



Frosty Hollow Herb Guild Newsletter

December 2009



Herb Guild Changes for New Year!!!!

The Frosty Hollow Herb Guild will be making some minor changes to help offset the cost of the newsletter. If you plan on attending meetings, please note that we ask for an additional \$5 per year and for those of you who enjoy the newsletter and do not attend any meetings \$10 per year will be asked of you. If you would like to receive the newsletter, please contact Deanna Sherman at 814-435-9490 or deanna@pottercountyleducouncil.org.

Eucalyptus Aromatherapy



Aromatherapy has been around longer than most people would expect, with the word first being coined in 1928 by a French chemist called Renee-Maurice Gattefosse when he discovered the effects of putting his burning arm in some lavender oil during an accident at a lab in which he was working. However, it's only in recent years that oils like eucalyptus have really been catching on with aromatherapists. There are a few reasons why eucalyptus aromatherapy is starting to become so popular.

But, before going too much further, here's a brief definition of what aromatherapy is all about: it's a holistic approach to treating spiritual, physical, and physiological problems through the external use of essential oils. This could include adding them to a warm bath, applying directly to the body through massage, or breathing in the vapors. As you can see there are a number of ways that it can be applied.

It has an advantage over the other more traditional forms of aromatherapy in as much as it's already recognized as having beneficial properties. In its undiluted oil state, eucalyptus is currently being used to help with joint and muscular pains, sprains, poor circulation, rheumatoid arthritis, and sinus problems.

With those credentials, it's easy to see how eucalyptus could have a number benefits over other oils being used in aromatherapy. Eucalyptus is also widely used in many decongestive medicines, so it makes it a must if you're looking for an oil that you can vaporize in order to inhale it and clear your hay fever, sneezing attacks, respiratory problems, flu, and headaches.

The easiest way to vaporize and inhale the eucalyptus is to take a bowl of boiling water, add two drops of eucalyptus oil, and then cover your head and the bowl with a towel and inhale the vapors - but remember to keep your eyes shut while you're doing it.

Eucalyptus, while being nontoxic, can be an irritant, so you don't want to get any undiluted eucalyptus oil on your skin, and you certainly don't want to open your eyes when doing your eucalyptus aromatherapy inhalation because it will have a burning sensation on them.

There are many forms of eucalyptus aromatherapy that you can use quickly and easily yourself. If you do decide that you want to try out the inhalation method, then be careful not to get any undiluted eucalyptus oil on yourself. If you chose to use it to rub on yourself topically, then blend it with something like jojoba oil.

Eucalyptus is a fantastic ingredient in any medicinal or therapeutic remedy - and could be just the thing you're looking for to help you with a few of your aches, pains and mild breathing complaints.

To Ease Sinuses:

2 drops Eucalyptus
2 drops Peppermint
2 drops Tea Tree

Boil a pot of water and remove it from the stove. While it is still steaming, add 2 drops peppermint, 2 drops eucalyptus and 2 drops tea tree. Immediately cover the pot and head with a towel and inhale for 3 minutes. Keep eyes closed.

To Ease Coughs:

2 drops Eucalyptus
2 drops Lavender

Boil a pot of water and remove it from the stove. While it is still steaming, add 2 drops eucalyptus and 2 drops lavender. Immediately cover the pot and head with a towel and inhale for 3 minutes. Keep eyes closed.

To Ease Coughs throughout the day:

2 drops Eucalyptus
2 drops Lavender

Add 2 drops eucalyptus and 2 drops lavender to 4 teaspoons of our massage base oil and apply to the throat and chest (this will make enough for several applications).



Herbal Health

While using herbs to help treat ailments may seem like a modern phenomena, it has been around for over 5000 years. Ancient Egyptians used oils in what was probably an early version of aromatherapy. In the past almost all medicines we took were herbs. Aspirin, for example, it's main ingredient (acetylsalicylic acid) comes from the bark of a willow tree. Others include morphine, which is an active element of the opium plant. Atrophine, comes from Belladonna leaves and the heart drug Digitoxin comes from purple foxglove leaves just to name a few.

Calendula -Calendula Officinalis

Helps relieve diaper rash (ointment), mild germ killing action makes it good for earaches.

Cascara Sagrada - Rhamnus purshiana

Helps relieve constipation.

Catmint - Nepeta cataria

Reduces fever.

Catnip -Nepeta cataria

Contains chemicals called nepetalactone isomers, that are cousins to chemicals found in valarian. sedative, helps with anxiety.

Cayenne -Capsicum annuum

Stimulate the circulatory system.

Celery Seed - Apium graveolens

Increases the elimination of uric acids.

Chamomile -Anthemis nobilis Relaxant, great bedtime drink, slows down central nervous system.

Chickweed - Stellaria media

Good for itchy skin, soothes a rash (ointment)

Chives -Allium schoenoprasum L

Rich in vitamin C and Iron, helpful in treating anemia.

Cleavers - Galium aparine

Reduces inflammation and tones the lymphatic system.

Cloves -Syzygium aromaticum

Clove oil is rich in eugenol, dentists use eugenol as a local anesthetic. Help reduce tooth ache pain.

Coltsfoot - Tussilago farfara (Horsehoof)

Soothes a cough, fight bronchial infections.

Cramp Bark (Black Haw)

Muscle relaxant, reduces menstrual cramps.

Dandelion -Taraxacum officinale L.

Gentle laxative, well recognized liver remedy, rich in minerals and iron, helps to prevent iron deficiency anemia.

Devil's Claw -Harpagophytum procumbens

Anti-inflammatory arthritis remedy.

Dong Quai -Angelica sinensis

Gynecological and menstrual problems, regulates menstrual cycle, eases cramping and suppresses PMS. Rich in Vitamins A, B12 and E. May help to prevent anemia.

Recipe Corner

Winter Herb Pasta

- * 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- * 5 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- * 3 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
- * 1 1/2 cups coarse fresh bread crumbs (preferably from a baguette)
- * 1 pound dried bucatini or spaghetti
- * 2 teaspoons chopped sage
- * 2 teaspoons chopped rosemary
- * 2 teaspoons chopped thyme
- * 1 cup chopped parsley



Heat butter and 1 tablespoon oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium heat until foam subsides. Cook garlic, stirring, until fragrant and pale golden. Add bread crumbs and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a bowl, reserving skillet.

Meanwhile, cook bucatini in a pasta pot of boiling salted water (3 tablespoons salt for 6 quarts water) until al dente. Reserve 1 cup cooking water, then drain.

Heat remaining 1/4 cup oil in skillet over medium heat until it shimmers, then cook sage, rosemary, and thyme, stirring, 2 minutes. Add pasta, 1/2 cup reserved water, and parsley and toss well. Add more water to moisten if necessary. Serve sprinkled with bread crumbs.

Lemon Thyme Sorbet

- * 1/2 cup water
- * 1/2 cup sugar
- * 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice and zest
- * 2 tablespoons fresh lemon thyme or regular thyme finely chopped



Combine the water, sugar, lemon juice, zest and thyme in a saucepan. Bring to a boil and simmer for approximately 10 minutes. Remove the mixture from heat and let cool completely. Strain into a freezer-proof bowl or pan. Freeze for one hour and then remove from the freezer and beat mixture using an electric mixer. Repeat the entire process twice more.

Herbal Tuna Salad

Ingredients:

- 2 hard-cooked eggs
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon prepared mustard
- 1 teaspoon dried dill weed
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary
- salt and pepper to taste
- 2 (6 ounce) cans tuna in water, drained

In a blender or food processor, combine eggs, mayonnaise, sour cream, Worcestershire sauce, and mustard. Season with dill, rosemary, and lemon zest, salt, and pepper. Blend until smooth, then spoon into a medium bowl. Stir in tuna.





Tarragon History

Tarragon, botanically-known as *Artemisia dracunculus*, is believed to have been brought to Europe from Mongolia and Siberia by invading Mongols in the 13th century. Although it was native to these remote Chinese and Russian areas, perhaps its remote birthplace contributes to its lack of popularity prior to this time. By the 15th century, it was popular enough in England to make its way to American shores with the colonists.



In the Far East, true tarragon was known as "little dragon," a reference to its root system. It was thought to cure snakebites and other venomous bites. The herb was cooked and eaten as a vegetable centuries ago. Home gardeners with tarragon plants will know that if not divided regularly, tarragon will actually strangle itself.

Oddly enough, true tarragon is generally sold as French tarragon. In the United States, False or Russian tarragon (*Artemisia dracunculoides*) is regularly sold as tarragon, but it pales in taste and aroma in comparison to true tarragon.

French tarragon has a glossy narrow, spear-shaped leaf with smooth edges. Russian tarragon looks very similar, but the leaves are more narrow and spiky and the flavor is more bitter.

Tarragon Cooking Tips

- When tarragon is dried, the oils dissipate. Thus, fresh tarragon has a much more intense flavor than dried, and should be used sparingly.
- To retain the most flavor of fresh tarragon during storage, freeze whole sprigs in an airtight baggie for 3 to 5 months. No need to defrost before using.
- Dried tarragon should be kept in a sealed container in a cool, dark place and used within 1 year.
- Heat greatly intensifies the flavor of tarragon, both fresh and dried.
- Tarragon vinegar is easy to make. Put fresh tarragon sprigs into a sterilized bottle of distilled white vinegar. Taste after a few days. Continue steeping until it suits your taste. Once desired strength is achieved, remove the sprigs.
- Vinegar can also be used to preserve fresh tarragon sprigs. Store in the refrigerator. Rinse and pat dry before use. Use the preserved tarragon in sauces, butters, or any recipe where fresh is not required.
- Tarragon is also a good herb to use in infused oils.
- Tarragon is a prime ingredient in Béarnaise Sauce and the French favorite herb mixture, fines herbes.
- If you run out of tarragon, you can substitute chervil or a dash of fennel seed or anise seed in a pinch, but the flavor will not be as intended.
- 1/2 ounce fresh tarragon = 1/3 cup.
- 1 Tablespoon fresh tarragon = 1 teaspoon dried.

Chicken Breasts with Capers

- * 2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) butter
- * 2 chicken breast halves with skin & bone
- * 3 shallots, chopped
- * 1/2 cup tarragon vinegar
- * 1 cup canned low-salt chicken broth
- * 1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon



Melt butter in heavy medium skillet over medium-high heat. Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper. Add to skillet and cook until golden, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer chicken to plate. Add shallots to skillet and sauté 30 seconds. Add vinegar; boil until reduced to glaze, about 2 minutes. Stir in broth. Return chicken, skin side up, to skillet. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer until cooked through, about 12 minutes. Using tongs, transfer chicken to 2 plates. Add tarragon to liquid in skillet. Increase heat to medium-high; boil uncovered until liquid is slightly reduced, about 2 minutes. Spoon sauce over chicken.

Lemon Tarragon Green Beans

- * 2 pounds green beans, trimmed
- * 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- * 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, or to taste
- * 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh tarragon leaves, or to taste



In a large kettle of boiling salted water blanch beans in 2 batches 2 to 3 minutes, or until just tender. With a slotted spoon transfer beans as blanched to a large bowl filled with ice and cold water. Drain beans well and pat dry. Beans may be prepared up to this point 1 day ahead and chilled covered.

Just before serving, in a large bowl toss together beans, oil, lemon



History of Gingerbread

The first gingerbread is thought to have been made by Catholic monks in Europe for special holidays and festivals. England, France, and especially Germany were known to eat and celebrate with gingerbread treats. Ginger was called “zingebar” in Latin, “gingerbras” in Old French and “gingerbread” in Medieval England. “Lebkuchen” is the German word for gingerbread.

Until the fifteenth century, “gingerbread” referred only to preserved ginger itself. Ginger was found to have preservative qualities and in the fifteenth century it began to be used in cakes and cookies. Crusaders returning to Europe from the Middle East brought back spices such as ginger and catholic monks formed the ginger into cakes and pressed it into molds. Gingerbread also became a popular treat at European fairs and was added to meat to preserve it and help cover up the strong odor of aging meat.



Gingerbread was not baked in homes in the fifteenth century, but rather was made by government-recognized guilds. Nuremberg, Germany was the location of the best known guild. The German guild was famous for elaborately detailing the lebkuchen with gold paint or with icing. The guild was called the Lebkuchner and was formed in 1643 as a means of quality-control reasons as well as a way to limit competition in making the lebkuchen gingerbread.

Gingerbread Pancakes

- 1¼ cups whole-wheat flour
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ¾ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- ¼ teaspoon grated nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon grated orange zest
- 5½ tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 1 large egg
- 2 cups whole milk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- Apple butter, maple syrup



1. Whisk together the flours, brown sugar, baking powder, salt, spices and orange zest. Set aside.
2. Melt 3 tablespoons butter and whisk it together with the egg, milk and vanilla. Pour the liquid into the flour mixture and whisk until combined. (Some lumps are OK.) Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least three hours or overnight.
3. Using the remaining butter, heat about 1 teaspoon at a time in a large skillet over medium heat. Pour ¼ cup of batter into the pan for each pancake. When bubbles appear on the surface and pancakes appear slightly brown around the edges, flip and cook the other side. Serve with apple butter and maple syrup.

The quality of the Nuremberg guild’s lebkuchen gingerbread was so high that it was even used as currency for paying city taxes. The lebkuchen was also considered a gift worthy of heads of state and royalty. Lebkuchen gingerbread is still sold in Nuremberg today.

Gingerbread cut into shapes, especially hearts, and tied with ribbon became a popular treat sold in fairs throughout Europe. Human and animal figures were also popular. The Brothers Grimm fairy tale, Hansel and Gretel, inspired the German “hexenhausle,” or witch’s house. “Lebkuchenhausle,” the gingerbread house, was made with large slabs of lebkuchen and decorated with sweets.

The first gingerbread in the United States is thought to have been brought by Swiss Catholic monks who founded the St. Meinrad Archabbey in Indiana in 1854. Monks gave gingerbread to the sick and baked it for holiday celebrations. Baking gingerbread cookies and gingerbread houses to celebrate the Christmas holiday became a tradition in the United States that is still popular today.

American bakers often sweeten gingerbread with molasses, while British bakers may use syrup and brown sugar. Germans usually sweeten lebkuchen gingerbread with honey. Honey is the traditional sweetener used in the original lebkuchen made by the guild in Nuremberg as the area had many forests containing beehives. Aside from ginger, cinnamon is the next most common spice used in gingerbread. Cloves, nutmeg, cardamom, and sometimes anise are other spices commonly found in many gingerbread recipes.