



*Wintertime brings wonder
A peaceful feeling inside
A time to cuddle by the fire
Or build a snowman outside.*

SAGE LEAVES

The Herb Society of America – Wisconsin Unit
November/December 2023 – Vol XXXIV #6

Unit Meetings

Saturday, November 18, 9:30 Social, 10:00 am Meeting

Program: Herb Study on Yarrow; Wreath Craft by Eva Boldt
Father Geoffrey makes our Spaghetti Lunch

Location: St. Christopher Church

Wednesday, December 6, Holiday Luncheon, 10 a.m. Social, Noon Luncheon



Donation collection for Repairers of the Breach
(see invitation for suggested items)

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

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

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NEWSBUDS . . .

From the Chair: As I write this greeting, the sun is shining and there are 70-degree daytime temps forecasted. What a great gift from Mother Nature.

I hope you have helped those herb pots, chosen for indoor overwintering, make the transition to sunny window areas. Last week I hauled in five Grandma Julia geraniums, four Rosemary, three assorted Thyme, two Parsley, and a Bay Laurel. Ha! Does this sound like verses from "The 12 Days of Christmas" song?

I also have a variety of Scented Geraniums vying for sunlight on the various window ledges around the house. Eventually the overwinter group and the well-established indoor plants learn to share the light and thrive through the winter months. I gain better indoor air quality from all the plant respiration going on. Love that, don't you?

When you read deeper into this Sage Leaves edition, I know you will enjoy reading Sue Obry's HOM articles. Diane has offered us a few more delicious recipes from our recent meeting luncheons. I suggest you cull through the past three or four years of November-December editions for recipes that you may want to try. The cooler weather always inspires me to warm up the kitchen by cooking a pot of soup or baking an herb infused bread.

If you are looking for an Herbal Out and About adventure, Madison Herb Society is hosting its 41st Herb Fair on Saturday, November 4, at Olbrich Botanical Gardens from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. I'm looking forward to seeing you all at the Saturday, November 18, meeting where we will share some information about Yarrow while creating a small wreath using dried yarrow as one of the design elements. I can hardly wait to enjoy the luncheon meal that will include Fr. Geoff's slow cooked pasta sauce. Abbondanza!

Be sure to get the December 6 Holiday Party on your calendar now. This is always a lovely way to get into the Holiday Spirit.

Lastly, with November right around the corner, that means snowy weather can be too. Be aware that if Milwaukee Public Schools are closed for inclement weather on a Unit meeting Tuesday date, our in-person meeting will be cancelled. ZOOM meet is always available on those days. We will only be holding ZOOM meetings (NO in person meetings) in January and February 2024. If you are out of the closing announcement area, please send me a text or call me if you are concerned or have a question.

All the best, AJ



Programs: November will be a very active month. We'll have the "Yarrow" report given by me and Kathy Bussenich in which we'll cover facts and fiction about the herb. Then Eva Boldt will be instructing us on how to make wreaths, followed by Fr. Geoffrey's spaghetti luncheon, which we're all looking forward to.

Birthday celebrations - our quiet recognition of each member's birthday, twice a year - every six months - will now include a list, in Sage Leaves, of each person whose birthday we celebrate. As it would take too much room in Sage Leaves, there will also be a list of those same people, with their actual birth 'date' in a frame on the luncheon table, as was done last time. This will give us each a chance to give the special people a wonderful birthday hug!!! Nice!!

--Joanne

November 2023 Herb of the Month – Rosemary (*Salvia rosmarinus*)

(Susan Obry)



I was indifferent to the taste of rosemary until I discovered rosemary cookies. Cookies that call to me in the dark of night.

Rosemary is a dense, evergreen herb with the strong taste and fragrance of pine with nuances of eucalyptus and lemon. Rosemary originated in the Mediterranean regions-France, Italy and Spain. Rosemary is difficult to grow from seed. Rosemary is bee friendly. Rosemary goes well with fatty and strong flavored foods such as meats, cheeses, rich sauces, and seafood. It pairs well with vegetables (especially potatoes), thyme, marjoram, and oregano. Dried rosemary can overtake a dish and become bitter if cooked too long.

Avoid cultivars with a strong smell of camphor. They are bitter and not used in cooking. "Tuscan Blue" (available in our area) is low in camphor.

Keeping Rosemary Alive Indoors:

Here are five ways to kill your rosemary:

Lack of light, poor watering practices, powdery mildew, pests and temperature fluctuations. So...

- Bring inside at the beginning of September or before the heat is turned on. Rinse the plants to avoid bringing insects into the house. Monitor frequently for disease or insects.
- Light: About a month before moving it inside, acclimate to lower light by moving the plant to gradually shadier areas. Inside: needs full sun for at least six hours or 14 hours of supplemental light. South/Southwest windows are best. Protect from cold window drafts.
- Room temperature/conditions: 65-70 degrees during the day; 55-60 degrees at night. Can withstand some fluctuations between 45-70 degrees. Sudden changes will kill or damage the plant. Place in an area with good circulation (deters powdery mildew) but not near heat registers.

Water/fertilizer: Do not overwater. Rosemary will suffer from low humidity so increase humidity by placing on gravel or small rocks in a tray. Add water daily but do not allow the plant to sit in water. Do not mist. Becomes semi-dormant from the middle of December through the middle of February. Water less but do not let the soil dry out. After February 15, water more and fertilize.

December 2023 Herb of the Month – Allspice (*Pimenta dioica*)

(Susan Obry)

Allspice is made from the dried berry of the myrtle pepper evergreen tree, or pimento, which is native to Jamaica and Central America. Hardiness zone is 9-11. It is grown in the US in California, Texas, Louisiana and Arizona. There is only one variety of Allspice. Allspice is a single ingredient deriving its name from its combined flavor of nutmeg, black pepper, cinnamon and clove.

Allspice is used in Caribbean, Middle Eastern and Latin American cuisines. It is used in desserts, side dishes, main courses, stews, soups, pickling, brining and beverages. It can be used wherever warm spices are needed or as a substitute for them. It can be used in ground or whole berry form. The ground version is used primarily in desserts. Remove the whole berries before serving. Berries can be added to meat like slivers of garlic.

Ground allspice lasts 2-4 years while whole allspice can be kept longer but flavor will diminish. A substitute for allspice is equal parts of cinnamon, clove and nutmeg with a dash of black pepper.

Allspice can be grown in Wisconsin but growing conditions are very specific and picky. It will not survive frost or cold weather under 50 degrees and new plants need higher outdoor temperatures. Plant too soon and it will die. Plant too late and you won't be able to harvest. Further research will be necessary.

Recipes

Tarragon Butter

(Diane Kescenovitz – Sep 16 Mtg)

- 2 sticks butter, room temperature
 - 4 T finely chopped fresh tarragon leaves
 - 2 T lemon juice
 - 1 t lemon zest
 - 2 t fine sea salt
 - 1 t finely ground pepper
- Mix all in blender and serve.



Vegan French Onion Soup – 4 Servings

(Susan Obry – Sep 16 Mtg- adapted from elavegan.com)

Ingredients:

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| 2 tbsp olive oil | 1 1/2 tsp fresh thyme or 1/2 tsp dried |
| 5 medium onions sliced | 2 bay leaves |
| 2-3 garlic cloves minced | 1 1/2 tsp sea salt or more to taste |
| 1-2 tbsp balsamic vinegar | Black ground pepper to taste |
| 1/2 cup green lentils | 1 tbsp soy sauce |
| 5 cups vegetable broth-more if soup thickens | |

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat and add the onions. Cook on low to medium heat until soft and caramelized. Stirring frequently.
- Once the onions are caramelized and soft, add garlic, salt, pepper and thyme. Sauté for about 1 minute.
- Add balsamic vinegar, the lentils, the vegetable broth and bay leaves.
- Bring the soup to a boil and let it simmer for about 20 minutes or until the lentils are tender, stirring occasionally.
- Remove bay leaves. Adjust seasonings. Add soy sauce. Enjoy!

Cheese Croutons

(Kim Paulus – Sep 16 Mtg)

Ingredients:

- 8 oz. whole-grain ciabatta or other rustic bread, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 3 Tbs. olive oil
- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (2 tsp.)
- 1/3 cup finely grated Swiss or Gruyere cheese

Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper. Place bread cubes in heat-proof bowl.
2. Warm olive oil and butter in medium skillet over low heat. Add garlic and mash it with back of wooden spoon to break up a bit more. Increase heat to medium, and cook 3 to 4 minutes or until garlic starts to turn light brown around edges. Remove from heat and discard garlic pieces.
3. Drizzle oil mixture over bread cubes, stirring to coat. Season with salt, if desired. Spread bread cubes on prepared baking sheet. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, or until crisp and brown on bottoms. Push croutons close together, and sprinkle cheese over all. Bake 2 minutes more, or until cheese melts. Cool on baking sheet, then pull apart to serve.

Holiday Prep: Check That Spice Drawer

(Herb N Cowgirl)

In the next two months most of you will be hosting – or attending – gatherings of family and friends. Nearly every one of these events will involve food, some of it made by you. Now I know absolutely you want to bring something that will be flavorful. Of course, this assumes that the herbs and spices you're using will do the job.

When you make your famous broccoli-cheese casserole, make sure the seasoning is top notch. Don't use old herbs or no one will eat it – except for the family dog, perhaps.

Just how old is that oregano you have tucked away on the kitchen shelf? Those decorative spice jars over the stove may look great, but do their contents taste great? All too often we buy spice jars, put them on the shelf and just assume they will do the job when the time comes. But like all foods, they break down and stop tasting good when they are beyond their "Use By" date. Time for you to employ the Herb 'n Cowgirl's famous look-sniff-taste test to determine what to keep and what to toss out.

Look – is the spice faded? Do the jar contents cake together when you shake the jar? Are there suspicious signs of insects (it happens, trust me)?

Sniff – Now open the jar. Can you smell the herb or spice? If there is no aroma, it's probably missing the essential oils that provide scent and flavor. Time to get a fresh jar.

Taste – Take a small amount and taste it. If the distinctive flavor is still there, keep it. But if it tastes no better than dried grass, it won't do anything for your foods.

Before you start your fall baking, make sure the herbs and spices on your shelf are still flavorful by using my look-sniff-taste test. Don't waste your time – and your ingredients – with less than flavorful spices. Herbs and spices that fail this test are not worth keeping. Be ruthless. Throw them out and buy more. But how old is too old? According to McCormick Spice Company, the average shelf life is:

- Ground herbs and spices: 1-3 years
- Whole herbs and spices: 4 years
- Whole seeds: 3-4 years
- Liquid extracts: 4 years
- Seasoning blends: 1-2 years

These guidelines are for spices stored under perfect conditions, away from heat and light and in an airtight container. Spices that are too old or have not been stored properly won't do their job. Buy replacements now to help you make tasty foods for the holidays

Happy Holidays





This Christmas . . .



Mend
a quarrel.
Seek out a

forgotten friend.
Dismiss suspicion
and replace it with
trust. Write a letter.
Give a soft answer.

Encourage youth.

Manifest your loyalty in word
and deed. Keep a promise. Forgo a
grudge. Forgive an enemy.

Apologize. Try to understand.

Examine your demands on others. Think
first of someone else. Be kind. Be

gentle. Laugh a little more. Express
your gratitude. Welcome a stranger.

Gladden the heart of a child. Take pleasure in
the beauty and wonder of the earth.

Speak your love and then speak it
Again.

--Howard W. Hunter



If you have an event, article, recipe,
etc. that you feel members might be
interested, please send to Diane and
she will try to put it in the next issue of
Sage Leaves if there is room.

Future *Sage Leaves* will be mailed out
to arrive by January 1 and March 1,
2024.