

The Herbarian

Sweet Land of Liber-tea

Though National Iced Tea Month (celebrated each June) has come and gone, the hot, long afternoons of July beckon for a tall, cool beverage.

While recipes for tea served cold or cool for medicinal reasons appear as early as 1860, the general public was introduced to iced tea at the 1904 Exposition in St. Louis by Richard Blechynden, a commissioner with the India Tea Association. The story tells of the incredibly hot summer, and how patrons to the World Fair weren't keen on a hot beverage to drink. Blechynden seized upon the moment, and had his waitstaff dramatically passing out glasses of ice over which to enjoy his tea beverage. In reality, tea – both hot and cold – was listed on menus for many restaurants throughout the Exposition grounds.

Today, 85% of the tea imbibed in the United States is taken over ice. Most teas are of the standard black variants flavored with fruit or



otherwise served sweetened, however a growing proportion of brewed, iced teas are herbal-based, and contain no traditional tea (*Camellia sinensis*).

An herbal tea revolution? It's certainly not unheard of; the events in Boston's Harbor in 1773 were a decidedly poignant turn away from black tea to

several native, herbal alternatives. Drinks such as Labrador tea, created from the leaves of the *Ledum groenlandicum*, and flavored with rose or ginger, or saffras tea are passed down to us today as Colonial substitutes.

The tea most readily turned to throughout the years of Revolution however is Oswego tea, brewed from the leaves and flowers of the perennial herb bee balm, known also as horsemint, a favorite of the Native Americans for its medicinal uses. The Shaker societies introduced this herb to Benjamin Franklin as a tea, having learned of it from the Oswego Indians native to the region (present-day New York state).

The perennial plants that we commonly refer to as the bee balms or *Monarda* derive their name from the Spanish physician and botanist who was one of the first to write about plants discovered in the New World.

In 1565, Nicolás Monardes (b. 1493 - d. 1588) published a book describing the medicinal and botanical findings in the Americas; in all, the series would span three volumes. An English translation was produced in 1577, entitled The Joyful News Out of the New Found World. The book depicted many of the new plants appearing on European shores and detailed their medicinal effects. It included a list of ailments and native treatments for the benefit of Spanish colonists abroad.



Wild bergamot, *Monarda fistulosa*

HERB OF THE MONTH: MARJORAM

Marjoram (*Origanum majorana*) is a sweetly-scented perennial herb whose flavor is reminiscent of pine and citrus. It is a member of the mint family (*Lamiaceae*), and a close relative to oregano, it is sometimes used interchangeably with *O. vulgare*. It originates in Asia minor, but is included in many Greek and eastern European cuisines.

Oregano and marjoram are close in appearance, the latter having smaller, softer leaves which bear a lighter and less pungent scent. Marjoram is best used when added to the end of cooking; the delicate flavor can be lost in long cooking times.



Marjoram is high in Vitamin C (86% RDA per 100g) and especially high in Vitamin K (518% RDA per 100g), giving any foods which it flavors a healthful boost.

In the Victorian ‘language of flowers’, marjoram signifies joy and happiness. Long associated with love— it was considered an herb dedicated to Aphrodite, and used in ancient Greek marriage rites— it is traditional when included in bridal bouquets. Tradition holds that if an unwed maiden were sleep with a bundle of marjoram beneath her pillow, her resulting pleasant dreams would

allow her a vision of her true love, and husband-to-be.

AN HERBAL REVOLUTION



The City Tavern, where many of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention stayed, as it appeared around 1800. (Detail from drawing and engraving (ca. 1800) by William Birch & Son. Library of Congress.)

Every town has its local neighborhood hangout— that place where, as the song says, *everybody knows your name*. This was true in the Colonial times as well, and few others were more famous than the City Tavern which opened for business in 1773. Philadelphia at the time was the largest and most prosperous city in all of the colonies; a number of its prosperous citizens called for the tavern to be constructed, and worthy of the city’s prominence in the New World. It’s certain they weren’t disappointed. The building, when finished had five levels which included kitchens, bars, two separate coffee parlors, three dining rooms and what was, at the time, the second largest ballroom in the New World.

The cuisine served was second-rate to none; exotic spices

brought in fresh from newly-harbored vessels often accented native foods. Ship captains, enticed by the proximity of the tavern to the docks, bartered their cargoes of Seville oranges or Malabar pepper or ginger and mace in exchange for local coinage. The open markets of Philadelphia were themselves an unending parade of German or French delicacies, as immigrants to the new world descended upon the most populous areas and settled, bringing with them their long-traditional regional cuisines.

It was this cornucopia of foods, scents and flavors that our Founding Fathers sat down to every evening as they discussed the future of the colonies and, as events would proceed, as they designed a new nation.

SUB ROSA

It is said that when Saladin, Sultan of Egypt and Syria, retook the ancient city of Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187, he refused to enter the famous Mosque of Omar, which had been converted into a Christian church, until its walls and every object in it had been purified with rose water brought from Damascus. Five hundred camels were scarcely sufficient to bring the load. Almost three hundred years later, Mohamet II emulated Saladin when he captured Constantinople in 1453, and similarly bathed the Mosque of St. Sophia (the Hagia Sofia).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Field Trip Opportunities

Field trips are open to both Herb Society members and to the general public. Additional fees and a minimum participation enrollment may be required.

July 21 (9a-11a)

Jorgensen Farms. Included is a tour of the farm (which has been certified organic since 2002), and lunch. Fee: \$20 herb society member, \$30 resident, \$40 non-resident.

August 4 (10a-2p)

Chadwick Arboretum & Learning Gardens. Located on the campus of the Ohio State University, the gardens serve as an educational environment for residents of central Ohio. A guided tour is included. Fee: \$10 herb society member, \$15 resident, \$20 non-resident.

Special Events at OHEC

Reservations required for some events. See description for details.

September 9 (2p-3p)

Grandparent/Grandchild Tea. Bring your grandparents to a lovely afternoon party. Craft keepsake opportunity included. Class limit 16. Fee: Resident Discount Rate- \$15; Standard Rate- \$20.

September 15 (11a-12:30p)

Etiquette Series: Training for Children, ages 9-12. Ms. Bonnie Coleman will discuss a variety of subjects during this 90-minute class. Topics may include: social interactions; engaging in social conversation; respecting others; dining etiquette. Class limit of 16. Fee: Resident Discount Rate- \$15; Standard Rate- \$20

October 13 (9a-4p)

Herb Harvest Day. Volunteers needed!

October 20 (11a-12:30p)

Etiquette Series: Workshop for Young Adults, ages 13-19. Ms. Bonnie Coleman will discuss a variety of subjects during this 90-minute class. Topics may include: preparing for the work world; social etiquette; dining etiquette. Class limit of 16. Fee: Resident Discount Rate- \$15; Standard Rate- \$20.

November 10 (11a-1p)

Etiquette Series: Workshop for Adults. Ms. Bonnie Ross Coleman of PROTOCOL, a social skills and cultural competency training and development organization, will discuss a variety of subject including: a review of social expectations for work; networking with confidence; adapting to social situations; setting a perfect table; confidence in social dining situations. A three-course meal and beverage are included. Class limit of 16. Fee: Resident Discount Rate-\$30; Standard Rate-\$40.

December 6 (5-7p)

Herb Capital 40th Anniversary Celebration/ OHEC Open House. Visit with Jane 'Bunnie' Geroux as she shares her memories and stories of the past forty years of herbal history in Gahanna. Samples of herbal foods and beverages will be provided. No cost.

December 1, 8, 15 & 22 (1-4p)

A Visit with Santa Claus returns to OHEC each Saturday in December. Photo opportunities with Santa, a letter writing station and a make & take gift crafting station will be available.



Meeting Calendar

All meetings begin at 6:30

August 14: Herbal Care for Pets

Culinary Herb Focus: Basil

September 11:

National Honey Month,
w/ Dawn Combs presenting
Culinary Herb Focus: Thyme

October 9:

Culinary Herb Focus: Chives

November 13:

Culinary Herb Focus: Sage

Making Scents

*Information from Judith Fitzimmon's
Aromatherapy through the Seasons*

Lavender

(Lavandula angustifolia)

One of the best oils for July's challenges is Lavender. Its cooling and soothing qualities can keep you from scratching your way through the month. It leaves us gliding coolly through the summer.

Bug Bite Mix

- 2 drops Chamomile
- 3 drops Eucalyptus
- 3 drops Lavender

Blend the oils and use them in any of the following ways:

- Add to a basin of water for washing the affected skin
- Add the oil blend to 2 Tablespoons of cider vinegar, which you can dab onto the bites with a cotton ball