shea Butter. I had no melt and pour soap, often used to give body to standard sugar scrubs. Then I had one of those aha-moments. Rhassoul Clay has mild lathering qualities itself. I melted the body butter on low heat, then stirred a little of it at a time into a mixture of brown sugar and Rhassoul Clay until the texture seemed right. The lady I was making the hostess gift for is hyper sensitive to most scents, whether lab or natural. So, I stirred in some Vanilla Bean Paste from my baking shelf. One TBSP. of Vanilla Bean Paste equals one vanilla bean in strength. The mixture packed nicely into silicone holiday molds, which I then chilled in the refrigerator. There was some oil seepage, but other than that I really liked them. Blotting them with a paper towel saved them. I presented them in a small windowed cookie box, tucked in with waxed paper, like I would cookies. They were a hit! Ladies at the party were curious, because instead of putting them out with the other food gifts to share with her guests, the hostess set them under the tree. They thought she was holding out on an edible confection and gave her a hard time about it!

The next time I made this recipe, I did it on purpose, and I liked them even better. I think this is one of those recipes you can change to suit yourself. However, even using the exact same recipe each time, I have had to adjust the balance of the fixed oil/butter I added to the dry ingredients. I have made this 3x on purpose, and I am still not sure if humidity or product differences are the reason. I have 3 cookie men I saved from last year, to see if they hardened or changed at room temperature. The answer is, not really! It seems better to add the oils slowly to begin with. This holiday season I might add a little powdered Dutch Cocoa to the mixture, just to see what happens, along with a drop or two more oil, or, maybe some dried rose petals.

1 1/2 C Turbinado or regular brown sugar
1 1/2 C powdered Rhassoul Clay
1/4 C melted Shea Butter
1/2 C melted Cocoa Butter
1 T Vanilla Bean Paste

Goosh the melted oil into to the dry ingredients a little at a time, and stop when the mixture is fairly stiff. Stir in the Vanilla Bean Paste or other scent last. Press and pack into silicone or plastic soap molds. Refrigerate for an hour or two, and pop out onto waxed paper.
Grocery Store Preparedness
Tina Sams  essentialherbal.com

Just this week, my daughter who is now a young adult caught a doozy of a cold. Ignoring Mom’s pleas to take elderberry tincture, she quickly progressed to the deep wheezing of bronchitis. I thanked my lucky stars that the herb shelf was lined with everything I needed to make some good syrup, and was grateful to have been busily making different medicines for the last couple of months. However, it has not always been this way. Not so many years ago, I would have found myself struggling to find a way to get her to a doctor, fill a prescription (most likely), and still get to work on time. Whether or not I found someone to take care of her, I would have felt like a terrible mom. This is the reality that the majority of us face.

I have friends who are purists and consider every substance they consume or come in contact with, and friends who eat fast food every day, smoke, drink, and view veggies as a waste of space on their plates. Most everyone falls somewhere in between. The truth is that everyone is just trying to stay one step ahead of the wolves at the door, raise their families, and enjoy a little slice of life where they can find it.

We all have vices. We are all in-betweeners in one way or another. We all eventually find that an unexpected illness can upset the apple cart, and we open the cupboards to find them lacking the things we need.

At that point, it’s too late to place an on-line order and sometimes dragging our sorry selves to a store is about as realistic as wrestling an alligator. The very best thing we can do for ourselves right now is to get a few things stocked up. I’m not talking about exotic herbs or even making up special concoctions to have on hand, necessarily. Certainly it is wonderful to have prepared or pre-purchased herbal products like tinctures and syrups on hand, but if not, all is not lost.

A good starter list for the grocery store:

*Honey – raw and organic local honey is the best. It can be used to whip up syrups, teas, and some very simple recipes.

*Lemons – Always good to have around. They stay good in the crisper for a long time, but pure juice is also available in shelf-stable containers.

*Ginger and REAL Ginger ale – We get crystallized ginger from the bulk store down the road, and try to keep ginger ale on hand. It’s not always easy to do because that ginger ale seems to vanish… Check the ingredient label on the ginger ale to be sure that there is ginger in it!

*Garlic – Garlic also lasts pretty well, but if you don’t use it much in cooking, consider getting the chopped bits in a jar.

*Apple Cider Vinegar – the real thing. Check the label. Often distilled white vinegar is just flavored, so be sure you’re getting the good stuff.

*Elderberry Jelly – we can often find this at the farm markets around here, but if you can’t, ask your grocer to get it in for you.

*Olive oil – besides all the other reasons to have this around, it can become a quick salve or rub when infused with essential oil or some garlic, ginger, cayenne, etc.

*Chicken broth – Although it’s wonderful to make your own, an emergency supply when you’re suffering is better than nothing. Adding lots of garlic and ginger (see above) will make it into something very good.

*Sick Food – Crackers, Applesauce, Jello, and some Italian Water Ice have all been things that we NEEDED but didn’t have in the house.

A few other things we couldn’t live without:

*Rice Sacks – these go by a lot of different names, but basically it is a cloth sack filled ½ way with rice that can go into the microwave for a minute. Great for muscle pains, cold feet, cramps, or just to soothe a sick person. Much like a hot water bottle, but easier to use. Ours is about 18” long and about 4” wide. We use it a lot.

*Licorice Root Sticks – In 20 years, there’s never been a time when we didn’t have these in the house. There really is nothing like them to soothe a sore throat or raw sinuses. As a stir stick in any tea, they make a huge difference. As a child, Molly often had a licorice root stick in her mouth.

*Tea Blends – we have a lot of our own here, and I try to keep them made up with heat-sealable teabags for ease of use, but tea balls work just as well. We also love a certain ginger and honey instant brew that can often be found in health food stores. If you’re not growing and blending your
own, be sure to have a variety on hand.

Now if you’ve got a moment, make up some of these medicines. They’ll keep for a very long time, and you’ll thank yourself later.

**Garlic Honey** - Fill a jar about 1/3 full with coarsely chopped garlic cloves and then fill to the top with honey. Work out any air bubbles. Use in tea (or eat the garlic and honey) when a virus attacks.

**Ginger Elixir** – Into a quart jar, chop a large hand of ginger coarsely. Thinly slice one lemon and add to the jar. Add a couple of cinnamon sticks or a tablespoon of pieces or powder. Cover with honey and stir well. Fill the rest of the way with vodka. The honey/vodka ratio is usually about 1 part honey to 2 parts vodka, however we do it more by feel than by measurement.

**Fire Cider** – I think this concept was originally done by Bragg’s, who has for decades put out a product called Cyclone Cider (I remember marveling at it as a teen), but has more recently been popularized by Rosemary Gladstar. Into a large jar, chop onions, garlic, ginger root, horseradish, and cayenne. Some people add turmeric as well. There are specific recipes on line, but I make it up as I go, depending on what is around. Cover ingredients with apple cider vinegar and let sit until you need it. Too use, mix with a little of the garlic honey, taking about a tablespoon at a time.

None of the items on the shopping list will go to waste, and it’s a good idea to keep an eye on them since they are things that we use in every day cooking. By keeping them in the house, I’ve saved myself (and my fellow shoppers) some very unsightly exposure. If you’ve got your chicken stock frozen, your syrups lined up in gleaming bottles, and your tinctures ready to strain, good! But if you’re an in-betweener like almost all of us, hopefully this will make you feel a little less guilty about that can of chicken noodle soup and saltines that might be the only thing that your little one is willing to eat today.

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**Left-Handed Content**

*Website content writing and editing*
*Blog creation and management*
*Social network monitoring and production*

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**Winter Blues** (Continued from page 19)

**lyptus**

How to use essential oils to improve your mood Essential oils are highly concentrated plant extracts and must be diluted before use to avoid an allergic reaction. They must never be ingested and should be avoided by pregnant women. They can be blended and used in a number of ways to improve overall physical, psychological and emotional well being.

There are several methods you can use:

**Massage**- mix 5-10 drops of the lavender and rosemary oil blend together with 10ml of carrier oil, such as sweet almond or castor oil. Relax and enjoy!

**Diffusion**- simply add drops of essential oil according to the instructions of your diffuser or vaporizer and enjoy the scent throughout your room.

**Bath** - add a teaspoon of your massage oil blend to your bathwater and mix well.

**Atomizer**-
This spray is like a burst of sunshine in your brain on a dreary gray day. this **Sunshine Blend** will uplift the spirit and deflect winter anxiety, grumpiness, and depression. Known to inspire happy bouts of giggling!

**Ingredients**
5 drops organic Sweet Orange oil
3 drops organic Petitgrain essential oil
2 drops organic Roman Chamomile essential oil
2 drops organic Nutmeg essential oil
1 oz organic Witch Hazel extract or vodka

**Directions:**
Drip oils together in a glass spray bottle and mix by rolling the bottle between the palms of your hands. Pour witch hazel extract to the top of the bottle and shake well. Spray in the air or on the body when in need of a smile.

**Final word**

While depression is often helped by a naturopathic approach, it is also important to recognize that counseling may be needed. In severe cases of depression, it is imperative that you see your medical doctor.

I know that depression can cause a downward spiral that may only be stopped with medical help. If, on the other hand, you have feelings of hopelessness and sadness that are not severe enough to warrant medication, then a visit to your naturopath or other alternative therapist may put things in a whole new light for you.

It’s also important to take time to laugh, to have fun. A comedy show, a funny film that you’ve heard about, a friend who always makes you laugh. Maybe your spouse is eager to share something fun and uplifting with you. Or it might be that the two of you wish to simply spend as much time as possible at home, puttering around the house and enjoying some quiet time.
I was just talking with a friend the other day who owns an herb farm. She sells strictly retail. She has no interest in selling wholesale and becomes irritated when someone comes in to her place and wants to buy at wholesale. I shared that I sometimes have people who show up at my workshop, hoping to buy at retail and find it equally frustrating. It is a concept that we live with, but we thought perhaps people who are not in business (and even some of those who are) may not understand the concept.

I’ll start with wholesale. Wholesale is the person who sells to the stores. Often it is the person or company that makes the products. Their customers are the stores. They try not to sell directly to the public because that would put them in direct competition with their customers. If one plans to sell to shops, they must find a way to make their costs low enough to sell at a low price.

Retail or Wholesale?
Maryanne Schwartz  Lancastersoaps.com

Retail is the person who sells directly to the public. In most retail shops, the prices are set and non-negotiable. They are set to allow the retailer to make the margin they need to stay in business.

One other way of selling is consignment. In this case, the “wholesaler” or manufacturer may not be in business long enough to be able to get their prices low enough to sell at a real wholesale price and they are willing to take a risk to get the product into a store. The retailer takes the merchandise without paying for it up front. They pay the manufacturer only after the product has been sold. Usually, in this case, because manufacturer is the one taking the risk, the split is 1/3-2/3 with the retailer keeping only 1/3 of the selling price and the manufacturer (or crafter) taking 2/3.

Just in case you were dealing with a bit of confusion over these terms, I hope this will help.

Kale (Continued from page 12)

In your soup pot, sauté the onion and garlic in the olive oil until wilted, then add your sausage, cooking until there aren’t any more raw spots. Then add your chopped vegetables and cover with your bone broth, or water and tomatoes and white wine. Bring to a gentle boil, cover partially and reduce your heat to gently simmer until the vegetables are almost fork-tender. Then add your chopped kale, and gently simmer, uncovered, poking it into the broth as needed, until your kale is bright green and still tender and sweet. Adjust taste with salt and pepper. This is delicious served with home made garlic croutons (I use stale bread, tossed with olive oil and fresh garlic and baked on a cookie tray at 350 until they get crunchy.) Sometimes I add a pinch of cayenne and sometimes I make this with potato, ginger, cubed kabocha squash and omit the tomatoes. It’s really hard to mess this soup up, as long as you add the kale at the end and don’t overcook it.

Until this past year, I prepared kale (or collards) nearly every single day. It was a habit, and one that I wasn’t aware of until my 13 year old son said in response to a comment I’d made about Kale, “Why, because we eat it every single day?” and I thought, “Oh, oh, he’s right! Hahaha! Yes, we eat it every single day.”

Resources:

Feeding the Whole Family, Cynthia Lair, Moon Smile Press (This book has a few greens recipes in it that have inspired my own cooking!)

The New Whole Foods Encyclopedia, Rebecca Wood, Penguin Books


Old Country Store Percolator Punch

3 whole cinnamon sticks
4½ tsp. whole cloves
½ tsp. salt
9 cups unsweetened pineapple juice
9 cups cranberry juice
4½ cups water
1 cup brown sugar

(31)

(This recipe is served every year at the open house of The Old Country Store in Intercourse, PA)

Place the spices in the percolator part of the pot, or wrap them on a cloth sack so they can be removed from the finished punch if you are making this in a crockpot. Mix the juices, water and brown sugar and put in the pot or in the crockpot. Perk away or set crockpot on high for 1/2 hour before lowering heat. Remove spices and serve.
for him to preside over and protect as the Father of this year’s crop. He is given a permanent perch for the entire growing season and instructed to watch over the land and protect it from pests and unwelcome intruders. Traditionally, the Butze is created in male form, because he carries the seed for the next generation of plants that are planted into the Mother Earth. He is to be visited throughout the growing season and brought offerings for his service.

When the growing season dwindles and the Butzemán’s tasks are completed he is to be burned along with all else that is not needed and let go of this time of year. This traditionally was completed between the Fall Equinox and Halloween. It was believed that if the Butzemán was not destroyed before October 31, his empty shell body would become animated by an evil spirit. Hence the scary stories of headless horsemen and haunted scarecrows!

Remembering the Kammesege in February symbolizes both the birth and rebirth process. Creating a well crafted Butzemán is considered just one of many ways to bridge the sacred connection between humans and plants and to acknowledge the gifts given us by the plant world.

"Warm thanks to my kindred Deitsch "brother," Robert Lusch-Schreiber, for his help, tireless dedication and research into the ways of our ancestors and for keeping the spirit alive for many more generations to follow +++

In case you have some corn frozen from the harvest:

**Corn Chowder**
Susan Hess  FarmatCoventry.com

Sauté together in 4 tablespoons of butter:

2-3 leeks cleaned and chopped
4 large stalks of celery chopped
1 large red or yellow pepper, chopped

When soft add:

1 bag frozen white corn
1 bag frozen yellow corn
2 quarts chicken stock

When corn is soft remove 2 heaping cups of soup ‘solids’ with a pyrex measuring cup.

Puree remaining soup in pot with an immersion blender to desired texture.

Add the 2 cups of soup solids back into the pot along with a pint of heavy cream (or 1 can of coconut milk) and a few tablespoons of chopped parsley.

Adding some pesto at this point adds nice flavor, too, if you have some on hand.

As the holiday season approaches, wouldn’t it be nice to package up your own herbal blends to serve when guests arrive or to pack up and give as little hostess gifts?

**Your Own Poultry Seasoning**

Bell’s Seasoning is the traditional, usual go-to brand beloved by our mothers and our grandmothers to give that stuffing/dressing/filling the taste we love. So with a nod to the iconic yellow and red box with the turkey on the front, here’s a suggestion to blend your own in minutes then package it up with a pretty bow.

**Your Own BBQ Sauce**

To 1 cup ketchup add 1 tsp. each chili powder, dry mustard, paprika salt and pepper. Slather on precooked wings; broil until browned and serve as an hors d’oeuvre.

**Your own Lemon Mayonnaise**

1 C best mayonnaise -- or make you own
1 t freshly squeezed lemon juice
salt, pepper to taste

Serve as a dipping sauce for shrimp cocktail along with the traditional red sauce or:

**Make your own Cocktail Sauce**

1 C ketchup
1 t pickle juice
1 t horseradish
1 t lemon juice

Sit back and relax -- you’ve got the holiday entertaining scene covered.
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NEXT ISSUE - January - February 2014
Deadline November 15

We don’t have a specific theme for the upcoming issue, but it is always somewhat seasonal. In January and February, we’re looking ahead to the next garden while ensconced in our cocoons drinking tea or cocoa, staying healthy with our herbs. We’re eating soups and stews and are starting to look around for new ideas to jazz it up a little. At this time of the year, we are indoors, freeing up time that allows us to start considering picking up a new craft or interest to try for the first time. We’re planning and scheduling markets and craft shows, ordering seeds, and looking ahead. Mostly though, we’re keeping warm and enjoying the coziness of winter. This will be our 13th Jan/Feb issue, and we’d like it to be the best ever. That won’t be easy, but I think we can do it.

Do you have something you’d like to share with readers? We’d love to hear from you!

Pumpkin Butter
Karen Hegre

1 can (15 oz.) pure pumpkin
1 medium apple, peeled and grated
1 C apple juice
1/2 C packed brown sugar
3/4 t pumpkin pie spice

Combine pumpkin, apple, apple juice, sugar and pumpkin pie spice in medium, heavy-duty saucepan. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to low.
Cook, stirring occasionally, for 1 1/2 hours. Serve with buttermilk biscuits, breads, corn muffins or hot cereal. Store in airtight container in refrigerator for up to 2 months.
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Persimmon Cake

PERSIMMON CAKE

Tina Sams essentialherbal.com

1/2 cup shortening
1/2 cup white sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 cup persimmon pulp
1 cup all purpose flour
2 eggs
2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp crushed cardamom seeds

Grease an 8" x 8" baking dish. Set oven for 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Cream shortening in a mixing bowl with the sugars, beating well. Add eggs and persimmon, and mix well. Add dry ingredients slowly, and the spices, and mix until well blended (I used a mixer). Bake for about 25 minutes, or until top is firm to the touch. Cake will be a medium brown.
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