



The Connecticut Thymes

Summer Edition

July-September 2003

Upcoming Events

August 16, 12-2pm

The Spiral of Life

A unique garden experience

112 Sisk St., Middletown

860-346-0897

Directions: From 91 take exit 20 Country Club Rd. go east for about 1 mile. Take first right, Higby Rd. At next stop turn left onto Sisk and it is the 10th house on the left with the drive before the house.

September 7, 10am-6pm

Taste! Organic Connecticut

Topmost Herb Farm

Members are asked to participate in CHA's presence at this event.

October 4, 1-4pm

Lecture by

Cindy Baker, Integrative Herbalist

November

Holiday Open House

December-no meeting

February

CHA Winter Retreat

Friday, Feb 20, 5pm to Sunday,

Feb 22, Noon. Killiam Point

Conference Ctr., Branford, CT.

Further details available soon.

As I sat down to write a recap of HerbFest I was feeling a little brain dead from a busy, busy schedule so I thought I'd read a few old newsletters to get the ideas flowing. Last year the title was "Could It Have Been a Better Day for HerbFest?" Well, the answer this year would have to be yes, although we still had more than twice the number of attendees as two years ago when it last rained. Rain is such a blessing to our earth and plants. How lovely it is to celebrate herbs with people that work to understand and live within the rhythms of our planet!

A huge thanks to everyone who participated in making HerbFest 2003 exciting, informative and joyful. Without the many volunteers it would not be possible. There are too many of you to try to name, but you know who you are. You are very much appreciated. A special thank you to the members of the committee who meet for a year and try to make each HerbFest a little more fun and interesting. A special thank you to Carole for allowing CHA to use Topmost Farm again this year – and to her family who do so much of the work involved in making things flow smoothly. And a special thank you to Steven Nogas for not only letting us once again use his wonderful tents, but delivering and picking them up as well.

The Fest began with us all staring at the sky, as Brian Smith drifted back and forth over us as he skydived to a perfect landing on the edge of the field. That and the organic coffee that the bake sale was providing certainly got the adrenalin flowing. The parking was treacherous due to all the rain we had already received and rather far away, but the parking Nazis did a wonderful job of trying to keep us all dry as they directed us to the best spots to park and shuttled people behind a 4-wheeler to the tent area. Carole and her daughter Lisa provided tows with the farm tractor when necessary. By the way, she says the fields are recovering nicely from the damage.

The vendor booths were full of wonderful things, the food vendors provided epicurean delights and the speakers provided a wide variety of interesting herbal information to stimulate our minds and enrich our lives. The children's center was well attended with lots of fun activities.

Despite the weather about 650 of us had a wonderful time. If you weren't one of us don't miss next year.

Pamela Quayle

HerbFest Committee

Did you know that one of our best gardening resources is our local Extension Service, affiliated with the University of Connecticut. They are the folks who do the soil tests, sponsor the Master Gardener program, and offer free advice on plant pests and diseases. Their website is www.canr.uconn.edu/garden/. They also publish a newsletter every 2 months, which is available for \$10 a year.

Essential Oil Production in the US

The industrial history of [essential oil](#) production in the United States is almost entirely related to spearmint & peppermint (steam distilled) and citrus peel (cold pressed) oils. This article briefly discusses the former American colonial farmers that imported mint stolons from England in the 18th century. The first American mint fields were planted in Cheshire, Massachusetts during the 1790s. From there, its cultivation has moved west ever since - first to the Finger Lakes region of New York in the early 1800s as growers sought better soil. Each acre of peppermint there yielded approximately 25 pounds of oil. The distilling industry continued to migrate west to the mucklands of Michigan after the Civil War and yields there approached 50 pounds per acre. The wet, low-lying black soils of the Lower Peninsula were drained and the water table was actively managed using a network of drainage ditches. By 1900, 90% of the world's steam-distilled mint oil came from the region around Kalamazoo. Flocks of geese were employed (euphemistically speaking) to selectively weed the fields ensuring that a contaminant-free oil would be produced. In the 1890s, growers in Michigan and Indiana supplied Chicago's Wrigley chewing gum factory with spearmint and peppermint oils distilled expressly for their trademark gums (Wrigley's Spearmint Gum was released in 1893 and Doublemint Gum, a blend of spearmint and peppermint oil flavoring, came along in 1914). The US mint industry declined in the Midwest throughout the 1950s due to the appearance of verticillium wilt disease. During the 1970s the growing and distilling industry was all but beaten by the wilt and it moved again to the northwestern states of Montana,

Idaho, Washington, and Oregon where it is threatened today by cheaper mint oils from China. For more interesting stories about this bygone agri-industrial way of American life, see these websites. <http://www.geo.msu.edu/geo333/mint.html> and <http://www.mintstills.com/discovery-main.html>. *Dave Catherman*

Members Recipes

Wild Spring Salad

submitted by Michele Maclure

Prep Time 10-15 minutes

Chickweed, dandelion greens, sorrel, violet leaves & flowers, chives, sliced strawberries, and crumbled feta cheese. Amounts - your choice & dressing - your choice. Pick greens, rinse well, dry in towel, and mix well.

Herbal Stress Busters

Herbs can help you relax and de-stress, or bolster your spirit when needed. They work most effectively as part of a lifestyle approach to nourishing yourself. Luckily, herbs lend themselves readily to some of the best relaxation methods—bathing with herbs, quiet time with herbal tea, or massage with relaxing essential oils.

Dip into a warm, fragrant bath and feel the tension ease. Give yourself the gift of time to unwind. Add soft music, a good book, and if you have children, put your husband in charge and lock the door! Use herbs such as Lavender, Chamomile and Oats to nourish your nervous system and improve coping abilities. Steep a handful of herbs in 2 quarts of water for 20 to 30 minutes; strain before adding this “tea” to the bath. Or put the herbs in a muslin bag to hang over the faucet as the tub fills. You can also use the bag to gently exfoliate your skin—you’ll feel like you’ve been to the spa!

You can add essential oils to the bag of herbs or directly to the tub—up to 10 drops per bath for adults. Try Sandalwood, Neroli, or Laven-

der to relax, or rosemary or peppermint for a pick-me-up. The warmth of the water relaxes your muscles as it releases the scent of the oils.

Bath salts are very popular now. Look for commercial products that contain real essential oils, or make your own. Mix four Tablespoons Sea salts, three Tablespoons mineral salts, such as Epsom salts, and one Tablespoon baking soda, or borax. Add 5 drops of essential oil. This makes enough for two to three baths—and a great gift too.

Teas made with Lemon Balm are sedative, antidepressant, and restore the nervous system. Oatstraw is a great addition to teas and can help heal damaged nerves. Chamomile, Catnip, and Passionflower are very soothing and can help improve sleep. To strengthen your system to withstand daily stressors, drink a cup or two of these herbal teas every day.

Massage is great for reducing stress on its own. Add aroma-therapeutic oils like Lavender, Ylang ylang, or Rose Geranium to help relax tight muscles, reduce anxiety, and lift depression, respectively.

If stress is keeping you up at night, Valerian is a great alternative sleep aid, and does not cause morning grogginess. It is sedative, anti-spasmodic, and helps relieve pain. It is most commonly used for nervous anxiety, insomnia, and migraines. A small percentage of the population can have an opposite reaction to Valerian and find it stimulating—if you find you are one of those people, discontinue use. Inquire at your health food store or neighborhood herbalist about Motherwort and Skullcap.

Dream Pillows made with Hops, Lavender, and other herbs are useful for insomnia, nervous tension, and even indigestion. The strong sedative quality of Hops makes it a good choice for anxiety, but it is not recommended for depression.

Kerry MacKerell Hunt is an herbalist and owner of ApotheKerry Herbs. herbal@optonline.net

Ayurvedic Herbal Remedies for Digestion *submitted by Dr. Martina Ziska, martinaziska@aol.com*

Digestive Fire - AGNI

There are four types of agni. Irregular agni, most commonly associated with *vata* type digestion, causes inconsistency in hunger and ability to digest food. A person with irregular agni experiences periods of hunger and periods during which they don't feel the need to eat. This results in skipping meals and incomplete or insufficient digestion when food is eaten.

Sharp agni is typical for pitta type digestion. Sharp digestive fire is desirable as it gives ability to digest large amount of food. However, when combined with strong appetite, pitta types have tendency to overeat. This causes weakened digestion in a long run.

Slow agni is usually associated with kapha type digestion. It has low capacity to process heavy foods, such as dairy, sweets and wheat, and causes congestion and overflow of the digestive tract. This results in heavy feeling in the stomach and accumulation of the toxins. Person with slow agni typically does not feel hungry, can easily skip meals during the day and enjoys the largest meal in the evening, which is particularly harmful.

The fourth and the most desirable type of agni is a balanced digestive fire. This fire is the strongest in the middle of the day, ready to absorb and assimilate all the food turning it completely into prana and ridding body totally of the unwanted byproducts.

VATA-Type Digestion

Irregularity is the hallmark of vata digestion. The digestive fire fluctuates and so do the eating habits. Hunger is irregular and sometimes it's fed and sometimes it's not. Vatas have small digestive capacity preventing them from overeating without feeling discomfort. Typical vata digestive problems are transient pain, especially in the lower right or left belly quadrant, indigestion, nausea, as well as gassiness, cramping and bloating. Irregular elimination and tendency to constipation are also quite frequent. Vatas tend to prefer light, dry and cold foods, which further aggravate their problems. Carbonated drinks or ice-cold water are especially harmful to them.

PITTA-Type Digestion

Pittas are naturally blessed with strong digestive fire, but also a strong desire to eat. As their system contains a lot of fire, digestion is sensitive to heat and acid-provoking foods, such as pungent spices, alcohol, salsas, pizzas, peppers, tomatoes, pickled and fermented foods, aged cheese, coffee, chocolate, bananas, and similar food items. Stress and hurry also create fiery digestive situation, manifesting possibly as heartburn, acid reflux, ulcers, or inflammatory conditions of the digestive tract.

KAPHA-Type Digestion

Kaphas have combination of sluggish and sometimes weak digestive fire. However, they like to eat – the more the better! This causes unprocessed food to accumulate in their stomach in form of congestion and mucous. Feeling of heaviness, lethargy, nausea and occasional vomiting are some of the kapha digestive manifestations. Due to the low digestive capacity, kapha is also unable to digest heavy foods, such as dairy, sweets, meat and wheat. A glass of cold milk with chocolate chip cookies and a bowl of ice cream, while tasting like heaven, create a digestive hell for the kapha.

Remedies for VATA Digestion

Lifestyle: Regularity is the most important part of the vata digestion. Eating at regular times, especially not skipping or eating late lunch and eating lighter and early dinner are key to equalizing vata agni. Vatas usually need a good and grounding breakfast, at least partially warm lunch and a soothing, easy to digest supper.

Diet: Vata digestion thrives on nutritive, well balanced diet consisting mostly of warm, well cooked, and somewhat unctuous foods. Use of oils is important, as well as grains, and fresh warm vegetables. Protein should also be included to provide the substance for the tissues and grounding for the mind.

Spices/herbs: Warming spices, such as ginger (fresh root), cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, and cardamom are sought after by vata digestion. They help to lighten and warm up the agni for optimal performance. Vata gas-forming tendency can be overcome by consumption of ajwan, an ayurvedic celery seed, asafoetida also known as hing, or fennel seeds. These can be combined with food, chewed or prepared as a tea. Ayurvedic formula Triphala is balancing and gently detoxifying for the vata digestion.

Remedies for PITTA Digestion

Lifestyle: Unhurried, relaxed and casual time for meals is important to pitta digestion.

As pittas excel in multitasking, it's especially important that food is eaten with 100% attention and focus. There should be no watching television, reading newspapers, or thinking about the next task. While this is true for all types of digestion, lack of focus is especially harmful to pitta digestion. Food should also not be eaten when emotionally upset with anger, frustration, envy, jealousy, or judgment and criticism. Pittas should take time to eat slowly and enjoy the sensory and digestive experience.

Diet: Cooling, non-acid provoking foods are especially beneficial to pitta types. Seasonal fruit, wide variety of green leafy vegetables, lighter grains, and fresh dairy are all well suited. Occasional use of yogurt and buttermilk during warm weather, especially when prepared with pitta balancing spices refreshes and cools pitta agni. Bitter, astringent, and sweet taste is particularly cleansing.

Spices/herbs: Cumin, coriander and its green cousin cilantro, fennel and cardamom are the most gentle, yet effective balancers of the pitta digestive fire. Ginger root when prepared with other spices is also well tolerated. Curry, chillies, cayenne and other aggravating spices should be avoided.

Remedies for KAPHA Digestion

Lifestyle: Activity is the most important factor for kapha. How do we achieve this for kapha digestion? Physical activity stimulates the digestive fire bringing on the feeling of much needed hunger. Reserving the largest meal of the day for the middle of the day and skipping both breakfast and potentially dinner, per individual tolerance, is the most important. Activating the digestion with the stimulating spices is equally helpful.

Diet: Light, easy to digest foods low in fat and calories are the most suitable for kapha digestion. Vegetables, light grains, some light fruits, light meats or vegetarian diet is the mainstay of kapha diet. Avoidance of all energetically heavy foods with predominantly sweet, salty, and sour tastes is really important. Of course, all the "good" tasting foods, such as ice cream, cold dairy, sweets, and chips should be strictly avoided, especially in the evening.

Spices/herbs: Kaphas benefit from heating spices such as ginger (dry or fresh); varieties of peppers, especially ayurvedic pippali; mustard seeds, turmeric, and all vata warming spices. Ayurvedic formula Trikatu, a combination of three fiery spices provides the much-needed stimulation to the kapha digestion. When everything fails, limit the amount of food and increase the amount of heating spices. You'll be pleasantly surprised.

Members' Recipes from the HerbFest

Agnes' Zucchini Cookies

1 stick butter
1 c sugar
1 large egg
1 c grated zucchini
2 c flour
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp cloves
1/2 tsp salt
1 c raisins
1 c chopped walnuts
Cream butter and sugar, beat in egg, add zucchini and sifted dry ingredients. Stir in raisins and nuts. Drop onto ungreased baking sheet. Bake 10 minutes at 375.

This recipe is from Maida Heatter's Book of Great American Desserts and she claims that it's Katherine Hepburn's recipe.

2 oz. unsweetened chocolate
4 oz. unsalted butter
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1/4 cup unsifted all-purpose flour
4 oz. (1 cup) chopped walnuts
1/3 cup seedless red raspberry preserves
Line an 8x8x2" pan with aluminum foil. Brush the foil with additional melted butter and set aside. Melt the chocolate and the butter together on low heat, stirring frequently until melted. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the salt, vanilla, sugar and then the eggs, one at a time. Stir in the flour and then the nuts. Pour half the batter into the prepared pan and place in the freezer for 30 minutes. Remove the pan, and spread the preserves on the frozen brownie batter. Then, pour or spoon small amounts of the remaining batter on top and spread it gently. Leave the pan out to return to room temperature, at least another 30 minutes. Bake at 325 degrees for 40 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean. Let the pan cool, then place in the freezer until the cake is firm. Turn the cake out, remove the foil and cut. (Don't skip the steps of lining the pan and freezing the brownies after baking - they really make it easier to handle the finished product.) Note: You can substitute ginger marmalade, apricot preserves, or anything you like for the filling. Just be sure it's a thin layer, or it's just not a brownie anymore!

Rosemary Dessert Squares

2 eggs
1 c brown sugar
2 tsp vanilla
1 c flour
1/2 tsp salt
1 tsp baking powder
3 tsp rosemary chopped fine
2/3 c chopped pecans
1 c raisins
1/4 c dried cranberries
1/4 c dried apricots
Beat eggs, then gradually add brown sugar, vanilla, flour, salt, baking powder, and rosemary. Combine ingredients and mix thoroughly, then fold in chopped pecans, raisins, dried fruits. Bake in buttered and floured 8 inch square pan at 350 for 30 minutes. Cool and cut into bars.

Rhubarb Pecan Muffins

2 c flour
1 1/2 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
1 large egg
2 tsp orange peel grated
1 1/4 c rhubarb finely chopped
3/4 c sugar
1/2 tsp baking soda
3/4 c pecans chopped
1/4 c vegetable oil
3/4 c orange juice
Combine all dry ingredients. Beat egg and oil, add orange juice. Add to flour mixture. Add rhubarb. Pour into 12 greased muffin tins. Sprinkle with coarse sugar if desired. Bake at 350 for 2-30 minutes.

Dried Cherry Buttermilk Scones

Preheat oven to 400 F
2 c flour
1/3 c unbleached sugar
1 1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp baking soda
6 tbs butter chilled
1/2 c buttermilk
1 large egg
2 tsp vanilla
2/3 c dried sour cherries
Sift dry ingredients. Cut butter into flour until it resembles coarse crumbs. Mix wet ingredients add to flour mixture. Add cherries. Lightly pat into 8" circle; cut into wedges. Brush with buttermilk and sprinkle with coarse unbleached sugar. Bake 13-15 minutes.

Members' Recipes from the HerbFest

Chamomile Sugar Cookies

1 c butter
1 egg
2 tbsp Chamomile Flowers
1 tsp vanilla
2 c flour
Cream butter and sugar. Add egg, vanilla, then chamomile flowers and flour. Bake 350 for 10-12 minutes. Chill dough to roll out cookies or shape into balls and bake.
Helyn Bartholomay

Carrot Cake Muffins

Sift and mix together:
1 c unbleached flour
1 c pastry flour
1 c sugar
2 tsp baking soda
2 tsp cinnamon
Add to flour mixture:
3 eggs-beaten
1 c olive oil
Add:
1 tsp vanilla.
Gently fold in:
1 1/3 c mashed, cooked carrots
1 c chopped walnuts
1 c shredded coconut
3/4 c crushed pineapple
Pour into lined muffin tin. Bake in 350 oven about 25 minutes until toothpick comes out clean.

Coconut Lemon Sours

1 c flour
2 tbsp sugar
1/8 tsp salt
1/3 c soft butter
2 eggs, beaten
1/2 c chopped pecans
1 c packed brown sugar
1 c flaked coconut
Glaze:
1 tbsp lemon juice
1 tsp grated lemon rind
2/3 c confect sugar
Mix flour, sugar and salt in bowl. Cut in butter until mixture resembles a coarse meal. Press into ungreased 9" square pan. Bake at 350 for 15 minutes. Mix remaining ingredients. Spread over baked mixture. Bake 30 minutes longer. Cool. Spread glaze over top and sprinkle with more coconut. Makes 20.

Clove Cookies

1/2 c melted butter
1 c sugar
1 tsp vanilla
1 egg
1 c flour
1 tsp ground cloves
Stir the sugar into the melted butter until blended. Stir in vanilla; beat in the egg until smooth. Stir flour and cloves together; then stir into the butter mixture. Mix until blended. Drop batter by level teaspoon on cookie sheet 2" apart. Bake 12 minutes at 350 or until edges are golden and puffy. Tops start to crinkle and collapse. Cool on pan 30 seconds, then cool on wire rack. Makes 4 dozen.

Boiled Cookies

Combine 2 cups sugar and 3 tbs cocoa powder in a medium saucepan. Add 1/2 cup milk and 1/4 cup butter. Bring to a boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat and add 1 tsp of vanilla and 1/2 cup of rolled oats. Spoon onto waxed paper and allow to harden.

Lemon Balm Cookies

1/2 c butter
1/2 sugar
1 egg, beaten
2 c all purpose flour
1/4 c finely chopped fresh lemon balm
1 tbsp grated lemon peel
Cream butter and sugar. Add egg, flour, lemon balm, and lemon peel and mix until the dough is firm. Wrap in plastic and chill 1 hour. Roll and cut in shapes. Sprinkle the tops with a mixture of sugar, chopped lemon balm or coconut. Bake until light golden brown on edges.
Michele Maclure

Rose Geranium Cake

When baking any white cake, line the cake pan with grease then put rose geranium leaves upside down on pan. Pour cake batter on top and bake as directed.

Zucchini Chamomile Bread

3 c flour
1 c sugar
1 c oil
1 c shredded zucchini
1/4 c chamomile flowers
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp baking soda
3 tbsp orange juice
Combine dry ingredients; add others. Bake 1 hour at 350.

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Please feel free to contact any of the above CHA members with your questions, ideas, and concerns.



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Please submit articles for the next newsletter to Rosemari Roast or Sabre Duke by September 1, 2003.