

THE ESSENTIAL HERBAL

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SUMMER



The Magazine for the Everyday Herbalist

# WITH LOOSE INCENSE, WE ARE ALL ARTISANS

Tina Sams

We've all seen magicians toss magic powder into the air with a flourish, resulting in colored smoke, a disappearance, or a cute bunny showing up unexpectedly. In many ways loose incense has that same sort of magical effect (without the bunnies). Set some resin blended with herbs or woods to a sufficient heat source, and the air is infused with scents evocative of wooded glens, summer gardens or autumn cookspaces.

Years ago my sister and I were the herb ladies at a local renaissance festival. We were known for our "herb walls", pegboard lined walls which held hundreds of pre-weighed ounce packages of herbs. We kept what we called a "shake" bag of all the bits left over after weighing the pounds into ounces. Our antique scale never gave us more than 15 ounces per pound, so there were always leftovers. In order to create interest and draw customers, we kept charcoal disks burning and periodically sprinkled a pinch of this random blend over them. So began our love of incense making.

This loose form of incense is the simplest, and in many ways the most creative method. Whereas formed incense line cones and sticks require very specific measurements and ratios of ingredients, there are no such barriers for loose blends.

Most often, a very scant pinch of the blend smolders upon a specially made self-igniting charcoal disk. Care must be taken because indoors the smoke can be overwhelming unless a light hand is used. Resins can be simmered in water; a blend of lavender buds and frankincense is lovely simmered or smoldered. Blends can be tossed into campfires or heated woodstoves. For the most part though, incense is burned

Blending is where personal preferences come into play. For instance, to me a blend starts with a resin (pine, copal, myrrh, frankincense, dragon's blood, etc) but may not be at all important to someone else. Yellow sandalwood was at one time de rigueur but in recent years it has become too precious and so we save it for very special blends and use it sparingly. Powdered or cut and sifted fragrant herbs and spices are good inclusions. Many other symbolic additions are possible in small quantities too.

We live on a Christmas tree farm, and the trees are trimmed each summer. In the fall and again in January, I gather the drying drops of sap that results from the cuts to the trees and put that sticky mixture in the deep freeze for a year to dry out. It is my favorite resin to use for personal blends because it means a lot to me.

Along with that, I blend herbs that I've grown over the summer. Lavender, thyme, lemon verbena, sages, basil, mints, and many other plants from the garden or found in the wild can be used. Incenses can be made in a way that uses the language of flowers to make them meaningful, they can be carefully designed, or they can be a haphazard mixture of the

things that make you happy.

Sometimes burning changes the scents of substances in surprising ways.

To find out if a scent remains true, light a charcoal disk and burn the tiniest pinch of each of the substances being considered. It was a surprise to us that orange peel was unpleasant when burned.

Essential oils (and synthetic fragrance oils) almost always retain their true scents when burned, and a very small quantity goes a long way.

As always, record the blend as it is being created. It would be sad to stumble upon the ultimate blend and not be able to duplicate it.

Make very small batches. If it is perfect and the recipe is recorded, more can always be made later. If it doesn't turn out as was hoped, using a teaspoon measure or smaller as "a part" (as in one part resin, 1/2 part lavender, 1 part rose petals, 2 drops patchouli essential oil, for instance) means that much less material will be wasted.

Most importantly, enjoy the process and trust your own creativity. Going back to our shake bag from the renaissance faire, it should be fairly clear that it is difficult to blend a loose incense that is bad.

Some people require something like a recipe, so in that case here is one of ratios that I tend towards:

- 1 part resin (small chunks or powdered)
- 3 to 4 parts dried botanicals and/or wood powder
- 1 drop essential or fragrance oil per teaspoon (optional)

Store in an air-tight container out of the light and it will last for years. Depending on the ingredients the scent might fade somewhat as years pass, but I have some that is close to 2 decades old that are still delightful.

Some simple blends...

- 1 part myrrh
- 2 parts ground patchouli
- 2 parts ground lavender buds
- 4 drops patchouli essential oil
- mix well
  
- 1 part copal
- 3 parts white sage
- 1 part cedar tips or ground wood
- grind together in mortar and pestle
  
- 1 part frankincense
- 2 parts lemon verbena
- 2 parts rosemary



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.

**In the coming year, we'll be transitioning to PDF only and sending something different on the "off" months.**

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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# A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR - MAKING HERBAL CANDY

Tina Sams

*Update to original article: I no longer use corn syrup, but do add a "hunk" of butter (about 2 T) when adding the sugar. It keeps the foaming down a little and also keeps the cooling candy pliable a little bit longer so that it's easier to work with.*



A couple of years ago, Marty Webster wrote about making horehound lozenges, and the instructions were very inspirational for me. Before I knew it, all kinds of ideas were running through my head!

Oh, it started simply enough.... what about elderberry? Maybe something relaxing? Oh! And Holy Basil "on the go"!

All you need is a candy thermometer, a large, heavy pan, and an afternoon. A helper for cutting in the end helps too.

When I was a kid, one of my best friends was from a large farming family, and they had an interesting side business. They made hard candies in about 15 flavors. On candy making nights, I would often stay overnight and help, because many hands were needed. In their basement, they had a stove, and would set 4 kettles filled with sugar, water, and Karo syrup to boil. There was a ping-pong table (probably reinforced) that took up most of the room, and we were stationed all around the table with heavy shears. The table was dusted with confectioners sugar. The father would heave a marble slab up onto the head of the table. As the first kettle reached the right temperature, he'd pour the molten mixture onto the slab, and work it with paint scrapers. Then he'd add the color and flavor and continue to fold the sweet, thickening mixture together. Finally, he'd start to cut it into fat 1/2" wide strips, and toss them out to us to cut into bite-sized pieces. It had to be cut quickly before hardening, but those first few strips were soft and very warm. We would always sample a piece or two. Quality testing at its finest. By the end of the night, there would be bins full of candy, and a bunch of kids high on sugar.

These memories also inspired me. I'm sure that that production set-up would not satisfy today's regulations, but it sure was fun.

The recipe I use is:

3/4 to 1 C of strongly infused herbal "tea"

2 1/2 C of sugar

1/2 C corn syrup

I have not had a chance to experiment with honey, and I believe that one could use all sugar, but this recipe worked well for me. You may want to try a few variations if the corn syrup is objectionable.

To make the tea, I put the herbs, berries, etc., in a pint jar and covered with boiling water, allowing it to steep for several hours. Then I strained it and squeezed the dickens out of the pulp to get all the good stuff. If there is less than a cup of liquid, that's fine.

Put the liquid into a large (at least 2 quart) pan. It bubbles up a lot during cooking, so you need a lot of space.

Add the corn syrup and stir to blend. Add the sugar and turn on medium high heat. Stir only until the sugar is dissolved. Set the thermometer on the side of the pan, with the tip in the liquid, but not touching the bottom of the pan.

Let 'er rip!



While it cooks, grease a 10 x 13 glass cooking dish and put down plastic wrap on a surface where you'll be doing the cutting - probably 2' x 3' is sufficient. Sift confectioners sugar or cornstarch over the plastic wrap.

When the temperature of the candy reaches 300 degrees, turn off the heat and stir briefly.

Pour it into the baking dish. Have something under the dish to protect the counter from heat.

Wait a minute or two, and lift the edge of the candy to see if it can be lifted to cut. When this is possible, use scissors to cut a strip, and toss it out to a waiting helper who will cut it into pieces. This really is difficult to do alone, but it's possible.

Keep cutting the strips until it is finished.

If the candy in the baking dish hardens before you've finished, you can place it into the oven and heat it, but it will probably stick to the dish. I've taken out the whole piece that is leftover, melted it in another pan, and repoured it into the original baking dish. Clean-up is easy, hot water dissolves the candy.

Here are the infusions I started with:

#### **Elderberry Bits**

1 C fresh elderberries  
2 slices ginger  
zest from one lemon

#### **Tulsi Twist**

3/4 C freshly picked holy basil  
1/4 C dried goji berries  
1/4 C freshly picked chocolate mint

#### **Herbalicious Medley**

Juice and zest from one orange and one lemon  
1/4 C holy basil  
1/4 C elderberry  
2 slices ginger  
3 rose geranium leaves  
sprig of lemon thyme  
sprig of rosemary  
sprig of lemon verbena  
1/4 C mint  
2 pods cardamom

#### **Lemon Balm Bombe**

3/4 C freshly picked lemon balm  
1/4 C freshly picked passionflower leaves, flower, tendrils  
1/4 C blueberries  
zest from one lemon  
20 drops of lemon eo just before pouring into baking dish

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## GATHER THOSE NASTURTIUMS

Tina Sams

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*First, we'll clear up some confusion. Watercress is an aquatic plant species with the botanical name **Nasturtium officinale**.*

*We've tried growing it in the creek here, but it keeps washing downstream. It looks nothing like the plant we are talking about today, but also has a very peppery taste which is probably the root of the issue. In fact, in England during the 1600's, nasturtiums cultivated in the gardens, and called "Indian Cress" due to the similar peppery taste.*

Today, we're talking about **Tropaeolum majus**, an easy-to-grow annual whose leaves and flowers are edible.

In fact the whole plant is edible, including the seeds! It comes in a range of colors, from the buttery-est yellow to the most blazing scarlet. Creamy apricot, and variegated shades of bright orange are among the shades often available, but most often they are deep orange and yellow.

When we visited the kids in California, nasturtiums were everywhere – wild! We first spotted them while crossing a little hollow on a foot bridge. Looking down, the jewel tones shone up at us on what were apparently vining (in a search for light) nasturtiums. They will grow anywhere, apparently, although for areas that freeze in winter, they are annuals.

They often, but not always, self-seed. The phrase, "Be nasty to nasturtiums", is sometimes used for how to care for them. Give them lousy soil, intermittent moisture, and a little light, and they are happy.

The nasturtium plant is surprisingly useful medicinally. The leaves, in particular, and especially before the flowers appear! That's good, because the flowers make a great garnish, salad



ingredient (so do the leaves) or stuff them with guacamole and sit them on a nacho chip! The whole plant is high in vitamin C, beta carotene and also contains vitamins B1, B2 and B3, as well as iron, calcium, phosphorus and manganese. There are also an abundance of carotenoids and flavionoids - compounds that boost the immune system and protect against carcinogens.

Nasturtium combats fungus, infection, viruses, and bacteria. Providing expectorant, and sedative, benefits. In a tincture or vinegar it provides good disinfectant properties. In Germany, Angocin Anti-Infekt N is a prescribed antibiotic having only nasturtium and horseradish root as ingredients. Be sure to make some tincture or vinegar this year. Or, make and freeze some pesto. Enjoy the many ways we've gathered to use them!

## Nasturtium Pesto

2 C nasturtium leaves  
1/2 C walnuts  
4 cloves garlic  
3/4 C olive oil  
1/2 C freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Blanch the leaves in boiling water for 10 – 15 seconds. Drain and plunge into ice water to cool. Dry on tea towels. Place leaves, walnuts, cheese, garlic, and oil in the jar of a blender; blend until smooth. If desired, add a few drops of hot sauce. Goes great on pasta or baked potato. Garnish with a flower! Perhaps a hair rinse: Mix equal parts lavender, nettle, nasturtium and rosemary into double the amount of water by volume – if you use a cup of herbs total, use 2 cups water. Bring to boil, then turn off the heat and steep in a closed pot for 15 minutes. Allow it to cool and then strain for use. Massage into your scalp before rinsing out. Refrigerate any leftovers.

From some of our friends on our old Yahoo! Group:

I make a variety of vinegars and **Nasturtium Vinegar** is my favorite. It seems to go with anything.



Gather Nasturtium leaves, pretty well packed, with an occasional blossom, if desired. Pack into a jar, add white vinegar, cover, and let set in the sun or other bright place for at least 3 weeks. Then strain and decant into your favorite vinegar cruet.

And a dear memory: Several years ago a friend came to visit me in the hospital. She brought me a bouquet of Nasturtiums from her garden. The scent lingered for a long time and I was even able to bring that scent home. I'll always remember that incident and my friend's kindness.

Lou



More than a few years ago, my husband and I stayed in a B & B on the Oregon coast.

When we came in the dining room for breakfast, there was a beautiful nasturtium flower set over the side of our orange juice glasses. Just a very simple thing but it was a highlight of our trip. I still try and do this in the summer when we have orange juice drinks.

Sharon Broderick



## Nasturtium Raspberry Salad

Dressing:

1 T raspberry jam or jelly  
1/4 C white wine vinegar  
1/3 C olive oil  
salt and pepper to taste

Whisk jam, vinegar and oil together. Add salt and pepper, to taste

Salad:

Red and green leaf lettuces  
Thinly sliced red onion  
Fresh raspberries  
Freshly gathered Nasturtium blossoms  
Combine the lettuces, red onion slices, and some raspberries.

Gently toss. Top with more raspberries and the nasturtium blossoms. Serve with the dressing on the side.

Note: Blueberry Jam for the dressing, and fresh blueberries also make a delicious salad!

Mary Ellen Wilcox



## Nasturtium Cheese Blend

1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened  
1/4 C chopped nasturtium flowers  
1/4 C prepared horseradish

Crackers or snack rye bread

In a bowl, beat the cream cheese, nasturtium flowers and horseradish until well blended. Serve with crackers or bread. Yield: 1-1/2 cups.



## Egg Salad with Herbs

For a beautiful presentation, serve this on a plate lined with nasturtium leaves, garnished with whole flowers, fresh snipped chives and/or dill sprigs. A fresh loaf of crusty, country-style bread is the best accompaniment; however rye or pumpernickel bread, pitas or thinly sliced bagels are good, too. Makes 6 servings.

12 hard-cooked eggs  
1/2 C mayonnaise  
2 t Dijon-style mustard  
2 T chopped sweet pickles  
2 T sweet pickle juice  
1/4 C thinly sliced green onions or minced onion  
1/3 C finely diced celery  
2 T snipped chives, divided  
2 T snipped dill leaves, divided  
1/2 t sweet paprika  
Salt and freshly ground pepper  
10 to 12 nasturtium flowers, julienned  
10 to 12 nasturtium leaves, julienned  
12 large whole nasturtium leaves  
6 to 12 whole nasturtium flowers

Directions

Dice eggs and place in a bowl. Add mayonnaise, mustard, chopped pickles, pickle juice, onions, celery, 1 tablespoon chives, 1 tablespoon dill leaves, paprika, salt and pepper. Toss well to blend. Stir in shredded nasturtium leaves and flowers. Refrigerate 30 minutes before serving.

To serve, let salad stand at room temperature for 5 to 10 minutes. Arrange nasturtium leaves on a platter and heap egg salad on top. Garnish with whole nasturtium flowers and remaining chives and dill, and serve immediately.

Marcy Lautanen Raleigh [www.backyardpatch.blogspot.com](http://www.backyardpatch.blogspot.com)

# JUST LEMON BALM

Molly Sams

When I first began studying herbalism seriously I fell in love with lemon balm. Interning at TheRosemary House, one day Susanna was explaining to me the different uses and properties of general garden herbs. When lemon balm came up in the conversation her eyes lit up. It seemed like she was telling me this wonderful secret and I was thrilled to learn.

She explained that lemon balm never truly dies in the winter. The plant is always growing and if need be you can always dig it up out of the ground and smell that citrusy scent that lemon balm has. This plant has been used to combat symptoms of SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) for its lemony scent and taste. It has a light, almost sweet taste and it smells absolutely heavenly (especially on a cold winter day). Susanna described it as almost divine intervention that this plant will always be there for you in the winter. And from that sentence on I was hooked.

Unlike just about anyone else who has grown lemon balm, my mother and I found it difficult at first. Since we moved to the house on the hill she was completely unable to plant it and keep it alive through the summer. After hearing about the benefits of winter however, I was determined to make it work. I took a nice sized plant from Susanna's gardens



(after asking of course) and begin to baby it for a whole summer. Every day I would go out and water it, make sure the dirt was loose and moist, and search for any mean bugs who may need to be relocated to our fields. After a season of babying my lemon balm I let fall and winter take over. Outside it was a constant barrage of cold and I was honestly unsure if the lemon balm would return. On the first warm day I ran out to see if the plant had popped back. It had - with beautiful deep green leaves and as fragrant as ever. Needless to say a happy dance took place right that moment.

For others lemon balm thrives incredibly well in whatever situation it is in. They like well-drained soil with plenty of room (trust me it'll grow), but unless you want it taking over

every nook and cranny in your garden you may want to keep it contained. Lemon balm is well loved by pollinators. Its Latin name *Melissa* (*officinalis*) actually means bee in Greek.



Lemon balm is wonderful for those who suffer from SAD but is also incredibly tasty in teas and baked goods. It is used mainly

for anxiety, insomnia, and indigestion. Lemon balm is a carminative, diaphoretic, and may reduce a fever. This plant is wonderful to give to little ones and fussy adults when they are sick with a cold or fever. You can also drink a tea after a large meal to fight off the symptoms of indigestion. It may also help you drift off to sleep afterward. Some find it helpful blended with St John's wort for nerve issues.

This plant also has calming affects topically for sores, small wounds and cuts, and even herpes breakouts. Many use a diluted oil or tea to wash the wounds and because it has antibacterial properties have reported faster and/or better healing. It is not recommended for individuals using thyroid medication.

Many have used the wash for a gentle acne treatment. My favorite way to use lemon balm topically is to mix a drop of oil into witch hazel as a toner.

For those who love history and herbs you may want to try your hand at Carmelite water. Nobles originally used this water after the Middle Ages to increase vigor and maintain a youthful appearance.

## The Essential Herbal Magazine's Carmelite Water (For one teapot)

2 t lemon balm  
½ t lemon peel  
½ t grated nutmeg  
1 t angelica root

Steep for three to five minutes and enjoy by itself or with honey.

Lemon balm is an absolutely wonderful little plant that is incredibly strong-willed and still has plenty to show us.



## SUMMER FRUIT CORDIALS

Tina Sams, [www.essentialherbal.com](http://www.essentialherbal.com)

In my kitchen, you'll see a row of jars filled with various fruits that have ripened during the past summer, just waiting for me to turn them into cordials. In the recipes below, you'll see that you don't need to steep the fruits for months on end, but I do it this way and have a cordial making spree when time allows in the late fall.



Making cordials is a great way to have a little taste of summer in the winter, a little sweetness after dinner, and they make a superb gift over the holidays. Besides the fruits, you can add different herbs and spices. Ginger is one of my favorites to add, as well as vanilla.

There are three main steps to making cordials.

**Steeping** - in this step, the ingredients are steeped in the alcohol (usually vodka or brandy, but you can try anything you like).

**Sweetening** - typically a sugar syrup is used, but maple syrup is a great substitute. Honey can also be used.

**Aging** - The flavors all improve tremendously with age. Generally 2 to 4 weeks is good. I like to leave mine a lot longer, if possible.

More than anything (here comes my mantra...) have fun with

them and try the things that you like. You might come up with the world's most delicious cordial all on your own.

Here are some recipes to get you going:

**Wild Blackberry Cordial**- Christy Sarles ([radicalweeds.com](http://radicalweeds.com))  
Pick enough berries to fill a clean glass jar in the size of your choice at least a third, and up to a half, full. I use about two quarts of berries for a gallon of cordial. If those lovely wild blackberries don't grow in your neighborhood, you can substitute raspberries or blueberries. The little wild blueberries will give your cordial a more intense flavor than the larger cultivated ones, but either way blueberries are relatively tough-skinned and you will need to macerate them - crush or grind coarsely - before adding the other ingredients.

Fill the jar to the top with equal parts of maple syrup and brandy. I usually use E&J brandy, but any decent variety of 80 proof brandy will do fine. As for the maple syrup, I like the dark, late-season Grade B syrup because it has the strongest maple taste and contains more minerals than the three lighter Grade A syrups produced earlier in the sugaring season. You can use whatever grade of maple syrup you prefer, but please make it real. Don't use the artificial stuff!!

Put the cover on the jar and shake to mix. Label, date, and leave the fruit to infuse for at least 10 days, and up to 6 weeks. Shake occasionally when you think of it. Strain out the fruit (marvelous over ice cream) and decant the cordial into glass jars or bottles. Keeps for years without refrigeration - but I guarantee it won't last that long!

### Peach Cordial

Cut unpeeled peaches in quarters, and add them to a wide-mouth glass jar. Pits optional. Fill the the jar with brandy, to cover the fruit. (I use E&J brandy, which has no preservatives, although as a child of the 60s it still galls me to buy Gallo...). Anyway, let it sit, shaking it up occasionally, until the peaches lose their color and start looking mushy. Then, depending on where you are in the season, you can either proceed to the sweetening stage or strain and pour the brandy over a new batch of fresh peaches (and pits) for a more intense peach flavor.



When you're ready to sweeten and bottle, strain out the fruit and add the ginger syrup -- a quart per gallon, or more to taste. Start with a basic simple syrup recipe -- 2 parts water to 1 part sugar (demerara is my preference). Add sliced, unpeeled ginger to taste. I like it HOT, so I use LOTS of fresh ginger -- at the very least a cup. Simmer/boil for 15 minutes or so til it thickens up, let it cool with the ginger in it, then strain and add to the peach brandy. Decant to smaller bottles as needed.



### Pear Cordial

Use the basic fruit/brandy/maple syrup cordial recipe with either peaches or pears (or any other fruit), using 1/2 fruit and the rest equal portions of brandy and maple syrup -- or more or less of either one depending on how sweet you like it. I always look out at yard sales for pretty little bottles to fill up with summer cordials for winter solstice gifts -- a little bit of midsummer in midwinter!



### Kahlua Recipe, Susanna Reppert (therosemaryhouse.com)

2 C water  
 2 C sugar  
 1/2 C dry instant coffee (a dark roast is best)  
 1 fresh vanilla bean, chopped  
 1-1/2 C vodka  
 Slice open and scrape the vanilla bean into the water. The more you scrape/chop the bean the more flavor you will release. Boil the water, sugar and vanilla bean together for 10

minutes. Turn off heat and slowly add the instant coffee and keep stirring.

Allow to cool and combine this sugar/coffee/vanilla syrup with the vodka. It tastes yummy right away but improves and mellows as it ages. If you want a cleaner product strain out the vanilla particles. If you want an even smoother taste add 1 t glycerin to the finished blend. Yield: about 4 cups.

Tip: Drizzle over ice cream. Oh my goodness....

### Tea Liqueur, Susanna Reppert

1 T good quality tea leaves, we like earl grey or darjeeling  
 1-1/2 C vodka  
 1/2 C sugar syrup  
 Steep the leaves in the vodka for 24 hours only.  
 Strain, filter, and add sugar syrup. Ready in 24 hours!

### It's Berry Good, Susanna Reppert

10 oz package of berries, strawberry, raspberry or any berry (fresh or frozen)  
 1-1/2 C Vodka  
 1/4 C sugar syrup  
 Steep berries and the juice in the vodka for one week.  
 Strain and filter.  
 Taste and add sugar syrup as needed.  
 Note: Many frozen berries are pre-sugared.

And some of my own personal favorites:



### Elderberry Cordial

1 pint fresh elderberries OR 1 cup dried berries  
 1 pint 80 proof brandy  
 1 pint Maple syrup  
 3-5 cinnamon sticks  
 a few slices of fresh ginger  
 2 cardamom pods  
 the zest of one lemon

Put elderberries in a quart jar & muddle well. Add cinnamon sticks. Then add equal parts brandy & maple syrup until the jar is full. Cover tightly. Macerate for 6 to 8 weeks, shaking gently every few days. Strain & bottle.



### Chocolate Cherry Cordial

- 2 pints pitted sour cherries
- 1/2 C cacao nibs
- 1 vanilla bean
- 1 qt brandy
- 1 qt maple syrup

Muddle cherries in 1/2 gallon wide-mouth jar. Add cacao chips, brandy & maple syrup. Stir well. Put on the lid and wait. This needs to age for 6 weeks.



### Nectar of Venus Cordial

This beverage needs to be made up early in January for use mid- February, but it will be worthwhile. The flowers give it a beautiful deep pink color, and can be served with ginger ale and lime slices.

The following ingredients should be placed in a 1/2 gallon jar with a tight fitting lid that allows for shaking. Be sure to label and date the jar. Put out of sunlight while it sits for 1-6 weeks. Shake occasionally. All herbs and flowers are dry.

- 1 fifth of good quality vodka
- 1/2 C red rose petals
- 1/2 C hibiscus flowers
- 1/2 C rose hips
- 1/2 C spearmint
- 1/4 C granulated orange peel
- 1/4 C cinnamon bark chips

After sitting this mixture is ready to decant. Strain through fine cheesecloth or muslin into a pitcher large enough to

also hold the additional 5 cups of Grand Marnier and simple syrup (below).

- 1 C Grand Marnier
- 4 C simple syrup made from 2 c water, 2 c sugar.
- 1 T either rose water or orange blossom water.

Add these ingredients to the vodka mixture and blend well. Allow this to rest for a couple of weeks so that the flavors can become well acquainted. Pour into beautiful bottles, cork, label, and enjoy.



### Lavender Limoncello

- Zest from 10 lemons
- 1 fifth vodka
- 1 C lavender buds
- 3 C sugar
- 4 C water

First infuse the lavender in the vodka for 24 hours. Strain. If you leave the lavender longer, it gets too medicinal for my tastes.

Next, infuse the lemon zest in the vodka for one week, and strain.

Make a simple syrup with the sugar and water, boiling gently for 15 minutes without stirring. Cool well, and add the infused vodka. Allow this mixture to steep together for at least 2 weeks. Serve ice cold.

Substitute rose geranium leaves for lavender buds for a real treat!

At this time of year, you can have some fun with the herbs and fruits available. I hope you got some ideas from these recipes!

