

The Magazine for the Everyday Herbalist



THE ESSENTIAL HERBAL



Pickles

Saffron

Herbal Concoctions

Prepare for Winter

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SAMPLE MINI-MAGAZINE

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We've put together this miniature sample of the magazine to share so that you can get an idea of what we do here at The Essential Herbal. The regular magazine is 32 full sized pages. Into each issue, we pack practical information, recipes, instructions, and ideas. Many thanks to our contributors for making this possible. They come up with some unique ideas that are fun and do-able. Hopefully you will find something useful to you and worth saving on these pages.

We began publication in 2002, and in 2012 we started offering print or pdf delivery options. Print is only available in the US, but pdf's go everywhere.

Since we began, we have found that although we never know exactly what material we will have for each generally seasonal issue right up until the deadline, it always falls together spectacularly with just the perfect blend of medicinal, culinary, fragrant, crafting, and growing information. There are projects and guidance to begin learning something new, keeping our readers busy right up until they start looking for the next magazine. We put out 6 issues a year, and each one is delightful.

So please enjoy this small sample. Hang onto it, and if you find that you'd like to become a part of it - as a subscriber, writer, or advertiser (or even all three!), visit our website or email us for more information.

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The Essential Herbal Magazine

The Magazine for the Everyday Herbalist

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FENNEL AND ORANGE SALAD

3 T orange juice
1/4 C extra virgin olive oil
2 T red wine vinegar
Salt and pepper to taste

2 C packed baby arugula
1 medium fennel bulb, trimmed, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced

3 large navel oranges, peeled and sliced into thin rounds
1 small red onion, thinly sliced
1/3 C sliced almonds, toasted

Blend first 4 ingredients to make a dressing.
Arrange arugula on 4 plates. Toss together fennel, orange slices, onion and dressing. Spoon over arugula and sprinkle with toasted almonds

MEMORIES OF COUNTRY PICKLES

Debra Sturdevant , www.theCountryArtist.com

The seasons come, the seasons go. My family is long gone now but memories are well seated. I still live here on my beloved country hill where I spent my youth exploring fields and forests, catching fireflies in mom's Mason jars under the summer stars and sitting with Mom and Dad on the old country porch listening to stories I would carry on. I still reside here on the hill and prepare for the long northern winter in the same manner my folks did. Dad was the gardener and my mother was the herbalist and kitchen coordinator pairing their handed down skills to make this old house a home.

In September when I was back in school down in the valley I always wondered what my Mom was creating in her country kitchen as I watched the clock on the classroom wall waiting anxiously for the bus ride home. After what seemed like an eternity of travel on the old dusty roads and endless stops I would arrive at my own long driveway.

The fondest of all my Fall memories is the scent that greeted me emanating through the screen door of sweet and spicy Icicle pickles. I always tried to steal a chunk or two from the old black canner before she packed them into a lined up army of steaming mason jars. I don't think any other garden harvest can compare to this sweet piece of heaven especially when old man winter arrives. Many folks like to hurry recipes in this hectic day and age but nothing can surpass the flavor rewarded from an old fashioned crock cured pickle that is removed daily to have spices and sugar added then heated sending the most lovely scent of cloves and spices throughout the house. Each Fall I bring a piece of my childhood back through the scent and taste of mom's wonderful pickles I now share with you...

Icicle Pickles

(crisp,spicy, and sweet)

About 24 pickling cucumbers (2gal)
Split, quartered, remove seeds if large.

1. Dissolve 1 pint canning salt in one gallon boiling water and pour over cukes in large enamel pan or crock. Cover and let stand three days
2. Drain and cover with fresh boiling water without salt let stand 24 hours
3. Drain and cover with fresh boiling water with alum the size of an egg. Let stand 24 hours



4. Drain

5. In separate pot mix:

- 2 1/2 qts apple cider vinegar
- 16 cups sugar
- 2 tablespoons pickling spice
- 1 teaspoon of whole cloves
- 2 sticks of cinnamon

6. Bring liquid to a boil and pour over cucumbers and let stand 24 hours

7. Each of the next four days drain off the liquid, bring to a boil and pour over the pickles. On the fourth day can.

Mom added on the bottom of the yellowed recipe card in her own penciled handwriting "Yum!" and "Yum" they are.

Illustration also by Debra Sturdevant - The Country Artist

GROCERY STORE PREPAREDNESS

Tina Sams, www.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 HEAT SACK – 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-betweenener 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.



OVEN TOMATO SAUCE

When tomatoes are plentiful, this is an easy way to prepare them to use now or to freeze for winter. It is not a hard and fast recipe, but more a technique with basic guidelines!

Oil well, or spray a baking dish (I use 1 9 x 13" dish) with Pam.

Peel*, core and quarter enough tomatoes to fill the baking dish.

Squeeze out some of the seedy parts while you are preparing them.**

Chop an onion or two, a couple of cloves of garlic, a few leaves of basil and a sprig or two of oregano.

Now, use your imagination as to what else to add. I like to chop a few sweet peppers and a box of baby portabello mushrooms and add them to the mix.

Sprinkle all the chopped vegetables over the tomatoes, salt and pepper well, then dribble about 1/4 to 1/2 C.

Olive oil over the whole thing.

Bake in a 400 degree oven for about an hour and a half, stirring about every half hour.



Serve on spaghetti with mozzarella and parmesan cheeses.

If you make a second pan, cook and pack in a Zip Loc(tm) bag to freeze for winter feasting!

*To peel, just dip each tomato briefly into boiling water, then plunge them into ice water. The peel just slips off!

**If it's too hot to bake right now, just freeze the tomatoes at this point and defrost when the weather is a little cooler to finish the recipe!

HERBAL CONCOCTIONS

Sandy Michelsen

Over the years, I have collected herbal recipes from books, magazine articles, the Internet and any other place I could find them. Feel free to share them with your friends. You will have nice natural products to use, and they make wonderful gifts.

These recipes are simple, straightforward and you can easily find the ingredients. Have fun with them while learning about the joy of herbs. Hope you enjoy the following:

Clear the Air Spray

1-3/4 oz. water
1/4 oz brandy
20 drops Rosemary Essential Oil
20 drops Lavender Essential Oil

Put in a small spray bottle and use it whenever you feel the need.

Rosemary is good for relieving headaches and tension.

Lavender reduces stress and anxiety.

Also good for "clearing" your house.

Spearmint Honey

(This was an experiment that turned out great)

Melt a cup of honey in a double boiler
Add 1/3 - 1/2 cup dried spearmint leaves.
Mix it all together and then let it cool.
Let it sit for at least an hour (longer is better)..and then heat it back up again.
Strain out the herb and pour into a jar(s).

Makes a great gift and it is wonderful in tea!

Soothing Salve

(Good for skin – everything from burns to diaper rash)
I use Olive Oil in my recipe.

1/3 C Self Heal infused oil
1/3 C Calendula infused oil
1/3 C Chickweed infused oil
Mix equal parts of each herbal oil in double boiler
(or a Pyrex measuring cup in water)
Add 5 T of shredded beeswax
When it's all completely melted, immediately pour into your containers.

Ear Oil

(Good for Earaches and Swimmer's Ear)

1 C of Mullein Oil (that you made over the summer by collecting the blossoms daily) or I am sure you can find some at your health food store or on the Internet.
Add a clove of garlic and some dried Lobelia and let it sit for a month or so. Then strain off the herbs and put it in a bottle with a dropper. To use: put a dropper full in the ear and cover it with a cotton ball. Adding garlic helps fight infection and Lobelia kills the pain.

Lip Salve

(Heals lips if they are chapped and keeps the moisturized so they don't chap again.)

1/2 C Calendula infused Olive Oil
1/2 C Plantain infused Olive Oil
4 T Shredded Beeswax
6 drops – Peppermint oil

Melt together in a double boiler. Add Peppermint oil after you take it off the heat.
Pour into containers.

SPICE COOKIES AND PUMPKIN DIP

Marcy Lautanen-Raleigh, www.backyardpatch.com

Cookies

1-1/2 C butter, softened	4 t baking soda
2 C sugar	2 t cinnamon
2 eggs	1 t ea. grd. ginger & cloves
1/2 C molasses	1 t salt
4 C all-purpose flour	Additional sugar

Pumpkin Dip

1 pkg. (8 ounces) cream cheese	2 C confectioners' sugar
2 C pumpkin pie filling	3/4 to 1 1/2 t cinnamon

Directions

In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy.

Beat in eggs and molasses. Combine the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, cloves and salt; add to creamed mixture and mix well. Chill overnight.

Shape into 1/2-inch balls; roll in sugar. Place two in. apart on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 375° for six minutes or until edges begin to brown. Cool for two minutes before removing to a wire rack.

For dip, beat cream cheese in a large bowl until smooth. Beat in pumpkin pie filling. Add the sugar and cinnamon, then mix well. Serve with cookies. Store leftover dip in the refrigerator.



Almost all cultures have included Saffron in their cuisine. From the ancient Phoenicians to the Pennsylvania Dutch, saffron has always been the most costly and desirable of the seasonings. Spanish paella or arroz con pollo, the fisherman's bouillabaisse, Swedish saffron buns, Indian curries, African couscous, Italian risotto, chicken potpie and gravies, fish sauces and coloring for butter and cheeses are just a few of its uses in international

cooking. Commercially cultivated in Spain, saffron can be grown in all temperate climates. It is a fall blooming crocus (*Crocus sativus*) which is planted in spring or summer to bloom next fall. The harvest is the



little orange stigmas, three per flower, which accounts for its costliness. More than 200,000 stigmas make a pound of saffron, all laboriously picked by hand.

Once the herb of only the wealthy, thrifty Pennsylvania Dutch ensure their supply of this distinctive seasoning by growing their own crop. Saffron is easily grown in any sunny well drained garden where it enjoys an occasional feeding of bone-meal and compost and soon forms a colony of little productive bulbs.

Plant the corms two inches apart and three to five inches deep in average well drained soil but – a word to the wise –

mark the spot! The bulbs are dormant most of the time and vulnerable to over planting or inadvertent weeding. When the small lavender crocus like flowers appear (they open only in sun) harvest the orange stigmas, air dry them on a sheet of white paper and then store your precious saffron in a tightly lidded dark glass bottle.



Used in Biblical times as seasoning, medicine and dye, in ancient Rome, Greece and the Orient Saffron was also a perfume. Aromatic, hot and pungent to the taste, today it colors cakes, and confections golden yellow or adds distinctive flavor to exotic dishes. The Arabs believed that saffron kept in the house would drive away dreaded lizards. In the middle ages, adulterers of saffron were beheaded for their crime. It has been written that Henry VIII so craved saffron that he forbade the ladies of his court to use the rare spice to dye their golden hair. The Song of Solomon provides a lyrical reference "...an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits: camphour, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes. With all the chief spices: ... Awake, O north wind: and come, thou South: blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."



FIELD NOTES AUTUMN MINI '18



No matter what, time outside makes me feel better. Pulling a few weeds, checking on my garden, walking by the creek, or harvesting wild herbs are all simple little things that change my perspective. Still, some days I have to drag myself out into the heat of the day, forgetting that once I am out there it will be hard to stop exploring, stop fondling plants and looking at buds, cones, and seedpods, to walk back to the door and return to inside work.

As the fall approaches, it becomes more important to relish the days that call me outside. Suddenly the work inside loses its urgency as I realize how soon the dark, cold days will shove me indoors and I will long to see the green buds pushing up from the earth and smell the fragrant grasses and blossoms of summer again. Now I am outside until the very last of the sun falls behind the trees and hills, leaving me to pick my way to the house in the near darkness. It will be with a touch of sadness that I'll note each fading bloom as the bushes and perennials are trimmed and pruned, and I'll mourn the days that I didn't spend enough of outside (momentarily forgetting how hot and humid it was at the time). It's the same every year. I never learn.

So while we have these golden days before winter sets in, let's go play outside and explore. Let's look at the stars, smell the earth, hear the wind rustle the leaves, and feel it toss our hair around.

Peace,

Tina

MAKE A BAGEL BIRDFEEDER!

Melissa Nicole Sidelinger, melissasidelinger@hughes.net

Would you like to attract more songbirds to your home this spring? If so, here's an easy project for an edible birdfeeder that can be hung in your backyard or outside of a bedroom window. My sister and I have been making these things since we were little kids, and it's still a joy to see the chickadees and nuthatches eagerly gathered around them. Our biggest problem is keeping the local squirrels from hogging the bagels all to themselves. It seems that they enjoy this treat just as much as the birds do!

Springtime Bagel Birdfeeder

Materials:

Bagel

Jar of peanut butter

Birdseed, rolled oats, or uncooked millet

Shelled sunflower seeds

String, yarn, or twine



Cut the string so that it measures about two feet in length. Thread the string through the hole in the bagel and tie the ends into a sturdy double knot. Spread peanut butter on both sides of the bagel with a butter knife. Cover the peanut butter with the birdseed, oats, or millet, and then press in a handful of sunflower seeds. Hang the birdfeeder on a tree branch or in another suitable place outside. You can also bypass the string and set the bagel in an old dish or pie pan, if you prefer. Either way, it's a good idea to bring the feeder in at night if you have any issues with the wildlife living in your area. I live above 8,000 feet in the Colorado Rocky Mountains, and we always have to make sure not to leave out any 'treats' that could be discovered by our resident family of black bears!