

*“The joy of brightening other lives becomes
for us the magic of the holidays.”*

-- W C James



**The Herb Society of America
Wisconsin Unit**

Nov/Dec 2024 - Vol XXXIX #6

Unit Meetings

Saturday, November 16

Social 9:00 a.m., Brunch 9:30 a.m., Meeting 10:00 a.m.

Program: Study of Chamomile Matricaria

Speakers: Kathy Bussanich and Joanne Ruggieri

Craft: Autumn-Themed Pin (AJ Star and Eva Boldt)

Location: St. Christopher's Church



**Holiday Luncheon
Wednesday, December 11**

10 a.m. Social, Noon Luncheon

Location: The Town Club, 7950 N Santa Monica Blvd., Fox Point

Donation collection for Capuchin Clothes Closet, a daytime shelter.
See holiday luncheon invitation for suggested items.

Editor: Diane Kescenovitz – if you will be going out of town for an extended period,
please notify Diane of your change of address or request an email copy – thanks!

Subscription rate: \$6 for 6 issues

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NEWSBUDS...



Since our last edition of *Sage Leaves*, we, as an organization of old and new herb-loving friends, have shared some sad news. Two of our dear, long-time members, Nino Ridgway (member since 1995) and Kathy Laurent (member since 2011) have left our ranks and are now sending on their light to us through the healing power of spiritual intentions. You should have received information about their individual Celebrations of Life via Pat's BLAST emails a few weeks ago. If you cannot locate the information, here it is again:

Kathy Laurent: November 11, 2024, 1 to 4 p.m., at Joe's "K" Ranch, 4840 S. Whitnall Ave., Cudahy, 53110

Nino Ridgway: December 14, 2024, at 11 a.m., worship with a potluck to follow at the Milwaukee Quaker Meetinghouse, 3224 N. Gordon Place, Milwaukee, 53212. Fellowship and reminiscing can be shared during the potluck.

It is the intention of the Board members to share stories about Nino and Kathy and then publish the story summaries in the January/February 2025 edition of *Sage Leaves*. Please offer us your remembrances too via email or direct conversation with one of us, between now and December 23. We want as full a picture of these dear women as we can assemble. Thank you so much.

I hope you are planning to attend the November 16 Unit meeting and program. Joanne Ruggieri and Kathy Bussanich will be presenting on Chamomile, the HSA Herb of the Year. Eva Bolt and I will also be offering you a craft project that we hope will delight your senses and be useful. As you continue to read deeper into this edition of *Sage Leaves*, I know you will learn a great deal from Susan Obry's information about Caraway and Star Anise. Thank you, ladies, for sharing your herbal knowledge with us.

Information about the December Holiday Party is enclosed. I know I'm looking forward to getting into that holiday feeling as we share a cup of cheer on December 11.

All the Best, AJ

Holiday Luncheon – December 11, 2024

We are scheduled to have our Holiday Luncheon at The Town Club in Fox Point on Wednesday, December 11. An evergreen tree theme is planned with craft projects and decorations. We have five table centerpiece trees that are available to decorate by our members. I will bring them to the November Unit meeting so volunteer members can take them home to design. The decorated trees should be brought to the Holiday Luncheon by 10 a.m. on December 11. Party invitations are included in this newsletter, which lists the luncheon menu and cost per person. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Denise Nelson, Event Chair

Book Club

Our small group enjoyed discussing "A Garden's Purpose: Cultivating Our Connection with the Natural World" by Felix de Rosen. The three parts: Wonder, Design and Habitat have individual chapters you could choose to read. The Boerner Botanical Garden Library is a wonderful setting for meeting. Think about future books to read. We will meet in January/February 2025.

Melody Orban

November Herb of the Month: Caraway (Carum carvi)

A reason to sugar coat something!

(Susan Obry)

Depending on the source, caraway is listed as both an herb and/or a spice. Caraway was found in Egyptian tombs as an offering to the gods and there is evidence that it was used in the stone age. This herbaceous biennial is native to Europe and western Asia.

The caraway seed is the most used part of the plant, but all parts of the plant are edible. The leaves can be eaten when they are young and the root when harvested. Caraway seeds are technically the fruit of the plant. They have a mild anise flavor with hints of coriander, pepper, and citrus.

Caraway grows well in zones 4 to 10. Caraway requires full sun with good air circulation. Plant in well-drained, moderately moist loamy soil. Germination is slow. To plant in Wisconsin, first check the annual frost dates. It usually is safe to plant two weeks after the last frost. Protect from unexpected frost. Depending on the type of caraway, it takes 30-40 days to grow from seed indoors. Water consistently, especially in the first year when caraway is developing its taproot. Fertilization requirements will depend on the specific type of caraway plant you have. If planted in a container, the container will need to be deep since the tap root can grow over nine inches. Caraway is an excellent self-seeder.

Culinary use: Seeds-whole or ground in desserts, sauces, salads, stews and soups, cabbage, meat, potatoes, eggs, cheese and baked goods (I think there is a law that states you must serve rye bread at fish fries). Roast the roots as you would any root vegetable. Toast seeds before adding to the dish to enhance flavor.

Medicinal use: It is believed that caraway seeds can promote appetite, sweeten breath, relieve indigestion, stomach cramps, bloating and flatulence. During the 17th century, sugar-coated caraway seeds were eaten at the end of the meal to facilitate digestion. It also contains rich antioxidant properties. Caraway is also used in the treatment of cough, fever, bronchitis, and gingivitis.

Commercial use: Caraway seeds yield an essential oil that is used to flavor candy, mouthwash, toothpaste, soap, and perfumes.

Fun facts: Add to cabbage water to eliminate the smell while cooking. The USA is a large market for Canadian caraway.

December Herb of the Month: Star Anise (Illicium Verum)

So Sweet!

(Susan Obry)

This fast-growing evergreen tree is native to southern China and northern Vietnam. This tree, with olive green leaves and white cupped flowers, can grow 15 to 20 feet. This spice was first introduced to Europe in the 17th century. Star anise plants grow best in planting zones 8 to 10, sub-tropical regions, but it has been grown in greenhouses in colder regions. It can be grown indoors in containers with full to partial sun. Due to its size and preference for higher temperatures it may be difficult to grow indoors.

Star anise and anise are not the same plant. Anise is part of the parsley family and star anise is part of the magnolia family. Although both have a licorice flavor, star anise is more bitter than anise. Ground star anise is a substitute for anise seed. The flavor is licorice with a hint of cinnamon and cloves. Only the star shaped fruit is used in cooking.

Culinary use: This spice imparts both flavor and aroma into many diverse dishes. It pairs well with meat and poultry, breads, desserts, beverages, preserves, curries, stews, soups, broths, and other savory dishes. It is one of the main ingredients in the traditional Chinese seasoning five-spice. It can be used whole, powdered, or as an oil.

Medicinal use: May promote appetite and digestion, relieve respiratory infections, balance hormones, improve skin health, and serve as a remedy for sleep issues.

Commercial use: The oil is used in soaps, toothpaste, and perfumes.

Caution: do not confuse Chinese star anise (*Illicium verum*) with the poisonous Japanese star anise (*Illicium anisatum*).

Fun facts: Crushed leaves smell like licorice but are not utilized in cooking. Star anise is 10 times sweeter than sugar.

RECIPES

Star Anise Tea

Ingredients

- 10 Star Anise or more to taste
- 2-4 Cups Water
- Optional: Two tablespoons honey or sweetener of your choice
To your taste, add other spices like cinnamon, cloves, fennel, cardamom, or peppercorns

Instructions

Roughly grind anise. Add to the water. Add optional spices. Bring to a boil and simmer for 10 minutes. Strain the tea.

Brunch Punch Recipe (thecarefreekitchen.com)

(Cheryl Kazimier – Sept 2024 Mtg)

Ingredients

- 1 12-oz can Orange Juice Concentrate, thawed
- 4 cups Pineapple Juice
- 3-4 cups Water
- 6 cups Ice
- 2 large Lemons, sliced thin
- 2 large Tangerines, sliced thin
- ½ cup Strawberries, sliced
- 4 cups Ginger Ale

Instructions

1. In a large punch bowl, add thawed orange and pineapple juices and mix together. Then add about 3 cups of water. Taste test, adding up to 1 additional cup of water.
2. Add the ice, sliced lemons, tangerines, and strawberries. Then mix in the ginger ale.
3. Serve immediately, garnishing with special straws and more sliced fruit as desired. Enjoy!

Savory Cheese and Herb Muffins

(Kathy Bussanich – Sept 2024 Mtg)

Ingredients

BUTTER AND CHEESE

- 3 tbsp butter
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 cups cheddar cheese

DRY

- 2 cups flour (all-purpose flour)
- 1 ½ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt

WET

- 1 egg
- 1 cup milk (full or low fat)
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh parsley
- 1 garlic clove, *crushed*

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350F
2. Place butter and garlic in a microwave-proof bowl and melt in 30 second bursts. Mix.
3. Brush a 12-hole standard muffin tin generously with butter, being sure to slather with some garlic. Reserve some butter to brush tops.
4. Whisk dry ingredients in a bowl.
5. Whisk wet ingredients in a separate bowl.
6. Pour wet into the dry ingredients bowl. Mix 8 times. Add cheese, mix as few times as possible just to incorporate remaining bits of flour - no more than 7 big stirs (secret to soft muffins).
7. Divide between 11 holes in muffin tin. Batter should be thick and fill muffin tin to top.
8. Bake 22-25 minutes or until muffins are golden and crusty and spring back when touched in the center.
9. Remove onto cooling rack, brush with remaining butter (microwave again if needed) and cool slightly before eating.



Did You Know?

The gorgeous red, orange, and yellow pigments in fall foliage are actually there all year, just under the surface. Sunlight helps fuel plant cells containing a chemical called chlorophyll, which gives leaves its vivid green color while working to turn light into energy. When sunlight diminishes in fall, chlorophyll breaks down, letting the plant's hidden red, yellow, and orange hues shine. From Ebert's *Village Gardener Express*, Oct. 4, 2019

Quick Tips for a Flavorful Thanksgiving

(Herb n Cowgirl, Ann McCormick, Nov. 19, 2018)

Thanksgiving dinner is the big event in every cook's year. The gathering of the clan over a meal that takes days to plan and hours to make is exciting – but also stressful. If the prospect of cooking yet another feast makes you feel less than thankful, perhaps it's time to spice things up a bit. Here's a few herbal ideas to get you thinking in new directions.

Stuffing the Bird – Packaged stuffing mixes are usually very lightly seasoned. Start by adding a tablespoon each of chopped fresh parsley and sage. To give it just a touch of sweetness, try apple juice instead of the liquid you usually add when mixing the stuffing. You can also add crunch by adding one cup of chopped walnuts or pecans for every package of dry stuffing.

Dressing up Mashed Potatoes – This filling side dish can be a little “ho hum.” Add zest to it by mixing in a tablespoon of minced or roasted garlic and two teaspoons of parsley for every three pounds of potatoes.

Making Herbal Butter – No matter what's on the menu, butter will be on the table. This too can be dressed up for the holiday. The day before the big meal, add one teaspoon of dried or one tablespoon freshly chopped herb seasoning to 8 ounces of softened butter. Some good combinations to try are parsley and oregano, basil and onion powder, or rosemary and thyme. Mix well, shape into a mound on a serving dish. For added flair, sprinkle a little parsley on top. Allow to chill for at least one hour before serving.

That Green Bean Dish – You know the one I mean . . . the French-cut green beans, cream of mushroom soup, and French-fried onion casserole that appears everywhere at this time of year. Instead of the one-eighth teaspoon of pepper called for in the original recipe, be bold and use 1-1/2 teaspoons. Then add in a teaspoon of dried oregano or marjoram. If you're feeling adventurous, sprinkle 1/2 cup of sliced almonds on top for extra crunch.

Brighten the Table – Even if you are a casual cook, you can easily enhance the dining table with some fresh sage and rosemary. Clip a few stems the morning of the feast and group 3-5 pieces together with a bit of ribbon at the base. Place these around a candle centerpiece or a favorite bit of holiday decoration. The aroma from the fresh herbs will scent the room and make things that much more festive.

I guarantee these quick tips will improve the flavor of your family feast. I'll close with a wish that your day of thanksgiving will be food for your soul as you spend time with those you love.



**Deck the halls with boughs of holly
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la
'This the season to be jolly
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la!**

Diane Kescenovitz
2427 W. Plum Tree Court
Mequon, WI 53092
(Return Service Requested)



*May the gifts
Of peace and joy be
Yours at Christmastime
And may happiness
Dwell around you
Wherever you go!*

...Holiday Blessing



If you have an event, article, recipe, book, etc. that you think members might find interesting, please send to kescenovitz.diane@att.net, and I will try to put it in the next issue of *Sage Leaves* if room allows.

Future *Sage Leaves* will be mailed out to arrive by January 1, 2025, and March 1, 2025.