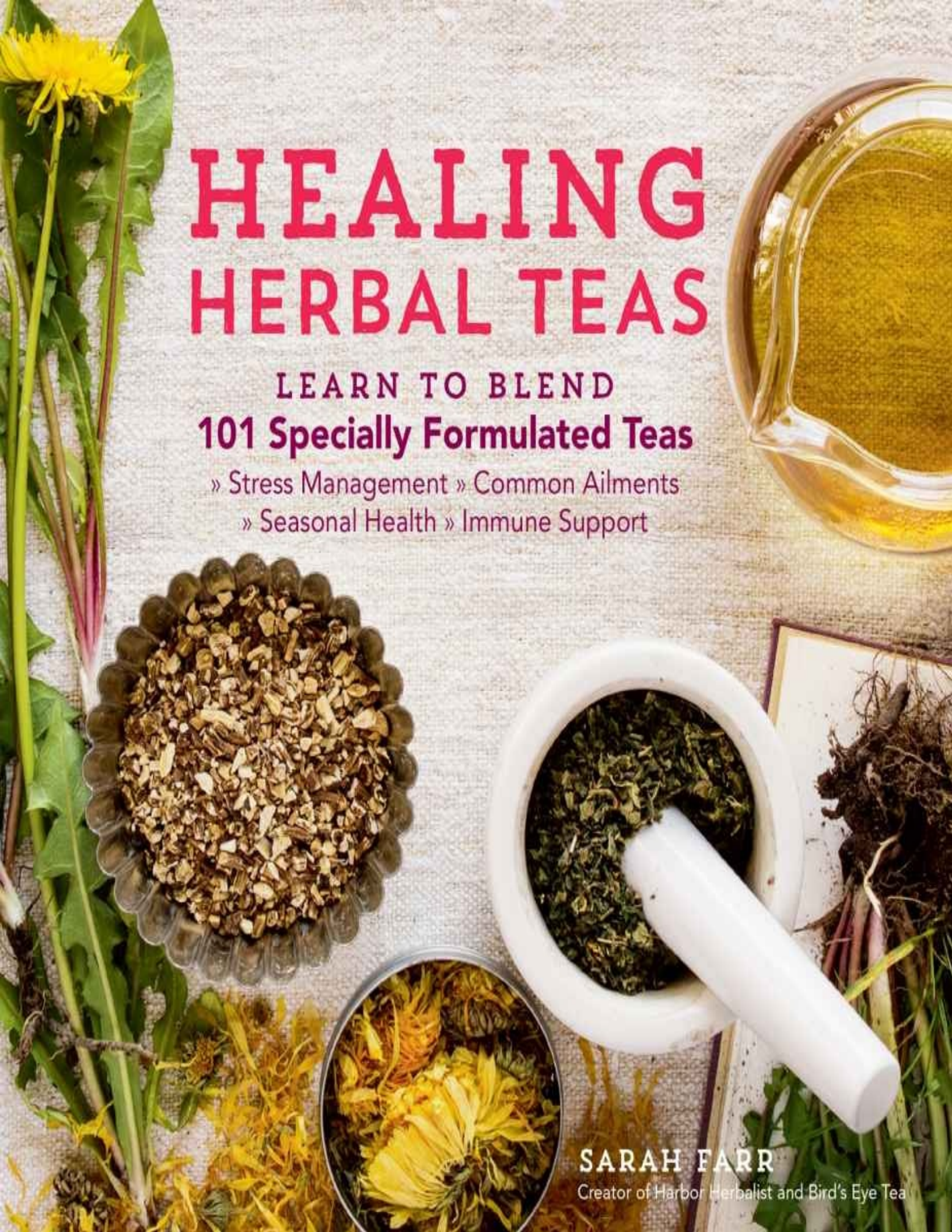




HEALING HERBAL TEAS

LEARN TO BLEND
101 Specially Formulated Teas

» Stress Management » Common Ailments
» Seasonal Health » Immune Support

SARAH FARR

Creator of Harbor Herbalist and Bird's Eye Tea

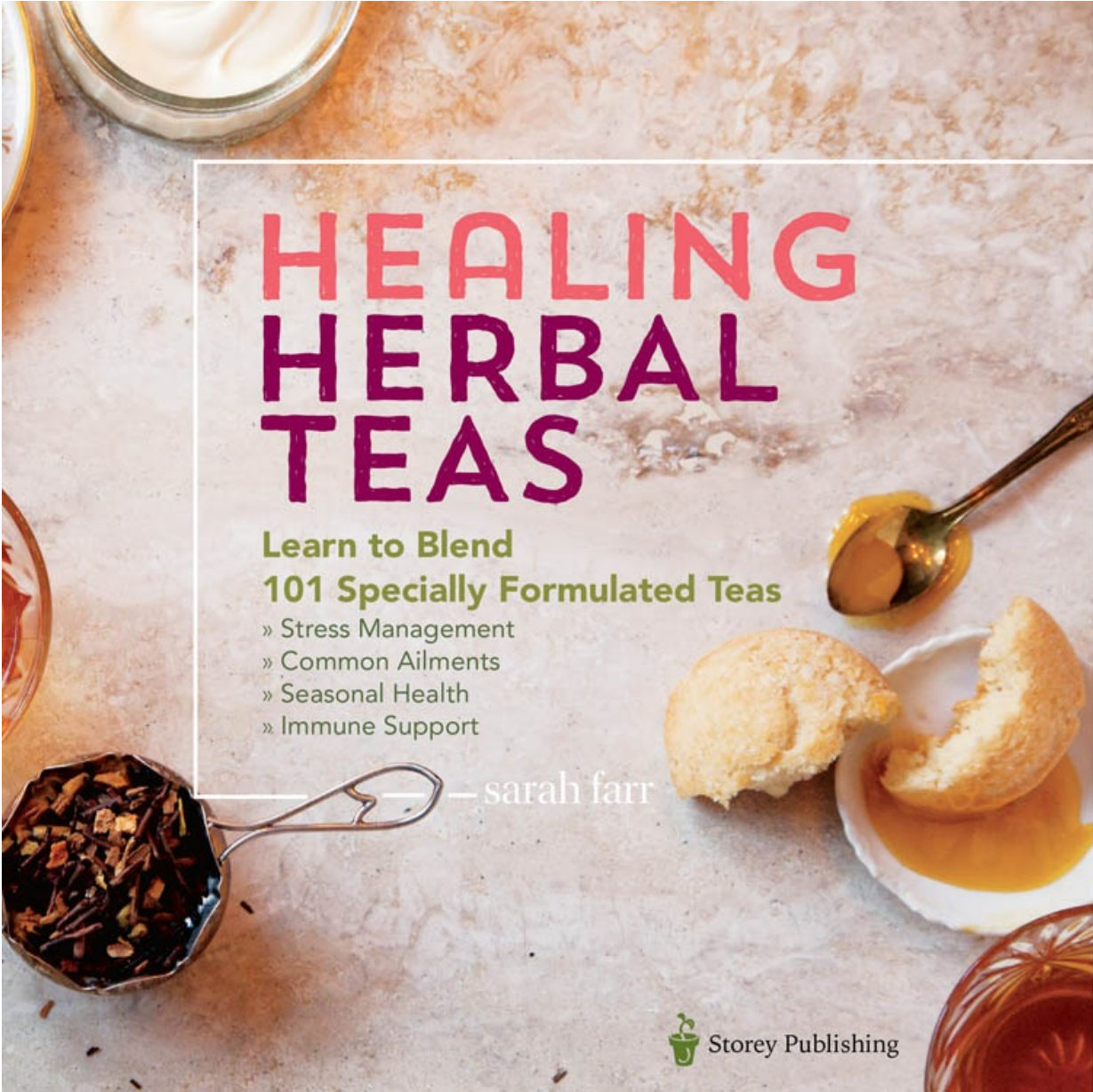
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**Learn to Blend
101 Specially Formulated Teas**

- » Stress Management
- » Common Ailments
- » Seasonal Health
- » Immune Support

— sarah farr



Storey Publishing

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you for supporting yourself by drinking herbal tea and reading this book!

I have a truly blessed creative life, and I get to work with plants in the most glorious ways. But my work would not be possible without the consistent support of my friend, David Balatero. Thank you for your kindness, humor, and deep moral support. You are continually thoughtful, and your unique perspectives and passionate music inspire me all the time.

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Contents



Introduction

Part 1: The Art of Tea Blending

Chapter 1: The Tea-Making Process

Chapter 2: Formulation and Herbal Actions

Part 2: Recipes

Chapter 3: Tonics for Holistic Health

Nutritive Tonics

Strength

Daily Mineral Tea

Respite Nervine Tea

Respite *without Mint*

Dream

Glow: Beauty Tea

Digestive Tonic

Vitamin C Tea

Gingerade

Vital Tea

Indulge

Rejuvenating Tonics

Balance

Think

Athlete's Tea

Urinary Health Tea

Women's Blend

Daily Adrenal Support

Refresh

Repose

Kids' Tea *Vitamin C Tea*

Basic Chai

Delight Chai

Decaf Chai

Vanilla Chai

Rainy Day Chai

Chai Light

Bright Chai

Mint and Spice Chai

Cardamom-Rose Chai

Aphrodisiacs

Bliss

Love Tea

Love Your Life Tea

Chocolate *Spiced Drinking Chocolate*

Chapter 4: Remedial and Medicinal Teas

Wellness Tea

Respiratory Health

Sore Throat Soother

Constipation Relief

Cancer Care

Daytime Calm

Pregnancy Tea

Postpartum Nourish Tea

Candida Support

Nursing Mama Tea

Calm Waters

Blood Pressure Support

Snooze

Inflammation Reduction

Happy Heart

Ease the Pain Tea

Mindspring

Chapter 5: Seasonal Teas

Spring

Allergy Tea

Spring Revival!

Spring Nutritive Tea

Elegance Tea

Spring Aid

Spring Strength

Spring Tonic

Clarity

Spring Immunity

Green Love

Wake Up!

Summer

Summer Solstice

Summer Sol

Berry Sun Tea

Summer Breeze Sun Tea

Nutritive Sun Tea

Mint Green Tea

Lemon Ginger Iced Tea

Apple Green Iced Tea

Sol MatÉ

Summer Goddess

Serenity

Coconut Green

Chillaxin

Cucumber-Jalapeño Breeze

Nervine Cold Brew

Summer Chill

Revive

Shiso Iced Tea

Black Beauty

Iced Chai

Iced Choco-Chai

Fall

General Fall Tonic

The Fall (Fall Repose)

Mulling Spices

Peace Tea

Brain Tonic

Golden Garden

Kukicha Gold

Delight

Honeybush Spice

Lift the Grey

Vira Protect

Winter

Winter Solstice Tea

Memoria

Winter Comfort

Rejuvenate

Deep Wellness

Fire Tea

Late Winter Woodsman Tea

Kahwa

Traveler's Tea

Part 3: Living Amid Your Medicine

Chapter 6: Starting an Herb Garden

Chapter 7: Wildcrafting a Better World

Index

Converting Recipe Measurements to Metric

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INTRODUCTION

When you lean in and take those first deep breaths after preparing a cup of tea, you are tuning your senses to the energy and fragrance of nourishing botanicals.

Humans in just about every civilization worldwide have experienced that moment of bliss, hovering over a cup of herbal tea. We physically and emotionally respond to the chemistry of botanicals, and so did our ancestors — the joy and familiarity of drinking herbal tea is embedded in the fabric of our genes and cultures. The human body evolved along with a vast botanical pharmacy, and herbal teas were among humanity's first medicines. When we commune with herbs in the pure form of tea, we participate in a long legacy of relationship between humans and nature in all its glorious complexity.

Making and drinking herbal teas for comfort and health is an ancient tradition that anyone can learn. It is both sensual and intuitive, a thoughtful process in which we look, smell, touch, and taste the herbs. As we develop our sensual palate, the flavors, texture, and fragrance of an herb begin to tell us a story of its remedial properties.



The Power of Plants

Plants connect with myriad other organisms through their root systems, leaves, flowers, and seeds. These connections increase their resistance to disease, aid in pollination and seed dispersal, and help increase nutrient uptake. Plants also create special chemical compounds to communicate with other organisms in their vicinity, exchanging information about the constantly fluctuating conditions in the environment. With their above-and below-ground connections they are able to thrive and help a diversity of others thrive as well. Mutually beneficial partnerships are what create stability and resilience in the landscape.

Like plants, our bodies need to be part of an interconnected community, too. Our physical and emotional health depends on knowing and communicating with our environment. Herbal teas — simple infusions of healing herbs in water — offer a daily reminder of our place in nature and open our hearts and minds to the ways in which plants can realign us.

We rely deeply on the plant kingdom for nourishment, medicine, oxygen, ecological stability, and clean drinking water. By learning to observe, tend, and use healing plants, we gain insight into their ecological roles both inside our bodies and out in the landscapes from which we harvest them. No special genius is needed, just interest and attention.

Learning from Those Who Came Before

Direct relationships with a landscape shape the needs of the people who depend on that landscape for food and medicine. And, in turn, the actions of the people shape the needs of the landscape. If we look closely, we all participate in a cycle of reciprocity. The landscape draws us in and begs us to learn how to tend her; in exchange we are given long-term access to some of nature's most healing and profoundly comforting plants. We can learn to modify our actions to meet the needs of our place and let the abundance of where we live fulfill us physically and emotionally.

Before centuries of colonialism, indigenous communities naturally embraced the patterns of nature in order to survive; they knew how to use their regions' biodiversity to find nourishment, maintain health, and treat imbalances. By our standards, since every member of society was fluent in the language of plants and could generally manage their own health, everyone would have had the basic skills of an herbalist. Food and medicine were intricately connected to place.

Indigenous communities inhabited the Puget Sound long before my family moved here. The unique range of native edible and medicinal species evolved alongside these people, and the techniques they developed for tending the diverse ecosystems of the Puget Sound are part of a rich cultural heritage. Therefore, when I am out wildcrafting herbs and fruits for teas, I am practicing an ancient skill that indigenous cultures in my area have performed for thousands of years. Although my goal is to honor life and be part of a community that appreciates and supports all the local biodiversity, my opportunities are shaped by a history of colonialism, land-use choices, and a

culture of entitlement. I must work to create a new culture that ensures a different legacy for this place I love.

Those of us who are not indigenous and feel spiritually shallow (or hungry) often admire the earth-based spiritual practices of indigenous peoples. It might seem enticing to identify and cloak ourselves with the teachings of these cultures to compensate for our own feelings of emptiness and grief from being part of a culture that prides itself in ecological dominance. But we must learn to teach ourselves new ways to heal the wounds of our violent history, while honoring but not appropriating indigenous culture.

As I learn skills that enable me to become an herbalist and land steward, I try to be mindful of the indigenous roots of these skills. Part of learning about a place is grappling with its uncomfortable history and not ignoring it. But there are many ways to nurture our people and the earth, and time spent loving nature and connecting to plants will naturally bring those ways to light.

A Philosophy of Place and Healing

Herbal foods and teas can teach us how to nurture both our internal and external environments. In the four years I have owned Harbor Herbalist and Bird's Eye Tea I have witnessed dramatic positive changes in the herbal tea community where I live. Most of my customers reside in the Puget Sound area where cool, damp winters make way for the lush, foliated landscapes of summer. The beauty and uneven terrain of the Puget Sound seem to instill a fondness for innovation, creativity, and adaptability in our cultural identity. We enjoy a healthy seasonal balance of introspection and outdoor activity. An awareness and appreciation for our special ecology give support to a robust network of local seafood and farms. There is a growing community with a desire to become part of a more sustainable culture that builds strong bonds between local organic producers and consumers.

Herbal teas fall at the intersection of food, nature, and medicine, and I feel blessed to be able to create blends that both heal and highlight the incredible biodiversity of the place where I have spent almost my entire life. My work is influenced by the ingenuity and artistry of regional cooking traditions, and I have always believed that the most effective herbal remedies are those that nourish depleted organ systems and offer daily support. The selections of teas I make for farmers' markets are designed for and influenced by the energy of the seasons where I live — and are also tasty enough for people to adopt as healthy habits.

Making and using your own teas (from locally available sources, when possible) can have a positive impact on the environment and reduce your reliance on pharmaceutical drugs. If you decide to start your own tea garden or get out into nature to gather herbs, you will surely have a pleasant time getting to know the landscape. Whether exploring a woodland forest for nettles in early

spring or relaxing in your own backyard apothecary, you are providing yourself an opportunity to become more at home in your region.

The practice of drinking herbal teas to support wellness connects you to your little spot in the world, but it also empowers you to participate in and own your health. Despite what the media tells you, we are all capable of responsibly caring for ourselves and our place through our lived experience. Like the rest of nature, our bodies are incredibly intuitive and designed to heal themselves, but we experience many moments of fear and discomfort when we stretch ourselves too thin, which causes physiological imbalances. Tea can provide the beauty, motivation, and direct therapeutic support that the body needs to shift its focus back toward healing and balance on physical, emotional, and energetic levels.

Herbal tea is a daily celebration of life, and it reminds us how lucky we are to be part of the earth's natural cycles. A cup of tea is a form of communion, a coming home.

THE ART OF TEA BLENDING



CHAPTER 1

THE TEA-MAKING PROCESS

TEAS HELP BRING OUT THE BEST IN PEOPLE. Making your own teas is a fun way to invigorate your senses and deepen your familiarity with healing plants. You get to work directly with your hands to create something that specifically suits your needs and desires, thus becoming an active participant in the process of maintaining your health. (It feels really good when you make your first wellness tea that keeps you and your family healthy during the cold and flu season.)



At a basic level, a well-crafted tea is a community of herbs synergizing to achieve a desired outcome. Whether you need adrenal support, help sleeping, or simply an uplifting experience, making your own teas allows you the freedom and flexibility to nurture your body in specific ways. By learning some basics and exploring the recipes in this book, you will be able to formulate delicious teas that lead your body toward the health outcomes you desire.

Every herb has a beautifully unique flavor, energy, and purpose embedded within it. Making an herbal tea is a process of delicately weaving the energy and character of each herb into a tenacious basket strong enough to lift the weight of life from within our bodies. In drinking your daily tea, the biochemistry of the tea becomes part of you. This transformation is guided by thoughtful listening and learning to trust botanicals to nourish and help protect the body from stress and disease.

Sourcing Herbs

When you can, it is always best to get your herbs locally. *Terroir* is a term used in the wine industry that describes the nuances that the growing conditions of a vineyard impart to the grapes and the finished wine. Herbs are no different. Rosemary grown in your backyard is going to have a slightly different color, flavor, and potency than rosemary grown elsewhere. For some herbs the variation is quite small, but for others the difference is substantial. This is what makes herbs grown in your specific bioregion so special — they are specially conditioned to local weather and seasonal patterns and deal with the same stressors and climate fluctuations that you do. When I am making teas, I much prefer and trust the unique biochemistry of plants well adapted to my region: a healthy, well-tended herb grown close to where I live is always going to be better for me than an herb grown somewhere else.

Also, supporting local, small-scale, organic herb production will encourage a promising future for organic agricultural networks where you live. Incredible shifts are happening in domestic and international agriculture right now, and sourcing your herbs is a direct and simple way to channel your resources in solidarity with the agricultural practices that create the sustainable future you want to be a part of. For decades, small-and medium-scale organic herb producers have been forced out of the domestic herb market because they cannot compete with cheap herbs imported from overseas. By buying local, you will be supporting regional biodiversity and creating opportunities for farmers to reenter the herb market.

Herbalism is all about being part of a healthy and holistic community of healers, medicine makers, farmers, family members, and nature lovers. Plus, local sourcing usually means better-quality herbal products with a reduced carbon footprint. You will definitely have to pay a little extra for higher-quality organic herbs sourced close to home. But you will also be able to use less to

achieve a desired herbal action, as locally sourced herbs are fresher and retain better potency than herbs that have been sitting in shipping containers for months before arriving at a distributor.

Finding Balance

Balance comes from paying attention to how you feel and learning to use herbs purposefully and responsibly to shape the conversation between you and your tea. For example, I am prone to overstimulation and often find myself overwhelmed and stressed out by social situations that might seem relaxing to other people. My genetics and culture, along with life experiences, have shaped how I relate and cope in our culture and our technologically connected modern world.

It is my responsibility to listen to, contemplate, and appreciate my tendencies, but also to live intentionally and shape patterns in my life that promote safety, health, and balance. Because I know my tendencies, I am able to guide myself toward nourishing activities and herbs that feed rather than bankrupt my nervous system. I also use herbs to give me hope and determination by surrounding myself with messages, memories, and stories of the adaptive resilience of plants. Through my exploration of herbal tea making, I am learning to live with greater compassion and purpose and fostering healthy relationships.



Sourcing from Overseas

I try to avoid relying on internationally sourced herbs as much as possible, but the truth is I cannot grow or even regionally source the quantity or diversity of

herbs I need for my company's teas. I use quite a few spices that only grow in tropical and subtropical regions, so I approach and navigate the wholesale herb market with a discerning eye.

Unfortunately, the commercial herb market is rife with inconsistencies, poor land-management practices, exploitation, and greed. Typically, the dried organic herbs that you or I can source through herb shops, wholesale distributors, or online retailers come from very large production farms in developing countries. A few large-production herb farms operating in the United States and many in western Europe supply organic herbs domestically, but by and large, herb buyers typically partner with farmers in the world's poorest countries where labor and agricultural costs are much lower than in developed nations. It is difficult to gain access to specific information about the individual farmers that distributors and wholesalers source from, which is a pretty big red flag for me. Usually, the most information I can get out of my distributors is the herb's country of origin and harvest month.

Some distributors are amazing and trustworthy, but it requires careful research to find the ones that can balance quality, purity, and ethical sourcing with affordability. When I am getting ready to place an herb order with a distributor, I try to call ahead and ask for information, such as the harvest date and how the herb has been stored since harvest. I am often really surprised that companies sell batches of herbs that are sometimes over two years old. I will not buy an herb if it is older than the most recent harvest season, even if the distributor tells me the herbs are still testing in their lab at high potency levels.

Ensuring the herbs that get blended into your teas are fresh and potent sometimes takes a lot of legwork, but it's worth it. Ask for information and use your senses to test each batch of herb you receive. Does the herb look, smell, and taste fresh and vibrant? If not, send it back.

How you choose to source herbs has powerful ecological impacts. Some herbs travel halfway across the globe before they arrive at an herb shop or distributor. It is likely that you could easily grow or responsibly forage some of the same exact species of herbs. Before you automatically decide to get your

herbs through a distributor for its convenience, take a look around and see what is available from a wildcrafter or an organic farm in your region.



Fair Trade and Direct Trade

Large organic herb distributors have employees that spend much of their year traveling and working with large-scale rural farmers in poor countries to improve their systems. Some buyers perform random inspections on contracted farms to ensure that they are producing herbs in accordance with global organic standards and the standards of customers. Though these farms still retain the drawbacks of large-scale agriculture and monoculture, they show a positive shift in the relationships between poor rural producers and international buyers. Another part of that shift has been the rise of fair-trade and direct-trade policies. Ideally, fair-trade and direct-trade agreements are less manipulative and less exploitative than the free-trade agreements created at the intergovernmental scale that dominate much of the corporate global agricultural industry today.

FAIR-TRADE certifications are designed to empower farmers to get a fair price for their harvests. Fair-trade agreements are usually created with family or co-op farmers in rural developing nations to redirect more of the benefits of globalization into the hands of the underprivileged farming communities.

DIRECT TRADE is not a certification but simply a movement by ethically minded buyers that was created in the last decade in the coffee industry. Though the term was coined only recently, it has been a relatively common practice in the herb industry for many years. Direct trade goes a step further than fair trade by creating greater incentives to farm specific plants in accordance with natural ecosystem patterns, such as cacao in the tropics or nettles in temperate climates. Higher prices are paid for better

overall land management, which also increases the quality of the crops produced and ideally improves resilience of the farmland as well. In the end, the cost to the consumer is much higher, but it reflects the actual cost of a long-term sustainable agricultural system.

Basic Equipment

Making small batches of tea at home does not require any special equipment except a digital scale. You can use mixing bowls (one large, one small) and a wooden or stainless steel spoon that you already own. Keep a notebook on hand, especially if you are experimenting and want to keep track of what you do. Finally, you'll need airtight containers or opaque bags for keeping your tea fresh.



Creating a Good Workspace

The best workspace is a clean table or counter. If your space is free of clutter, the herb particles and dust created during blending will be easier to clean up. A kitchen table will work great, but in the warmer months I prefer to set up a folding table outside for the best ventilation. Working outside also feels natural and makes cleanup easy, although if the weather is damp or windy it will cause some obvious and hilarious problems. Your precious herbs either get soft and saturated

or will soar along the wind and get dropped back into the soil from which they came. So use your best judgment when deciding whether to work outside.

I am definitely not characterized as excessively neat, but it makes tea blending and packaging a whole lot easier if I try to keep my workspace tidy, both for my own peace of mind and to avoid cross-contamination of herbs. I usually try to work in a space that is a little bigger than I actually need, which makes me feel more relaxed and organized.

Once you have a clean, cleared workspace, gather all your materials for tea blending so they are handy when you need them.

How to Work with a Recipe Written in Parts

Most of the recipes in this book are written in parts so that you can easily adapt them to your needs. Before you start, you will need to decide how much tea you want to make.

Let's say you want to make 1 pound (16 ounces) of Strength tea. The recipe calls for:

- 1.5 parts peppermint
- 1 part nettle leaf
- 1 part raspberry leaf
- 0.5 part fennel
- 0.5 part rose petals

First you need to find out how many ounces are in a part. Start by adding up the total number of parts in the recipe. For Strength, the total is 4.5 parts. Since we are trying to make 16 ounces of tea, we need to divide 16 by 4.5. So, now we know that each part is 3.55 ounces. At this point, I usually round up or down to make measuring a little easier. In this case, I will probably round down to 3.5 ounces per part. Finally, you multiply each part by 3.5.

So here is our calculated recipe for making just a hair under 16 ounces of Strength tea:

- 5.25 ounces peppermint
- 3.5 ounces nettle
- 3.5 ounces raspberry leaf

- 1.75 ounces fennel
- 1.75 ounces rose petals

Write It All Down

If you are thinking of experimenting with your own blends, you'll find it incredibly helpful to have a reliable record of your successful formulations along with those that don't make the cut. I often try many different combinations of herbs before I arrive at what feels like the right blend. To keep it all straight, I have a recipe notebook that I use every time I make teas.

No matter how simple a recipe is or how confident I am that I will remember it, I always force myself to write it down. Throughout the year, I keep one notebook that is like an ongoing journal of tea recipes and ideas. The teas that I end up using for my business I transfer to an online spreadsheet, just in case I lose my notebook.

I find it important to keep track of ideas that dead-end, too. They help me track my thought processes and intentions. And occasionally I go back and rework blends or ideas that didn't seem to taste right or make sense the first time around, especially when I am in the midst of a creative dry spell. Sometimes I get a nagging feeling that I need to rework an existing tea, and it is fun to go back and look at all the iterations of a blend from when I was first formulating it. Other times I go fishing for ideas in my recipe notebook, looking for a starting place for a new concept. In any case, having records helps me build on and improve blends over time. Plus, we are always gaining new insights about herbs and our health, so blends often get updated and improved.



april teas

white tea	5	7.5	8
green tea	5	7.5	8
orange tea	3	4.5	5.5
green	5	7.5	8
lemon	4	6	7
lemon	4	6	7

allergy tea

nutrative tea
oats 2/2 to 7/7

May teas

sassafras	6	4
cham	6	
elephant	2	
birdseye	8	
Sassafras	2	
dandelion	7	
licorice		
Cinnamon		
Oj zest	2	
Cacao	1	
all spice	5	
ginger		

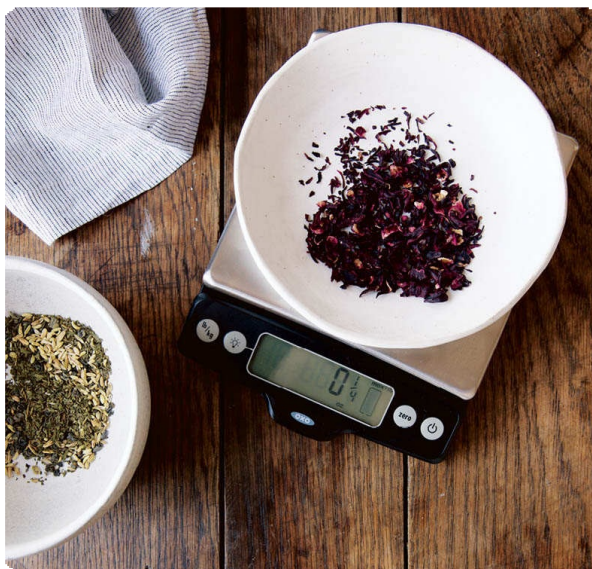
spring digest

barberry	3
ginger	5
Schisandra	5
anise fennel	10
dandelion	7
Mint	1.5
hibiscus	

Blending

Now that you have your recipe calculated, you are ready to start putting it all together.

-
1. Before you begin blending, always make sure your hands and all your equipment are clean and dry. Even a small amount of moisture inside a bowl or pot can cause herbs to spoil.
-
2. Weigh out each herb one at a time into a small mixing bowl, and then pour it into the large bowl. If your largest mixing bowl is too small for the size of the batch of tea you are making, use a large stainless steel cooking pot instead. When I hand-blend teas for Harbor Herbalist and Bird's Eye Tea, I use a 5-or 8-gallon stainless steel pot as my blending vessel.



-
3. Once all your herbs are in one vessel, you can blend them with your clean hands or with a large wooden or stainless steel spoon. Mix the herbs slowly using a circular wavelike motion to help blend them evenly. If you

rush, you will find yourself in a small cloud of herb dust, especially if you are blending cut and sifted roots. Depending on how you look at it, being immersed in a cloud of the aromas and textures of tiny herb particles can be a good thing or an annoyance. I admit I love big messes, so I really enjoy being covered with herb particles when I mix teas. If you prefer to keep your workspace spick and span, mix your teas gently and lightly. You will hardly notice the particles if you stick to small batches. When I am making several large batches of tea in a single day, I often wear a respirator to keep all the dust particles out of my lungs. I notice my chest gets congested when I breathe in too much dust from tea blending.



Storing Teas and Herbs

Keeping your teas in a handy spot near the stove or sink is convenient, but remember that the herbs are completely raw and without preservatives. The best way to truly honor the time, energy, and work that goes into growing and processing them is to create a space to store them properly.

To protect the integrity of your bulk herbs and finished tea blends, you need to keep them away from light, moisture, and heat, which cause oxidation. Otherwise, stored improperly, those rich, aromatic, potent herbs quickly become pale, flavorless, and void of medicinal potency. Try to store your teas (and culinary herbs and spices as well) in a cabinet or pantry that has a relatively stable temperature all year round. You would easily notice a difference in a week or two between teas that are stored in a cool, dark pantry versus teas stored on the kitchen counter or a cabinet above the stove.

Because I keep my herbs and teas in a cool, dark storage room, I don't worry too much about the containers I store them in. A lot of people buy special tea tins or opaque ceramic jars, which look and work great, but clean mason jars or quart-sized yogurt containers work fine, too. If you do decide to store your teas in a visible spot in your kitchen, it's definitely better to blend small batches of tea at a time and store them in opaque containers instead of clear glass jars.

The teas in this book are primarily designed for health and healing, so the integrity of the herbs makes a huge difference in their flavor and medicinal effectiveness. Also, being responsible and diligent about sourcing and taking really good care of your herbal teas honors nature by reducing the amount of herbs needed to achieve desired therapeutic effects, which reduces costs and eases the financial burden on your herb farmers, wildcrafters, distributors, and home gardeners. Basically, the quality-over-quantity argument works here.

Quality Control

When you are blending, make sure to observe your tea. If you notice any impurities or foreign material mixed into the herbs, pick it out or start over with a batch that is pure. I usually inspect herbs as I am weighing them out, and if I find lots of “junk” in a batch I bought through wholesalers, I let them know about it. Then, if I receive another batch of bulk herb that isn’t totally clean, I just find another source for that particular herb. Lately I have been impressed by how infrequently I find stray plant material or little fragments of harvesting sacks in the herbs I buy directly from organic farmers or distributors.

When I grow and harvest my own herbs, I hand harvest everything I use for teas so I can be totally sure that no weeds are getting mixed into the herbs (plus, I don’t think I would like farming much if I didn’t get to physically harvest my own herbs). Hand harvesting on a small scale makes sense, but on a large, commercial scale, machinery does most of the planting and harvesting, so it is more common to find stray plant material, bugs, and fibers or plastic in commercially sourced herbs.

A Note on Natural Flavors

I have noticed a significant increase in the use of “natural flavoring” as an ingredient in medicinal and nonmedicinal teas from big commercial tea companies in the last five years. This trend is disturbing. One of the reasons many of the commercial teas on the market have natural and/or artificial flavors (engineered in industrial chemical factories) is to mask the poor quality of the herbs and spices used in the tea. Adding natural flavors also increases the shelf life of the tea because 80 to 90 percent of the volume of a natural flavoring is a preservative that stabilizes the flavoring. So even though the medicinal quality of the herbs typically degrades within a year, chemically enhanced natural flavors add a few more years to the shelf life of a tea by offering consumers the impression of freshness. Natural flavorings mimic the tastes and aromas of real ingredients. This tricks our minds into thinking we are getting the benefits of fruits, spices, and herbs in the tea, which we are not.

Making a Cup of Tea

I like to drink several cups of tea each day in the fall and winter, and often drop down to just one cup a day as the weather warms up. During periods of increased stress, I have a successful protocol in which I drink a robust tea in the morning and restorative teas in the afternoon and evening. I try to be flexible, letting my body tell me what it needs and choosing teas based on how I feel. There are times when I consistently feel run down and crave a mushroom and root tonic every day for months. At some point I start to notice that I really need to take a break, and I switch to more simple blends.

I believe that seasonal teas are the way to go for long-term vitality, so at least once a day I try to drink the same teas I make for Bird's Eye Tea, my monthly tea subscription service. These teas are designed to highlight seasonal ingredients and mediate seasonal stress.

If you are not experiencing a specific imbalance, let your body guide you toward the right teas for you, or choose teas that support your seasonal needs, health, stress levels, and energy. If you want to get the most out of a specific medicinal tea, drink one cup, two or three times daily. This is considered an effective dose for chronic or acute conditions. Drinking two or three cups throughout your day allows your body to slowly absorb the active constituents over a long period of time. In the case of acute infection, prepare and consume a strong tea as often as you can drink it.

Teas are made by infusion or decoction, depending on what plant parts you are using and what constituents you wish to extract from them. The recipes in this book include specific steeping instructions, but the following information will help you understand why and how different methods are used.



Infusions

The term *infusion* comes from the Latin word *infundere* meaning “to pour in.” Technically, an infusion is a method of maceration (the preparation of an extract by solvent extraction that uses water as the menstruum/solvent) in which water is poured over herbs to extract the active constituents. The ratio most often used in this book is 1 to 2 tablespoons of herb to 1.5 cups of water, though this will naturally depend on how strong you prefer your tea.

Infusions are usually made with aerial plant parts such as leaves, flowers, and soft berries, which require relatively little time in hot water to extract the desired constituents. If you do boil the delicate leaves and flowers, you risk losing some of their potency to excessive heat and evaporation. Barks and stems are oddballs and can be used either in infusions or in decoctions.

To prepare an infusion, you can use a vessel such as a teapot, French press, mason jar, or teacup with a lid. It is super important that your vessel has a lid to limit the amount of volatile essential oils that evaporate with the water. Infusions can be prepared hot or cold and can be stored for up to 24 hours after preparation.

Preparing a Hot Infusion

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 to 2 tablespoons tea. Cover the vessel and allow to steep.

For most herbal teas, allow 15 to 20 minutes to steep. That probably seems like a long time, but it really does take that long to get a full extraction. Try to be patient. You can also just steep for 5 to 10 minutes and re-steep your tea a little later. For blends with black or green tea in them, steep for only 5 minutes if you want to avoid the bitter tannins. You can re-steep black and green teas multiple times.

Preparing a Cold Infusion

Combine about 1 tablespoon tea per cup of cold water in a lidded jar. Shake the jar for a few seconds, then place it in a cool space for at least 2 hours. I usually just stick the jar in the fridge for a few hours.

Cold infusions are important if you are trying to extract delicate vitamins, flavonoids, mucilaginous carbohydrates, and enzymes from herbs. Slippery elm, fruits, raspberry leaf, and marshmallow root are just a few examples of herbs that do well in cold extractions.

Decoctions

Decoction is from the Latin word *decoquere*, meaning “to boil down or away.” A decoction is a method in which rough plant parts, such as roots, bark, stems, and seeds, are placed in a pot with cold water, covered, and slowly brought to a boil. Placing the plants in cold water is essential because tougher plant parts are high in albumin, a protein, which needs to be extracted out of the cells slowly as the water temperature increases. If you put these plants in hot water, the albuminous matter in the plant cells coagulate and can prevent other constituents from leaving the plant cells, potentially limiting the extract.

Preparing a Decoction

Combine a tablespoon of tea per cup of cold water in a lidded saucepan. You can let the herbs macerate for a few hours in the cool water to loosen up the dry plant material if you have time. Bring the herbs to a boil and reduce the heat. Let the herbs simmer for 20 to 45 minutes. Remove from the heat and strain the herbs.

Using Fresh Herbs

Most of the teas in this book are designed for dry herbs (unless otherwise stated). If you have a garden or like to forage, however, you can make tea with fresh herbs as well as dry. I was once told that extraction is more efficient with dried herbs because their cell structures have been made brittle through the drying process. But honestly, fresh herbs are ideal for making delicately flavored teas because they tend to be improvised and ephemeral. All the excitement and affection you feel as you go out and harvest herbs for a fresh tea gets incorporated into the infusion. I find that fresh teas taste quite different from the same blend made with dried herbs: fresh tea just tastes alive.

When harvesting plants, I tend to think about where the strongest energy is in a plant. In the spring the plant is spending a massive amount of energy on leaf growth, so that is when I harvest the leaves (long before the plant has even flowered). Harvest flowers when they are in bud or just before their peak. Choose mature fruits. Gather seeds when they are just about to fall off the plant. Harvest roots in the fall, when the energy of the plant has retreated there, or in the early spring after winter dormancy. This rule of thumb will get you far, but there are plenty of exceptions. For example, there are many annual plants for which I might harvest the whole plant at once. Regardless, it is important to know what part of the plant has the nutrition or medicine you are seeking.

Preparing a Fresh-Herb Hot Infusion

When you work with dried herbs, they are often cut and sifted for you. With fresh herbs, you need to gently tear the herbs or finely chop them with a knife.

Because fresh herbs have a high water content, you will need to fully pack the jar (or other vessel) with fresh herbs if you desire a strong tea.

Pour hot water over the herbs, cover with a lid, and allow the herbs to steep until the tea is cool enough to drink.



Preparing a Fresh-Herb Cold Infusion

Fill the vessel with cold water and herbs. Make sure the herbs are fully submerged. Cover and shake the vessel for several seconds and then place it in a cool spot. Let the tea steep for several hours or overnight. For centuries, fresh herbs have been added to cold drinking water to kill pathogens and add refreshing flavor, vitamins, and minerals.

Preparing Sun Tea

Fill a jar with herbs and spices and cold water. Put the lid on and shake for several seconds. Make sure the herbs are fully submerged, and place the jar in a sunny windowsill or in a sunny spot in your yard for a few hours. Sun teas feel fresh and alive, really lending themselves to the wildness of homegrown herbs. I drink a lot of water when I am farming or wildcrafting, so I always have a jug of sun tea ready to replenish my body in the afternoon.



Blending Tea as a Prescription for Life

A great gift we can each give ourselves is in simply slowing down enough to listen to our bodies and using herbs to support our health on a daily basis. The more I participate in my own well-being, the more I feel empowered and enabled to give greater healing support to my community.

Each herb has its own story. I am deeply familiar with a lot of different herbs at this point, and the action and flavor of each one makes it feel as if the herb is embedded in the cells of my body. One of the really cool aspects of getting to know herbs is that you will begin to notice that the right herbs will reveal themselves by popping to mind precisely when you need them.

When herbs speak to me, I usually listen. I might be at the farmers' market or running errands when I feel my heart, way in the background, shuffling through memories of herbs and letting me know which would benefit me in that precise moment. It feels like my body is not only processing how I feel in a situation but also advising me about where to look to complement my situation. Depending on the circumstance, I might reroute myself toward a familiar place where a supportive herb is growing, head home to make some tea, or momentarily adjust my focus toward the memory of the herb so I can find peace and acceptance of my situation. You get to decide how to respond to the messages your body sends you.

CHAPTER 2

FORMULATION AND HERBAL ACTIONS

TEA FORMULATION IS WHERE THE ARTISTRY OF HERBALISM merges with some of the more technical details about plant chemistries. Some herbal teas I make are designed solely for pleasure, as a flavorful celebration of a season or a moment in time, while other teas are designed as a remedy or to support the body's natural resistance to stress and disease. If you take time to discover tea as a joyous expression of nature and learn a little about the chemistry that defines those flavors, the teas you make for yourself will be so much more meaningful.



Most people begin making teas with herbs that have touched them in some way. Garden roses and mints are inspiring herbs that many people feel a strong affinity toward. I have a deep love for lemongrass and shiso from years of growing them in my gardens when I lived in Hawaii. When I make tea with these herbs I get to let years of joyful memories wash over me. It is totally possible to fall in love with almost every new herb you discover. My favorite herb is the one I feel most connected to at any given moment. Herbalists are

promiscuous when it comes to plants; it is my goal to always open my heart and mind when choosing which herbs to use.

Combining herbs can be unpredictable, but you get better the more you practice. When I first started making teas, one out of every ten teas I made was really good on the first try. I often had to tinker with the blend quite a bit until I arrived at the right balance of medicine and flavor. Fortunately, almost all of the herbs I work with are safe. The worst thing that happens when I am formulating new teas or working with new herbs is that I underestimate the intensity of a particular herb and create a tea that tastes truly wretched. It takes a lot of practice to make delicious teas with herbs that have an unusual or powerful taste. Over the years I have learned to appreciate herbs with more intense flavors and enjoy the challenge of shaping a delightful tea that incorporates powerful herbs with intense flavors. Working with bitters is a good example.

This chapter will introduce you to the importance of knowing the individual plants you use for medicine and flavor. Tasting each herb you use is incredibly important to the craft of herbal tea making, more so than with other forms of herbal medicine, because flavor is a big part of why people drink teas. Few people in the Western world will consistently drink a tea that does not taste good. Also, herbs can be categorized into specific tastes that are connected to specific plant physiologies and herbal actions. This simple yet remarkably reliable system has been used in natural medicine for thousands of years. The second half of the chapter is dedicated to methods of formulating teas and little tricks I rely on to create teas that are both potent and delicious.

Learning from Nature

Some of my first teas were simple blends made from abundant wild plants I came across when spending time enjoying the ecology of the Pacific Northwest. In the spring I would combine fresh nettles, raspberry leaf, and maple flowers into a fun, light-hearted infusion. In the summer I loved improvised blends made from wild and cultivated fruits, herbs, and spices in a moment of whimsical inspiration. I make teas because I have a fondness for plants, and teas are a way to celebrate and appreciate the beauty and flavors of nature. The edible plants that I learned about while observing nature helped me better understand the ecological niches and functions plants have in their natural ecosystems, which shaped the way I think about plant chemistry. Watching and then subsequently tasting nature are what allowed me to develop awareness about plant chemistries and how they influence the other organisms they come into contact with.

Training Your Taste Buds

Part of the reason we love tea so much is because we get to experience the taste and aroma of herbs — it feels less like medicine and more like a daily rejuvenating ritual. However, most of us were raised on a mild diet and without any understanding of how different taste sensations influence our bodies. Processed foods are rarely medicinal and lack strong, penetrating flavors derived from real herbs and spices. As a culture, we tend to prioritize sweet, salty, and artificially flavored food because they are so familiar to us, and we remain relatively unfamiliar with most of the flavors of the natural world. So when it comes to becoming more attuned to the flavors and properties of herbs, it takes some practice and attention.

The first step to understanding taste and flavor is to simply pay close attention to the sensations you experience when tasting individual herbs. Take a piece of fresh or dried mint, for example, and focus your attention on the sensations in your mouth and nose:

- Does it taste sweet, salty, sour, bitter, or spicy? Most herbs have a spectrum of tastes, one being more dominant than the others.
- Is there a tactile nature to what you are tasting, such as texture, astringency (a dry feeling), or numbing?
- How does the herb make you feel? What does the taste remind you of?

Asking — and answering — these questions helps you build a strong conscious memory of the herb. But it also helps you start to recognize taste patterns that reflect herbal actions.

Fresh herbs are going to taste different from their dried form. A fresh herb is typically between 75 and 90 percent water, so when you take a nibble from a

properly dried herb, some aspects of the herb are going to taste more concentrated. When you taste a fresh herb, sugars, bitter compounds, and other elements, such as highly volatile essential oils, are going to be less intense. A dried herb will more fully express the dominant taste sensations that you will experience in your tea.

The Taste of Herbs

As you become better acquainted with individual fresh and dried herbs, start also giving greater attention to how they taste as tea. The whole tea rises to a different level when a tea maker achieves really good balance through herb choices. Each time you drink a tea, spend a few minutes focusing on the smell, taste, and “mouthfeel,” which together make up the flavor. Soon you will form a strong memory for that particular tea and start to recognize the different flavors that specific herbs impart into the tea blend.

The more herbal teas you try to recall, the more associative and connected your mind will become when you taste herbs. When I try a new tea, I let it wash over my palate without thinking, just appreciating its particular flavor for a moment or two. This is an exciting and curious moment. It feels a lot like my memories of being a child, wonder and surprise leading into a deep sense of joy. Once I have taken a couple sips, I start to associate the taste with particular herbs, memories, and changes in my body. I learn to appreciate the tea on many different levels when I mindfully enjoy my tea. Sometimes I get all giddy when I drink a tea that instantly makes me feel like I have connected or “arrived.” Some herbs are like old friends: you cannot help but stop what you are doing to converse with them. A really charming cup of tea can ground me perfectly in the moment.

The more familiar you are with the taste of an herb in all its forms, the more intuitive and practical you will become in regard to how you can and should use it. For example, there is an abundance of a wonderfully fragrant wild rose (*Rosa rugosa*) where I live, but although the dried petals look beautiful in a tea and

provide other medicinal properties, most of the essential oils responsible for the aromatic scent tend to evaporate during the drying process. Because I am familiar with the fresh and dried form of this rose, I know that I should only use it in my teas when it is fresh. So, instead of spending the time to harvest and dry the flowers for my dried teas, I add the fresh rose petals to whatever tea I might be drinking when the rosebushes are in bloom. The more you work with the particular herbs that are locally abundant, the more you will learn to honor the plants in specific ways. In the case of wild rose, I can only share it with my immediate community as a fresh flower infusion. This same species produces big rose hips that I collect and dry in the fall for my dried tea blends.

You will also develop a really good sense about the quality of the herbs you use. I can instantly tell whether or not a batch of tulsi (holy basil) is high quality just by smelling and tasting it. And I have gone through many sources for lemongrass in the past five years due to extreme fluctuations in quality. Lower-quality herbs are immediately noticeable to your body once you build awareness about how an herb should taste.

As you dive into the wonderful world of herbal teas, I encourage you to try as many herbs as possible to get an idea of how each individual herb tastes and makes you feel. Pay attention to the subtleties you experience. Over time this awareness about how each herb tastes will not only enable you to make excellent teas for yourself, but it will also benefit your cooking and general food choices. As you become adept at recognizing and appreciating flavor, your world will be so full with possibilities that every meal will be a celebration of nature.

Tea as Food

I am a tinkering kind of person, and I learn a lot from doing things and experimenting. I spent five years in my mid-twenties working as a cook. When I had a moment to spare in the kitchen, I would make teas using fresh and dried culinary spices, nuts, and fruits that we had on hand. In the winter I would make tea blends to steep in homemade broth — it just felt natural, refreshing, and delicious. To this day, during the fall and winter I make a whole variety of teas that get steeped into nourishing bone broth.

Not having teachers or guides at the beginning of my herbal journey expanded the way I think about taste, flavor, and herbal remedies: I just enjoyed experimenting with flavor and getting to know plants. I wasn't particularly aware of the “medicinal” aspects of herbs until much later. My teas are enjoyable and help the body manage the various kinds of stress we encounter in our daily lives. They are indeed medicinal, but to me they feel like an extension of food. After all, when we eat rich curries or spiced stews we are basically eating meat and vegetables in a salty herbal tea.

It turns out that the aromatic herbs and spices used in cooking are not just for flavor. Rather, they help the body digest fats and proteins efficiently, relieve gas, and protect us from food-borne pathogens. The difference is that the concentration of the herb is usually higher in tea, which strengthens its therapeutic effects. Also, while the flavor balance in food is derived from complementing herbs with the dominant starch, protein, or fat, with teas you have to balance the sweet, pungent, bitter, sour, and salty aspects of herbs with other herbs.

Spending years slowly learning about herbalism through food and a love of nature defines the kinds of herbal remedies I now make. So many of my teas are inspired by the idea that honoring fresh foods and local herbs is what truly sustains my mind, body, and spirit. Food and tea create the little pleasures in life that build hope, appreciation, and holistic wellness in our bodies and our communities. Nothing brings me more joy than sharing food and tea with my family and friends.

The Five Tastes and What They Mean

Herbs can be categorized based on their general tastes. Exploring taste is a great way to begin to understand herbal actions and get in touch with the medicine of your place. As you become more familiar with how taste reflects the chemistry of plants, you'll gain a greater depth of knowledge for precisely how to use them.

We are able to recognize five tastes: sour, salty, bitter, sweet, and umami. These tastes are recognized through our taste buds. Spicy, another category of flavor, is sensed through different kinds of receptor cells in the mouth. I'll also discuss astringency, which is a tactile sensation rather than a taste. Nature creates thousands of different flavors associated with a particular taste — the pungency of a pepper is strikingly different from the pungency of angelica root or thyme. Chefs are the first to admit that balancing all these different tastes and sensations creates the best meals.

The five tastes are our guide to understanding several basic herbal actions and how they work.

Sour

Sour is one of the least scientifically understood tastes. The chemical mechanisms by which we sense sour are, apparently, rather elusive. But as most of us know from experience, sour foods and herbs play a powerful role in how strongly we perceive other flavors when we eat or drink. Imagine a salad dressing without vinegar or lemon juice: taking the sour component out of the salad dressing leaves you with a rather dull taste experience and an oily residue on the tissues inside your mouth.

Sour substances are commonly used to brighten flavor. Strong sour substances like lemon juice and vinegar cause the slightly thrilling tactile sensation that makes your mouth pucker, often leaving you with a minor burning sensation in the back of your throat. Some sour substances are astringent and cause a drying sensation on the tissues in the mouth and throat. The sharp bright taste, along with the tactile sensation when eating something sour, is primarily derived from organic acids. The most commonly found organic acids in fruits and herbs are citric acid, ascorbic acid (vitamin C), malic acid, and oxalic acid. Fruits and herbs use these naturally occurring acids to inhibit the growth of certain types of bacteria that can damage or kill a plant before the fruits and seeds of the plant are mature.

Most of the sour flavors in the plant kingdom are in the fruit that surrounds the seeds of a plant. The mechanisms by which a plant's seeds are dispersed may determine the sourness of a mature fruit. For example, blackberries are very tart and sour when the seeds and fruit are premature. But the moment the seeds are mature, the berries sweeten and maintain just a slight tartness, making them highly appealing to animals that the blackberry plant depends on to eat and distribute seeds. By producing strong sour chemicals while the fruits are maturing, a plant wards off animals from eating the fruit prematurely and prevents microbial breakdown. The mild acidity that the mature berry retains actually encourages digestion in the animals that eat it. Several hours after a bear or bird has eaten the berry, the animal excretes the seeds in a new location along with a pile of compost that has the potential to start a new patch of blackberries.



So on the one hand, sour fruits and herbs with strong concentrations of acids can burn tissues and kill certain types of microorganisms, and on the other hand, when mildly concentrated, the same acids encourage digestion. We have an innate response to grimace when our mouths come in contact with acids in high concentrations. Our ability to recognize the intensity of sour is essential in order to avoid strong acids and the potential harm they can cause. In therapeutic doses, sour foods and herbs support digestion, strengthen tissues, promote healthy intestinal flora (especially from fermented foods), and quench thirst. Some acids also help our bodies absorb nutrients and minerals more efficiently. Overuse of sour foods and herbs can deteriorate tissues and exacerbate issues related to tooth and gum decay.

Many sour herbs are fruits and berries also rich in beneficial enzymes and an array of antioxidant properties. It is a pretty safe bet that some of the benefits of sour foods and herbs come from the synergy of their organic acids, antioxidants, and enzymes together on digestion. One of the greatest things about herbs is that they are composed of thousands of different compounds that create their unique flavor. In the case of the sour taste, the relative concentrations of organic acids to other sweet, spicy, salty, or bitter compounds account for the strength of the sour taste.

It's fun to experiment with sour herbs because most often they feel bright and cooling on the palate and enhance the uplifting energy of floral and spicy flavors. My body responds and notices sour compounds almost immediately;

then the sensations of other flavors become apparent. Lemons, schisandra, cranberry, linden, peach leaf, fir tips, and alma are all fruits used in herbal teas that have a strong sour taste. Berries, raspberry leaf, hibiscus, hawthorn, and rose have a mild sour taste.



The Chemistry of Taste

Taste buds are actually bunches of cells called chemoreceptors that are specialized to sense and analyze the chemistry of everything we put in our mouths. Our sense of taste serves two major functions. First, it allows us to evaluate the toxicity and nutrient density of foods, thus helping us decide what to ingest. Taste also stimulates digestive function to prepare the body to metabolize foods and drinks once they have been ingested. Humans have really good recall of just about every taste we have experienced since childhood, which is part of why taste can evoke such strong emotions and memories. Even if blindfolded, the moment I taste a blood orange, rose water, tarragon, or yarrow, I know exactly what it is.

It is amazing and lucky that we have such acute awareness through our sense of taste. Our ability to categorize and predict results based on taste has kept our species thriving for a long time. We can use the powerful combination of taste and smell to remember patterns associated with flavors that influence our health. Medicinal plants often have more complex and intense flavors than most other foods we eat. However, most people in developed nations have forgotten how to use their sense of taste to decipher the nutrient content of foods and drinks. As an herbal tea enthusiast, you are in a great position to learn this lost craft, which will also improve the quality and flavor of all the foods and beverages you prepare.

Salty

Salt is extremely accessible. Very few people in developed nations experience salt scarcity. Distinctly salty-tasting herbs are incredibly rare. I have never had a tea that is powerfully salty (though sometimes I add a tiny pinch of salt to my tea to bring out the sweet and spicy flavors of the herbs). Some herbs, however, provide subtle salty character. Seaweeds and mineral-rich herbs, such as cleavers, oat straw, and horsetail, are plant-based sources of essential minerals, including sodium, which our bodies need for basic cellular function.

Sodium ions create a sharp, metallic taste in the mouth. When salt is added to sweet or spicy foods, it miraculously seems to intensify the flavor. We perceive foods as being enhanced when we add salt. But if you add salt to a sour or bitter food, you will notice those flavors get suppressed. A growing body of evidence suggests that salt does not actually enhance flavor but just mutes bitter and sour tastes, which gives the impression of enhancing sweet and spicy. I often wonder if salt helps us perceive sugars more strongly in order to encourage us to eat fruits and vegetables rich in magnesium, sodium, and potassium, which might otherwise taste too bitter or sour.

The taste of salt itself increases appetite and promotes digestion. Because salt absorbs water (making us feel thirsty), most herbal traditions think of salty substances as wet and heavy. Salt increases blood volume and moistens tissues, and too much salt can cause water retention and increase blood pressure.

Although their salty flavor is subtle compared to table salt, certain herbs have an abundance of sodium and potassium. These include peppermint, parsley, kelp, blessed thistle herb, burdock root, celery seed, chamomile, chickweed, dandelion root, gotu kola, horsetail, licorice root, oat grass, rose hips, sage, thyme, and turmeric.



Astringency

That drying sensation you feel when you have cranberries or hibiscus is known as astringency. Astringency is not a taste but rather a tactile sensation derived from either organic acids from sour foods or polyphenols usually found in bitter foods. These chemicals make you feel as if all the mucus in your mouth has suddenly disappeared. This is because astringent agents cause tissues to constrict and tighten. The tightening temporarily reduces the output from mucous membranes, giving you that dry-mouth feeling. Not all astringent herbs are sour but many sour herbs have varying intensities of astringency. Herbs with distinct astringency include raspberry leaf, blackberry leaf, and green tea.

Internally, astringent herbs tone some of the body's tissues. Astringent herbs are commonly used to reduce tissue secretions, stop excessive diarrhea, tone tissues that are lax, and reduce internal or external bleeding. They often contain antiseptic properties and are used to treat urinary tract, mouth, and throat infections. Energetically, astringent herbs are often cool and overall moistening.

Astringent herbs are really important and impart a unique sensation to teas. It is worth learning to appreciate the way astringency affects tissues in the mouth. Tannins, another class of astringent chemicals, give body and depth to the flavor of teas, and I love them in low concentrations. Tea blends that have stronger concentrations of herbs with tannins are often blended with sweet and aromatic herbs to reduce the intensity of astringency on the palate.



Bitter

We are probably all familiar with the unpleasant experience of eating a plant that is uncomfortably or surprisingly bitter. Plants often produce bitter compounds in response to stress and to avoid predation. Oils, tannins, alkaloids, phenols, and flavonoids are just a few of the large groups of chemicals that can produce bitter compounds. We have an innate reflex to simply reject strong bitter flavors, especially when they surprise us, because they often signal toxicity, but a little bit of bitterness from the right sources can be enormously beneficial.

Our bodies are significantly more sensitive to the taste of bitter than sweet, sour, and salty. When the tongue detects bitterness, it instantly causes a reaction in the digestive system: salivary secretions increase, jump-starting digestive processes. (Note that you have to actually taste the bitter herbs in order for them to be effective in digestion!) Because it takes significant energy to break down bitter compounds, a bitter taste stimulates the pancreas and liver, which strengthens the body's ability to metabolize substances and detoxify itself. In an era of intense stress and fast foods, our bodies need bitterness.

Bitter herbs often aid the body's natural defense system as well. Many of our folk remedy "blood purifiers" are bitter; we also call these herbs *alteratives*. Alteratives help promote healthy catabolic and metabolic processes by supporting the organs of elimination (skin, liver, kidneys) and the lymphatic

system. They strengthen the reconstruction of new tissues, enhance absorption and assimilation of nutrients, and help the body defend itself in the presence of illness. Echinacea, red root, Oregon grape, turmeric, yellow dock, and dandelion are common alteratives.

We have learned through centuries of cohabitation with plants which bitters are good for us and which ones should be avoided. Let your palate and experience guide you when exploring the diverse collection of well-documented bitter herbs and foods that are safe for consumption. Humans have been selecting specific bitter plants for thousands of years for food and medicine. Some of our most cherished and powerful medicines come from plants with distinct bitter tastes: angelica, turmeric, osha, elecampane, dandelion, yarrow, elderflower, cacao, tea, and coffee, to name a few.

The intensity of bitterness that we will tolerate is often related to the other constituents in the herb or in a recipe. Our palate will accept far greater amounts of bitter taste when sugars or salts are present in the herb or blend. You can do an experiment with a dandelion leaf from your yard: Take a bite of leaf alone, and then take another bite with a pinch of salt. The second bite should taste significantly less bitter. Really good chefs and tea makers are either consciously or intuitively aware of the relationships between each taste and how to bring out, tone down, and balance flavors in just this way.

When creating a specific medicinal blend with bitter herbs, adding fruits, licorice root, or a spoonful of honey to your tea helps you tolerate a greater intensity of bitterness. Obviously if your instinct is to spit it out, then it is too strong. Bitter can also be a deep base flavor that provides a really good accent to sweet or moderately sour herbs. I often combine chamomile and hibiscus as a base for summer iced teas because the slight bitterness in chamomile seems to moderate the intensity of the hibiscus. I also enjoy slightly bitter drinks after a meal because the bitterness helps curb my craving for sugar.

Experimenting with the mildly bitter herbs that are aligned with the herbal action you are seeking is a great way to start to understand how to integrate bitter into a well-balanced tea. Because bitter-tasting herbs often have a mildly cooling effect on the body, a person who constantly feels chilly should use

warming bitters, such as elecampane, turmeric, angelica, and orange peel, or create teas that balance the cooling nature of bitters with aromatic warming herbs. As you become more familiar with the nuances of bitter and the intensity of each herb's taste, it will become easier to work with more intense bitter herbs, such as hops, dandelion leaf, and Oregon grape root.



What Is Salt? And Why Can't We Live without It?

A salt is any compound defined by the ionic bond between an acid and a base. Sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, and iron are all bases, which carry a positive charge. To neutralize and stabilize their positive charge, they bond to specific acids, which have a negative charge, creating a salt. Sodium chloride (NaCl), for example, is sea salt/table salt. When we talk generally about salt, we are mostly talking about sodium chloride.

Salt is essential to the human body. Several hundred million years ago, all animal life on earth lived in the salt-rich ocean. Land animals evolved from sea animals and continue to rely on salt for much of their biological processes. Because we rely on salt, we developed taste buds that find it delicious.

Salt plays an important role in all cellular function. Sodium and potassium are responsible for the electrical gradient needed for muscle contraction, nerve communication, and fluid regulation in all the cells of our bodies. We get most of our sodium from sea salt or table salt in the form of sodium chloride, but we need other minerals such as potassium, magnesium, and calcium salts from foods and herbs to maintain the appropriate balance of salts in the body. Our bodies benefit from at least a 3 to 1 ratio of potassium to sodium salts in our daily nutritional intake.

Sweet

To our bodies, sweet-tasting foods indicate energy!

Oh, and vitamins and antioxidants, too. Many adaptogenic herbs — herbs that support the central nervous system and help our bodies resist the damaging effects of stress — also taste sweet. Licorice root, codonopsis, and astragalus are perfect examples of sweet adaptogenic herbs. Our brains and muscles need sugar, especially when we are active, which is why sugar tastes so insanely good. Sweetness also plays an important role in our excitement for and appreciation of food. Emotionally we rely on sugar to boost energy and give us a moment of total bliss. Unprocessed naturally sweet foods are truly wonderful gifts from nature.

When blended into tea, raw, dried fruits as well as sweet herbs are a rich source of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that help restore our cells each day. Primarily using unprocessed, unconcentrated fruit-based sugars is a magnificent way to experience the full expression and complexity of sweetness that nature has to offer without eating excessively high concentrations of sugar. In herbal tea making, I use dried berries and fruits to add sweetness and fruity flavor to many blends. If I am trying to mellow a bitter or sour aspect of a tea, I often add licorice root, anise hyssop, or stevia — my go-to herbs for sweetness.

Short chains of *saccharides* (sugar molecules) are found in ripe fruits. Glucose and fructose are two of the most important simple sugars we consume. They immediately taste sweet on the palate. *Polysaccharides* are complex chains of sugars that have a starchier texture and taste. They often taste less sweet in their raw form and tend to be found as stored energy in the roots, bulbs, and tubers of plants. The extraction method for sugars depends on the type of sugar present in an herb. Simple sugars found in fruits are often drawn out by infusion, while more complex sugars in roots, tubers, and mushrooms are starchy and extract better when decocted.

In herbal medicine, *mucopolysaccharides* are an important group of moderately sweet sugars found in herbs. Mucopolysaccharides cool and soothe inflamed or dry tissues. Our body naturally produces mucus, which is a mucopolysaccharide substance, to lubricate and soothe tissues, but sometimes we need extra support. Mucopolysaccharide-rich herbs include mallows, licorice

root, aloe vera, and slippery elm; they produce a substance similar to our own mucus. Unsurprisingly, they have a slimy texture, which coats tissues and helps reduce inflammation. In teas they treat dry, inflamed tissues in the mouth, throat, and digestive system.

Many nutritive teas have a light, sweet component to their overall flavor. When I am formulating a tea that has deep “medicinal” flavor, I sometimes add nutritive herbs with a sweet taste to balance it and increase tolerance for bitter or strong overpowering tastes of other herbs. Learning about different sweet herbs and fruits and using the appropriate ones to support the dominant action of a strong-tasting tea can really help your medicine be a delightful experience instead of an unpleasant one.

Plant Defense

Tastes and aromas happen for a reason and are specialized to the plant from which they derive. The diversity and range of flavors in the world are constantly evolving and reflect the chemicals that have evolved to provide plants specific advantages in their ecosystems. Herb farmers often intentionally give their plants a little bit of stress to elicit greater production of secondary metabolites, the chemical compounds primarily responsible for the medicinal properties of plants. Plants cannot get up and walk away when stress comes along, so they produce these chemicals to protect themselves from predation, oxidation, drought, and pathogens.

However, humans have also learned to breed bitter constituents out of a lot of our commercial food plants, and with them many secondary metabolites. For example, common lettuce varieties were bred from more bitter wild lettuces, such as *Lactuca serriola*. Instead of selecting foods for both their balanced nutrient content and the plant's innate ability to thrive on its own, our culture has been selecting plants with subdued flavor and higher sugar or starch content. This process of breeding out bitterness reduces the adaptability of the plant and sets up a dangerous situation wherein higher concentrations of pesticides are required to protect the plant in a farm setting, dramatically throwing off the balance of our food system.

We need to rethink the breeding of food plants and retrain our palates so that we can support food systems made up of plants closer to their wild ancestors that are able to thrive without intense chemical interventions by humans. In turn, when you learn to use and appreciate wild foods and herbs on a regular basis, you will become naturally less reliant on strong

medicines because you are giving yourself daily doses of naturally occurring antioxidants, vitamins, anti-inflammatory compounds, antimicrobial oils, and more.

Umami

Umami is an important aspect of flavor in food and drinks that is just starting to get the credit it deserves in Western cultures. Umami is characterized as a savory, appetizing flavor associated with proteins. Seaweed, nettles, nuts, medicinal mushrooms, and protein-rich grassy herbs, such as alfalfa, fit into umami flavor profiles. Fish sauce and rich bone broths have strong umami flavor, too.

Umami taste receptors stimulate salivation and positive associations with glutamate, a common amino acid (a protein) in the plant and animal kingdoms. The higher the glutamate concentration in a food, the more savory and meaty it tastes. (MSG is a synthetic glutamate substance.)

While umami plays an important role in how appealing certain types of foods are, there is almost no evidence-based research into the medicinal aspects of umami. But we do know that the human body — skin, bone, muscle, hair, enzymes — is made primarily of protein. Proteins also play important roles in healthy cellular metabolism. Unlike carbohydrates and fats, our bodies do not generally store proteins, so to maintain healthy tissues we must eat protein frequently.

Several of the teas included in this book have reishi, chaga, nuts, or nettles as a primary component of the blend. When I make a strong decoction of reishi and chaga mushrooms, I am always surprised by how appealing the tea is to me. The flavor itself is not particularly dynamic or amazing, but I feel a deep desire for and satisfaction from the tea. Working with medicinal mushrooms and roots, such as burdock, can be a little tricky, but they have important qualities that

leaves and flowers cannot provide. Luckily, mushrooms and many roots have umami aspects to them that draw you back to them again and again.

Pungent and Spicy

The spicy taste is not associated with taste buds but is rather a sensation of heat. Pungent herbs and chilies bind to thermoreceptors in our mouths, which are primarily responsible for letting us know when something is hot. When stimulated, they cause a sensation of heat and (sometimes) pain.

Pungent and spicy herbs are important medicines. So many of the aromatic leaves and roots we encounter get their scent and invigorating flavor from volatile essential oils that are often pungent. A plant produces pungent essential oils in part to protect itself from pathogens and insects. Because these oils are antimicrobial, they protect plant tissues from fungal and bacterial diseases. Ginger, cinnamon, pepper, mint, basil, and thyme are great examples of herbs with spicy pungency thanks to their essential-oil content.

Spicy herbs are often warming: you can feel the heat move through your blood when you drink a spicy tea or eat a meal with spicy aromatic herbs. I usually feel a little flushed. In therapeutic doses, spicy herbs cause you to sweat, which can help break a fever and also cool the body down during summer heat. Warming herbs that can cause sweating are referred to as *diaphoretics*.

In the winter, warming aromatic herbs reduce stagnation. Drinking spicy teas causes sweating and increases the elimination of metabolic waste through the skin. Pungent herbs also play an important role in supporting immunity. Some increase circulation and body temperature enough to kill pathogens. Others have volatile essential oils that are able to kill pathogens due to their antimicrobial properties. Many of our beloved digestive herbs, such as ginger, tulsi, basil, and thyme, positively interact with digestive enzymes and stimulate digestive processes. I drink spicy teas in the morning when I feel tired and sluggish; they help invigorate my body and motivate me to get moving.



Formulation

Formulating herbal blends is how amateur and professional herbalists fit the right remedy to a particular person or imbalance. Sometimes a single herb is all you need to get the result you are seeking. In my experience, however, an individual's complex, particular imbalances respond well to a blend of several different herbs. Plus, people really appreciate the balanced flavor that a blend can offer.

Few articles or discussions about formulation are available to budding herbal tea makers, and most herbal books provide only the formulas themselves. However, I think it is important for tea enthusiasts to also become skilled at the art of formulation so that you can make teas specific to your tastes and needs.

When you begin to step over the boundary between teas for flavor and medicinal teas, you may feel doubtful that you know enough about herbs. I still go through this regularly. But you will be motivated to learn what you need to learn as you explore the world of herbalism. And the more you learn about herbs through tea making, the more precise you will become when using them medicinally. Most of the herbs you will work with are safe. I pretty much use the same herbs for my medicinal teas as any other teas I make. The difference lies in the strength of the most active ingredients in the blend.

For a beginner, it is always a good idea to start with teas that are safe, gentle remedies. As your experience grows so does your ability to understand more complex physiological imbalances and the subtleties of the herbs we use to treat them. Being able to grow within your craft is one of the great joys of life.

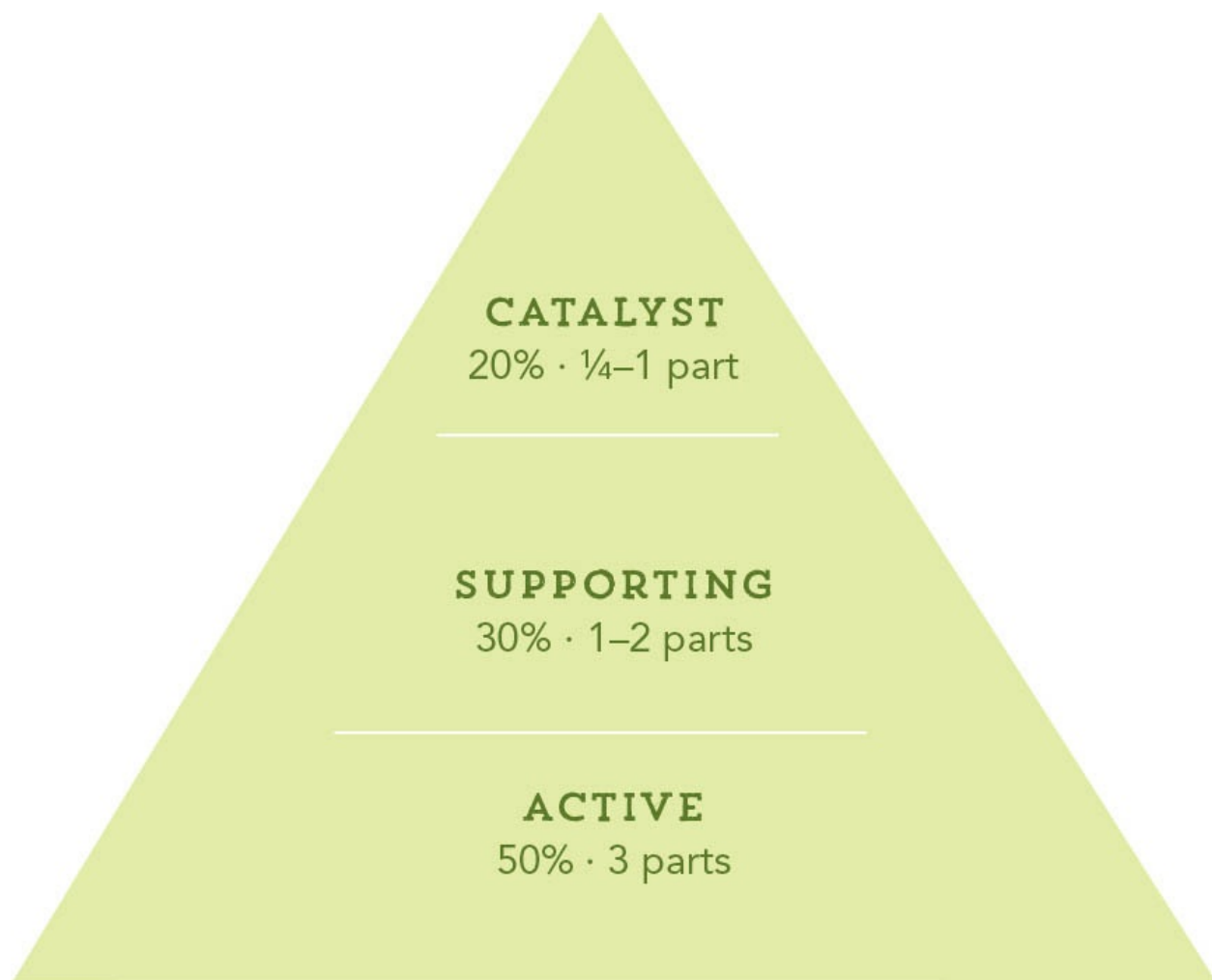
The Formulation Pyramid

Individual herbs typically have a dominant action or flavor and a whole host of subtleties, so whether you are trying to make a tea medicinal or not, having a

reliable system for coming up with new blends is handy. Eventually, and with practice, formulation will become a creative and intuitive process, but in the beginning most people just do not know where to start. The herbal tea formulation pyramid is a basic diagram that provides a structure that you can follow as strictly or loosely as you desire.

The idea behind the pyramid is that it gets you thinking about the mechanisms of different herbs and gives you a simple method for figuring out proportions. It will also help you better understand the functions of the different herbs you see in other people's tea blends. You can approach this method for tea formulation two main ways: start with an herbal action in mind — for example, you might choose to make a digestive tea or a tea that helps soothe a sore throat — or start with an herb you really like (such as rose, ginger, or lemongrass) and build a blend around the flavor of that particular herb.

The pyramid has three levels. The base is the “active” herb in the blend — the one with the most pronounced flavor and potency. For example, if you are making a tea to strengthen digestion, you will probably use a slightly bitter liver-supporting herb like dandelion root as your active constituent. The second tier of the pyramid consists of the “supporting” herbs, which give soothing support to the organ system affected. Supporting herbs for a digestive tea might be fennel, mint, or marshmallow root. The third tier “catalyst” herb is added as a flavor accent or to improve the function of the active herb. Ginger is a great example of a catalyst herb in a digestive tea. The heat in the ginger wakes up the digestive system, increasing your digestive fire.



You can think about the pyramid method a little differently if you decide to make a tea around a specific herb you really like. I love tulsi, so let's use it as the main or active constituent. The first thing you want to do when working with tulsi is to taste it. Steep tulsi in hot water and remind yourself of its complex flavor. Make a list of all the things that tulsi tastes like. Then you can start to imagine herbs that would accentuate specific aspects of tulsi. If I add mint, it will enhance its basil-like characteristics. If I add rose, it will draw out some sweet floral aspects of tulsi. Adding something bright and citrusy will bring out the bright top notes of the flavor. Also remember that when you accentuate one aspect of an herb, other aspects get muted. For example, if you add licorice or stevia to tulsi, its spicy peppery bite will be muted. If you add ginger, the subtle sweetness will fade. It takes practice to predict what will happen when you

combine herbs. But you'll find it helpful to start by noticing the flavor spectrum in a specific herb, then deciding which medicinal and flavor aspects you want to enhance or mute. This is what will define your blend and make it completely unique.

The best part of formulating based on the pyramidal method is its simplicity. You are able to make really beautiful blends based around the medicine and flavor of a single highlighted herb. The supporting and catalyst herbs provide balance and direction to the main constituent.

The Advantages of Blending Herbs

When herbs are combined we are able to do several things:

1. Enhance the main driving action of the blend.
2. Create multipurpose tonic blends.
3. Target more than one aspect of an imbalance.
4. Create teas with better flavor balance.

Free-Form Formulation

My technique for formulating tea has become more personalized as I've learned to use my experience and intuition to create precise blends. This experience comes from years of witnessing how the herbs in my teas affect members of my community. The great thing about selling herbal products at farmers' markets is that you get to listen to feedback from your customers — and all that feedback gets incorporated into new teas.

The teas that do best for Harbor Herbalist are those that straddle the line between medicine and excellent flavor. Every tea maker should strive for this sweet spot: if your teas can achieve great flavor without diminishing the therapeutic qualities and without adding natural flavorings, you will have no trouble making sure your customers, clients, or friends drink your teas. For a medicine maker and herbalist, the hardest aspect of working with herbs and clients is patient compliance. If clients don't enjoy or like the medicine, they might not have the discipline to stick with an herbal regimen.

My knowledge of tea formulation when I first started blending teas for Harbor Herbalist was basic, so I used the pyramid. My goal was to come up with simple remedial or tonic teas that I thought my community would benefit from and appreciate. I started with a basic set of teas that supported various body systems. These teas were based on my location, preferences, and education.

As I became more confident in my craft, my teas slowly diverged from the pyramid. On one hand, I became interested in making seasonal blends from herbs and spices I grew or wildcrafted, which changed how I viewed formulation. On the other hand, I have deepened my familiarity with the tastes and actions of the herbs I use. I have learned to notice their subtleties, which enables me to better predict their influences on the body and better combine them with other herbs for a truly synergistic effect. I notice more minute details about the herbs I work with now that I have been using them consistently for a long time.

It is a bit challenging to explain my current methods for blending, because I do not follow a specific formula anymore. Most medicinal herbal tea blends that I make take into account the season, taste, and availability of the herb, as well as the whole person and what they are going through (not just a specific imbalance). When blending medicinal teas, I try to consider not just the immediate symptoms but also the root of the imbalance as well as secondary imbalances that arise, such as the psychological implications of suffering from an injury. Working on this level of complexity often requires me to diverge from the pyramid and add a few more herbs to create a holistic blend.

For seasonal teas, I usually start with a handful of herbs that are either in season or are effective balancing herbs within a season and begin brainstorming tea ideas. I often let my mind wander and map out associations among herbs, the weather, how I am feeling emotionally, and how other people are responding to the season and each other. I try to watch for shifts in the plant communities around me as well as the shifting energy of humans. Basically, I try to sense the natural world as much as I can and create teas that enhance a sense of balance in myself and other people.

I typically make new teas during their appropriate seasons. I rarely formulate a new immune tea during summer or an allergy tea in the fall. I wait until the moment is right so I can be observant and make the right tea at the right time for a particular type of stress. Being as observant as possible to slight fluctuations in my community and bioregion is what defines the herbal action of the teas I create. I also let myself be totally taken over by a passion for the herbs growing around me. During the spring and summer I am obsessed with flowers and make a ton of improvised floral teas. I never get bored of flowers when they are in bloom. In the winter I use flowers in teas as accents only, as an uplifting memory marker, to remind us what is on the other side of the seasonal calendar.

It has taken me more years than I like to admit to become a keen sensual observer. My natural tendency is to rush and forget to see and listen to nature. Tea making has changed me. I pay far closer attention to what is around me than I did before I began making teas as my profession. Because I have changed, my formulation methods have changed. I loved having the tea formulation pyramid when I started, and I think it serves a great purpose for beginners. Over time you will develop your own style based on your own proclivities. This is in part why there are so many different teas on the market: we each see the world in our own unique way, so the way we work with herbs will also be different. As long as you remain focused and prioritize the herbal action you are trying to achieve, there are innumerable herb choices and combinations that can get you where you want to go.

The Gift of Tea

The possibilities of collaboration are pretty endless in herbalism. As we get older we encounter unforeseen health issues, such as high blood pressure or arthritis. Making personalized teas for loved ones that experience a chronic health issue is a great way to connect with the person and provide delicious herbal support. I receive a lot of gratitude from loved ones when I make them teas designed to fit their current circumstances and take into account their preferences. It shows that you have been listening and are mindful. Sometimes this simple act of mindfulness can be part of the community support a person needs. I would never force my teas onto people in my life; I usually create custom teas only for people who are already into what I do and wouldn't find a custom medicinal tea patronizing.



CHAPTER 3

TONICS FOR HOLISTIC HEALTH

VIRTUALLY ALL HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVES FOR HEALTH

and healing include tried-and-true tonic recipes. In Western herbalism, the term tonic describes a general restorative action of a single herb or blend of herbs. Tonics act as a balancing force on multiple organ systems to increase overall vitality, energy, and equilibrium. They do this by feeding your cells a broad assortment of vitamins and minerals needed for healthy cellular metabolism. Regularly using tonic herbs, in conjunction with a healthy lifestyle, will play a powerful role in keeping your body strong and vibrant.



The strength and versatility of tonic herbs make them the cherished herbs of the hearth and family. They are the keepsakes that get carried in medicine bundles across continents and oceans. This free ride accounts for the wide dispersion of many of the world's naturalized tonic herbs, including turmeric, burdock, licorice root, dandelion, parsley, and ginseng. No matter where you live, you rarely need to look far to find some of the best daily tonics suited to local

climatic conditions. Nature and a legacy of human tending ensure that the restorative herbs we need are always close by.

I categorize tonics into three main groups: nutritive, rejuvenating, and aphrodisiacs. Nutritive tonics are vitamin-and mineral-rich herbs that build tissues and blood. Rejuvenating tonics are designed to balance the mind, body, and soul; they often work through the nervous system to help the body adapt to stress, increase energy reserves, and support emotional resilience. Aphrodisiacs foster a closeness between the drinker and the world. They are not usually “sexual tonics” but rather sensual tonics. They quell tension, lift the spirits, and help people experience full sensual beauty and joy in the world.

In the following pages I have placed tea blends in the categories I feel they best fit. Some could fit into more than one category. Regardless, all are delicious and make wonderful daily teas. Try making many of the blends and let your body tell you which ones work best for you.

How Much Tea Makes a Therapeutic Dose?

The therapeutic dose for an herbal tea is probably much larger than you think it is. For example, if you were buying tea in tea bags at the store, you would need at least four tea bags to create a therapeutic dose for yourself. I usually make loose-leaf teas with a ratio of at least 2 heaping tablespoons tea per serving and usually drink at least 2 cups of tea per serving. If you like mellower tea, you can make 4 cups of liquid for your serving. The dosage is really about how much tea you are using; the amount of water you decide to use depends on your taste preferences. I have a French press that holds 4 cups of liquid. I usually fill up the press almost a quarter of the way with tea before adding water — sometimes more if I am really in need of a medicinal dose.

NUTRITIVE TONICS

NUTRITIVE TONIC TEAS WILL SOFTLY NOURISH YOUR BODY and restore tissues that are weak or depleted by stress or disease. They carry a rich assortment of vitamins and minerals, increase fluids, and build blood and lymph. Nutritive tonics also nourish the muscular system by providing bioavailable minerals essential for healthy muscular function and recovery.



When blending nutritive teas, remember that many vitamin-and mineral-rich herbs taste sweet and slightly salty. Sweet herbs have a cooling and soothing effect on tissues. During spring and summer, lush, sweet, mineral-rich teas feel perfect on a hot day. Nutritive herbs can feel a bit too cooling during the winter months when our tissues already feel heavy and cold. To balance the cooling effect of these herbs I often add warming spices (fresh ginger, star anise, cinnamon, cayenne, orange zest) or aromatic herbs (such as rosemary, thyme, and sage).



STRENGTH

Strength is a powerful nutritive tonic made from some of spring's most gratifying and beloved herbs. These herbs often have a dedicated, resilient presence on the landscape. And lucky for us, they gently imbue our tissues with these qualities through the lush transfer of nutrients from their leaves into our own flesh and blood.

In early spring, we crave new growth and wait in buzzing anticipation for the earth to warm just enough for spring foods and herbs to sprout. Nettle, raspberry leaf, and mints hardly need much coaxing to propel themselves skyward as soon as the coast is clear. Nettle has a deep, earthy flavor with slight bitterness. Sometimes nettles smell and taste a tiny bit fishy, in a good way. Like many members of the rose family, red raspberry leaf adds an earthy, sour flavor and moderate astringency. All three are rich in mineral salts, which heighten the sweetness in the peppermint and subdue bitter and astringent qualities. These mineral powerhouses satiate our hunger for fresh herbs and foods while fennel and rose petals balance the blend toward an aromatic delicacy.



INGREDIENTS

- **1.5** parts peppermint
- **1** part nettle leaf
- **1** part raspberry leaf
- **0.5** part fennel
- **0.5** part rose petals

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: a really good combination of grassy, aromatic, sweet, and floral flavors

HERBAL ACTIONS: nutritive, restorative, relaxing (nervine)

SYSTEMS ENHANCED: female reproductive system; muscular, circular, digestive, and nervous systems; kidneys and liver

Adaptogens for Stress

Stress is the leading cause of the majority of noninfectious diseases in the world. When we have a stressful day or experience a moment of fear, our bodies are designed to recuperate through rest and relaxation. But when we experience chronic stress that lasts days, weeks, months, or years, we become chronically fatigued and less able to bounce back and recover from acutely stressful encounters.

The loose category of herbs known as adaptogens help us deal with chronic stress through a variety of mechanisms. As herbs that enhance general health and well-being, adaptogens act as prophylactics by boosting the body's resistance to physical, emotional, environmental, and biological stressors. They play a protective and restorative role in the central nervous system and have been shown to support normal metabolic processes and restore balance. Some are calming while others are invigorating. In combination with nervine herbs, such as skullcap and fennel, they are also helpful in mitigating the effects of acute stress.

Most of the adaptogens we know come from Russia, India, and China because these countries have been using them for restorative health and longevity for a long time. Ginseng, licorice, tulsi, eleuthero, codonopsis, ashwagandha, and astragalus are popular examples.

How a person responds to stress defines their long-term health. As a busy farmer and business owner, I experience the daily pangs of stress and uncertainty in my professional life. Making sure I drink teas that help protect my body from the negative effects of chronic stress go a long way to keep my body healthy. I also make sure I get lots of sleep and exercise, and eat a healthy diet to ensure I am doing everything I can to

reduce stress and provide the basic nutrients I need to regenerate my body. Adaptogens have been helpful in keeping me adaptable, but they work best when careful attention is given to reducing daily stress.



DAILY MINERAL TEA

So often we neglect to feed our bodies enough vitamins and minerals from natural plant sources. This is one of my favorite vitamin and mineral teas for an active lifestyle — it adds a fantastic amount of micronutrients to your daily diet. Drinking a mineral-rich tea can eliminate the need for a daily mineral supplement, and whole-plant sources of minerals are often absorbed more effectively than store-bought multivitamin pills.

In the winter I drink a strong, hot cup daily, and in the summer I make a strong cold infusion and add a cup to my water bottle when I am out working. You can also make a sun tea from this blend. It can be stored cold in the fridge for a week.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts fenugreek seeds
- 2 parts oat straw
- 2 parts milky oat tops
- 2 parts goji berries
- 2 parts mint
- 1 part alfalfa
- 1 part nettle leaf
- 1 part eleuthero (Siberian ginseng)
- 1 part anise seeds
- 0.5 part safflower
- 0.25 part red clover blossoms

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: sweet and grassy with a wonderful aroma from the anise and mint

HERBAL ACTIONS: nutritive, restorative

SYSTEMS ENHANCED: muscular, nervous



RESPITE NERVINE TEA

This is a great mineral tonic with a nervine quality. I often make it when I feel a little frazzled by a busy day or have a stressful experience. Each of the herbs feeds the nervous system and supports healthy bones, blood, and muscles. This tea is cooling, so add some fresh grated ginger or cinnamon if you are already feeling energetically cold.

The base for Respite is similar to Strength with the addition of three slightly bitter herbs (chamomile, catnip, and skullcap) along with licorice to reduce their intensity on your palate. When it comes to herbal teas, it benefits the drinker to learn to appreciate strong flavors. Bitter herbs are often really bitter and the herbs we use to sweeten a tea tend to be overwhelmingly sweet. Medicinal herbs are a lot less understanding of our sensitive human palate than the culinary herbs we have selected and bred into softer, more pleasing versions of their wild brethren. As a tea formulator you will learn to constantly negotiate the intensity of the various herbs you use.



INGREDIENTS

- 1.5 parts anise seeds or fennel
- 1.5 parts mint
- 1 part nettle leaf
- 1 part chamomile
- 1 part rose petals or 0.25 part lavender blossoms
- 1 part skullcap
- 0.5 part raspberry leaf
- 0.5 part catnip
- 0.25 part licorice root (or a spoonful of honey in each cup)

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: smooth, palatable combination of bitter and sweet

HERBAL ACTIONS: nervine, restorative

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, muscular



RESPITE *without Mint*

This blend has similar properties as Respite Nervine Tea but without the mint. Like many tonic teas, this blend has a pleasant taste and promotes general wellness. It also has slight calming properties, making it a great option when you feel stressed and depleted. To bring out the sweetness of these herbs, add one teaspoon of honey per cup.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part milky oat tops
- **1** part oat straw
- **1** part nettle leaf
- **1** part ginger
- **1** part rose hips
- **0.5** part chamomile
- **0.5** part lemongrass
- **0.25** part rosemary

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: earthy, sweet, spicy

HERBAL ACTIONS: general nutritive tonic, nervine

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general nutritive tonic



DREAM

This simple tea promotes relaxation and sleep. I adore this blend because anyone can easily grow each of these herbs in the backyard, and because the herbs are gentle and effective for quieting a chattery mind, releasing muscle tension, and promoting general relaxation so that your body naturally feels tired and falls asleep.

I often use Dream tea during the day when I am experiencing a period of intense stress. Kids also respond really well to this blend as a calming bedtime tea.

INGREDIENTS

- **1.25** parts chamomile
- **1** part catnip
- **1** part skullcap
- **1** part mint
- **0.375** part licorice root
- **0.25** part hops

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: earthy, bittersweet, with a hint of mint

HERBAL ACTIONS: nervine, restorative

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, muscular



GLOW: BEAUTY TEA

This is my most basic detox tea. It supports the liver and kidneys. When these organs are well taken care of, you will notice clear, naturally radiant skin and feel energetic.

Both dandelion and burdock are gentle and nourishing to the liver and kidneys. They work best if incorporated into your diet regularly. Burdock is energetically a “mover,” supporting the excretion of toxins from the body; it also supports beneficial gut flora. As a food, burdock root can be eaten in stews and soups. Dandelion is another common plant that lives pretty much everywhere humans do. Most people consider it a nuisance or a weed, but it works wonders in the body. Dried dandelion root in tea is used to treat high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and abnormal blood sugar. It is also extremely beneficial to the liver, and its bitter taste encourages bile production.

Nettles are incredibly nutritious. In spring, fresh local nettles reduce seasonal allergies through their natural antihistamine properties. Abundant and chock-full of vitamins, minerals, protein, and chlorophyll, nettles are a choice herb for mineral tonics. Nettles support kidney health and provide a nourishing quality to this detox tea.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part dandelion root
- **1** part burdock root
- **0.5** part nettle leaf
- **0.25** part licorice root
- **0.15** part calendula flowers

STEEPING

DECOCTION: Combine 3 tablespoons tea and 3 cups cold water in a lidded saucepan. Slowly bring to a simmer without allowing the water to boil over. Let simmer over low heat for at least 20 minutes. Strain and enjoy.

TASTE: earthy, bittersweet

HERBAL ACTIONS: detox, tonic

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: liver, kidneys, skin, endocrine

HERB SPOTLIGHT

CALENDULA

Calendula can easily overtake your garden if you do not readily pluck the bright, uplifting flowers before they go to seed. It is a happy sight to see a garden full of calendula. One of my fondest memories is spending several days a week harvesting calendula flowers from huge fields when I was a summer intern at Herb Pharm. We would harvest every last flower in the fields, and two days later a whole new blush would appear.

The strength and deliberate nature of calendula is inspiring. I adore its ability to heal and soothe wounds and skin irritations. Internally, calendula has a diaphoretic effect, which can speed up elimination through the skin by encouraging sweating. It is well suited to those of us who have unresolved stagnation in the lymphatic system indicated by persistent swollen glands.





DIGESTIVE TONIC

Drinking this delicious tonic — especially prior to or immediately following a meal — helps balance the digestive system and relieve digestive upset. This is a basic, all-purpose digestive system tea that is designed to be drunk daily, and the herbs are easy to grow in your home garden. Supporting digestion is one of the best things you can do for daily health. A healthy digestive system can prevent many diseases over the long term.

If you experience occasional or persistent acid reflux, make sure you add the marshmallow root. With a sweet, thick texture, marshmallow root is a mucilaginous herb that is cooling and soothing to the throat and stomach. This tea has helped reduce acid reflux in many of my customers and friends.

Dandelion root, with its bitter-tasting compounds, helps stimulate the release of bile into the stomach and provides support to the liver. Ginger, one of the most powerful and important herbs used worldwide since antiquity, both warms the digestive system and relieves stomachaches, gas, nausea, and congestion. Both dandelion root and ginger support your digestive fire, allowing food to break down thoroughly in your stomach. The quicker your food is fully digested, the quicker nutrients are readily available to your cells. Strong, healthy digestion also ensures waste products are quickly eliminated from the body. The ideal transit time from eating to excreting is 18 to 24 hours. Fennel is a fabulous carminative herb, helping the body absorb excess gas in the digestive tract. Lesser known is fennel's ability to assist in relaxation. Fennel also soothes inflamed tissues and offers a slightly sweet licorice taste. Mint is calming, helping the body to relax after a meal, and adds a nice flavor to the tea.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts dandelion root
- 1 part fennel
- 1 part ginger
- 1 part peppermint
- 1 part spearmint

OPTIONAL ADDITIONS

Chamomile, about 0.5 part, is another great herb to add to a digestive tea, especially in the evening. Chamomile calms the nervous system, which supports healthy digestion. Adding a pinch of slippery elm or marshmallow root to each cup will soothe inflamed tissues in the throat, stomach, or intestines.

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: sweet, spicy, minty

HERBAL ACTIONS: carminative, liver support, digestive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: digestive, liver

Stress and Digestion

Sluggish digestion is extremely common due to many people's stressful, on-the-go lifestyles. Nervous or anxious individuals (including those who are routinely "stressed out") are especially susceptible to poor or sluggish digestion. The digestive system needs a lot of blood to do its job effectively, and stress shunts blood away from it. If you eat on the go or while working a stressful job, your digestive system may not be getting the energy and blood circulation it needs to function well.

It is important to rest your body and your brain after you eat to provide your digestive system with the energy it needs. Having a relaxing rest after a meal, even if only for half an hour, is a great habit to get into if you can. I realize that most of our work schedules simply don't allow for long breaks after a meal, so at the very least drink a digestive tea as often as possible when you eat.

HERB SPOTLIGHT

DANDELION

Dandelion grows almost anywhere that humans are and, astonishingly, aids in eliminating toxins in both the body and the landscape. While most plant species would be too stressed out to thrive in contaminated or highly disturbed locations, dandelion is a daring first responder. The robust taproots draw up minerals while loosening and aerating the soil, making a much cleaner, softer environment for fungus and plants to reinhabit. Dandelion can even take in harsh or toxic substances and transform them through metabolic activity into much less dangerous compounds.

Dandelion's action in the human body is as inspiring as its positive activism in the dirt. The leaves are a gentle diuretic, and their bitterness stimulates bile production when consumed in salads or tea. The greens also provide vitamins A, B, C, and D, as well as iron, zinc, and potassium. Human populations have used dandelion root for thousands of years for liver and gallbladder support, as it enhances the body's ability to absorb nutrients and remove toxins.

Please appreciate dandelion's persistence and diligence in showing up for the hard fight to restore balance to both our inner and outer ecosystems. Dandelion provides me with the emotional stamina I need to stay focused on being an agent of healing for the planet.





VITAMIN C TEA

Rich in vitamins and antioxidants, this is a simple fruity blend. Using dried fruits can create a wonderfully sweet tea — a healthy and satisfying choice when you crave sweet foods.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts rose hips
- 2 parts hibiscus
- 2 parts dried berries
- 1 part lemongrass
- 1 part linden
- 1 part white tea (optional)
- 0.75 part cinnamon

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: fruity with notes of citrus

HERBAL ACTIONS: provides vitamins and antioxidants

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: whole body (general tonic), nutritive



GINGERADE

If you love the toning effects of ginger on your immunity and digestion, this tea is definitely a must-try. In addition to the spicy ginger, Gingerade contains the nutritive sweet herbs milky oats, fennel, and honeybush, which create a delicious blend. Rosemary, known as the herb of remembrance, supports the mind and memory. Lemongrass, with its delicate citrus scent, brightens the mind and uplifts mood. Adding fresh or dried fruits provides a little sweetness and a touch of sour. I often add elderberries because in addition to being antioxidant and a little sweet, they also support the immune system.



INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts milky oats
- 2 parts ginger
- 2 parts honeybush
- 1 part lemongrass
- 1 part rose hips
- 1 part fennel
- 1 part dried berries (e.g., elderberry, blackberry, blueberry)
- 0.5 part rosemary
- 1 drop lemon essential oil, or fresh lemon zest to taste

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: sweet, spicy, fruity

HERBAL ACTIONS: supports digestion, mineral rich

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: digestive, general tonic



VITAL TEA

Sometimes you need a little liquid courage to rise up and feel energized. Vital Tea is similar to Gingerade, but the addition of cinnamon and orange zest gives it a more pronounced warming quality. It is a great tonic for cold, achy mornings and can lift your spirit on a dark day. Though it is a decaf blend, it can help bolster energy by making your body feel warm and primed for movement.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts honeybush
- 2 parts ginger
- 2 parts milky oat tops
- 1.5 parts lemongrass
- 1.5 parts rose hips
- 0.5 part orange zest
- 0.5 part rosemary
- 0.5 part cinnamon

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: spicy, fruity, citrus

HERBAL ACTIONS: nutritive, digestive, invigorating

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tonic



INDULGE

Indulge is a wonderful expression of the lush summer season, honoring the beauty and sweetness of medicinal plants as they arrive at the end of their seasonal life cycle. Dominated by fruits and flowers, this blend is designed to be calming, floral, and sweet. For the dried berries, I often use homemade fruit leather chopped up in a food processor. Although Indulge is not the most potent of the nutritive teas in this section, it is still full of vitamins and antioxidants. Its complex fragrance and its light, delicious taste make it a wonderful reprieve from the darker, leafier, or grassier nutritive blends.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 parts honeybush or rooibos
- 4 parts rose hips
- 4 parts dried berries (e.g., elderberry, currant, blackberry)
- 3 parts rose petals
- 2 parts milky oat tops
- 1 part calendula flowers
- 1 part lavender blossoms
- 1 part lemongrass
- 0.5 part chamomile

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: sweet and slightly acidic, with a delicate aromatic balance of rose, lavender, and lemongrass

HERBAL ACTIONS: nutritive, calming

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tonic

REJUVENATING TONICS



REVIVAL OF YOUTHFULNESS IN THOUGHT AND PHYSIOLOGY is what many people are seeking when they turn to herbs for guidance. These gentle, restorative teas can help revitalize your body and mind. They go hand in hand with a healthy lifestyle that includes exercise, good nutrition, and other habits that reduce stress and anxiety. When mind and body are renewed, your heart is opened to a richer diversity of feeling, and you can cultivate deep awareness and joyful creativity in your life.

Herbs that help restore energy reserves and build immunity are often the base for rejuvenative tonic blends. They promote longevity by preventing decay in organ systems. Rejuvenating tonics can be specific for an organ system or more generalized for whole-body balance. They can be energetically warm or cool, depending on herb choice. They typically help the body cope with stress.

HERB SPOTLIGHT

TULSI

Tulsi, also called holy basil, is the queen of herbs in Ayurvedic medicine. Tulsi tea often contains a blend of three varieties traditionally grown in India, Southeast Asia, and parts of China: vana, krishna, and rama. These varieties are all more medicinal, pungent, and aromatic than culinary basil. A sacred plant to the Hindu god Vishnu, tulsi is used in prayers to ensure personal health, spiritual purity, and community well-being. In clinical practice, it is used to enhance cerebral circulation and memory and commonly used to relieve mental fog. Tulsi is also useful for reducing stress, anxiety, depression, and menopausal symptoms.





BALANCE

Balance is centered around the protective and balancing properties of tulsi, or holy basil. Stress and fatigue can cause lightheadedness, forgetfulness, and foggy thinking. Tulsi brings strength and balance to the nervous system, helping to restore mental function during and after periods of stress. Gotu kola promotes mental clarity and brilliance. Balance tea is blended with mint, rose, cinnamon, and cardamom for a delicious and well-rounded tea.



INGREDIENTS

- **3** parts tulsi (if you have all three varieties, use 0.5 part vana, 1.25 parts krishna, 1.25 parts rama)
- **1** part peppermint
- **1** part cinnamon
- **1** part cardamom
- **0.5** part rose petals
- **0.5** part gotu kola

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: spicy, minty

HERBAL ACTIONS: adaptogenic, general tonic

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, digestive, immune



THINK

Think is an energizing brain tea. Green tea energizes the body and encourages focus and endurance, while tulsi and gotu kola give you a mental boost. Lemongrass invigorates the mind, and breathing in the lemony aromatics awakens your senses.

This is one of my most popular teas at Harbor Herbalist. The complex, refreshing flavor is light and uplifting, blended with herbs that reduce stress. Gunpowder green tea comes from Zhejiang Province in China and has been around since the seventh century. It has a lighter flavor than many Chinese green tea varieties and is rolled into pellets to protect the leaves and retain quality, similar to oolong teas. Green tea is high in flavonoids (which are antioxidant), supports cardiovascular health, and improves blood circulation. This can have hugely beneficial effects on the amount of oxygen transported to the brain.

INGREDIENTS

- **1.25** parts gunpowder green tea
- **1** part lemongrass
- **0.75** part tulsi
- **0.5** part gotu kola

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: smooth green tea highlighted by aromatic tulsi and citrusy lemongrass

HERBAL ACTION: brain tonic

SYSTEM AFFECTED: nervous

HERB SPOTLIGHT

GOTU KOLA

Gotu kola, native to Asian wetlands, has been used to treat many conditions and is particularly beneficial to the nervous system. It is used clinically to treat anxiety, mental fatigue, and irritability. People in India drink a blend of fresh gotu kola leaves daily to support the nervous system and improve memory. In Thailand, the leaves are sold as a stimulant and afternoon pick-me-up.





ATHLETE'S TEA

Designed for physically active people, this blend helps build endurance and aids recovery after long hours of physical activity. As a daily tonic, Athlete's Tea supports an active body and provides essential nutrients to the skeletal muscles, nervous system, and circulatory system.

Daily exercise is great for the body and mind. No matter if you are a yoga instructor or a bike commuter, this tea will help strengthen your body and mind and assist in cellular recuperation. Athlete's Tea encourages muscle and joint recovery, provides micronutrients essential for an active body, and includes herbs that provide a mental boost to keep up confidence, focus, and personal morale.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part ashwagandha (Indian ginseng)
- **1** part dandelion root
- **0.5** part eleuthero (Siberian ginseng)
- **0.5** part peppermint
- **0.5** part skullcap
- **0.5** part nettle leaf
- **0.5** part gotu kola
- **0.25** part licorice root

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: earthy, minty, slightly bittersweet

HERBAL ACTIONS: supports physical stamina and recovery

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, muscular



URINARY HEALTH TEA

This is a fabulous daily tonic for those prone to urinary tract infections or stress incontinence. The herbs in this blend promote kidney and bladder health, as well as prevent unwanted bacteria from traveling up the urinary tract. The flavor is sweet and grassy. If you prefer an even sweeter tea, try adding rooibos or honeybush.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts dried cranberries
- 1 part nettle leaf
- 1 part horsetail
- 1 part corn silk
- 1 part rooibos or honeybush (optional)
- 0.5 part dandelion leaf

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: sour, bittersweet

HERBAL ACTIONS: nutritive, supports urinary tract health

SYSTEM AFFECTED: urinary tract



WOMEN'S BLEND

This blend nourishes and balances female hormones to reduce painful periods and mood swings in menstruating women and lessen the physical discomfort of menopause. It also encourages nervous system balance.



INGREDIENTS

- 1.5 parts rose hips
- 1 part dandelion root
- 1 part burdock root
- 1 part dong quai
- 1 part astragalus
- 1 part ginger
- 1 part cinnamon
- 0.5 part shatavari
- 0.5 part orange peel
- 0.25 part reishi mushrooms
- 0.25 part clove

STEEPING

DECOCTION: Combine 3 tablespoons tea and 3 cups cold water in a lidded saucepan. Slowly bring to a simmer without allowing the water to boil over. Let simmer over low heat for at least 20 minutes. Strain and enjoy.

TASTE: earthy, spicy

HERBAL ACTIONS: supports hormonal balance in women

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: endocrine, nervous



DAILY ADRENAL SUPPORT

This is a great tonic for managing stress and rejuvenating the adrenal glands. Four adaptogenic herbs (chaga, reishi, astragalus, and ashwagandha) create the base of the blend; the spices are added for balance. Reishi and chaga are medicinal mushrooms that have been shown to support immunity and have adaptogenic properties, helping to reduce the effects of stress and restore natural energy reserves. Astragalus is a wonderfully nourishing herb that helps prevent immune weakness. Codonopsis is similar to but less intense than Asian ginseng. You could use ginseng instead if you had access to it, though I think codonopsis works better for those who are sensitive to stimulants.

I prefer adrenal tonic blends like this one that nourish the adrenals but do not have an overall stimulating effect. And I like to combine adaptogens with digestive herbs because people who suffer from adrenal weakness or fatigue often have concurrent digestive issues. Fennel is added for its naturally sweet taste and calming effects on digestion and the nervous system. Cinnamon is a great warming aromatic herb that promotes immunity and digestion and supports blood sugar regulation. Ginger, a workhorse of an herb, is anti-inflammatory and digestive and supports immunity. You can omit the ginger if you notice you feel hot and dry most of the time already.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts chaga mushrooms
- 2 parts Ceylon cinnamon
- 1 part reishi mushrooms
- 1 part astragalus
- 1 part codonopsis or Asian ginseng
- 1 part fennel
- 1 part dried or grated fresh ginger

STEEPING

DECOCTION: Combine 3 tablespoons tea and 3 cups cold water in a lidded saucepan. Slowly bring to a simmer without allowing the water to boil over. Let simmer over low heat for at least 20 minutes. Strain and enjoy.

TASTE: sweet and spicy with an earthy base

HERBAL ACTIONS: adaptogenic, digestif, general tonic

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, digestive, immune

HERB SPOTLIGHT

ELEUTHERO

As an adaptogenic herb, eleuthero (also called Siberian ginseng), helps replenish a depleted nervous system and enables your body to better combat the damaging effects of stress. It is particularly good for athletes who suffer from muscle fatigue and soreness. Eleuthero can also be useful in restoring mind-body balance. My restless mind sometimes causes me to tense my muscles, so I often forgo caffeinated teas and drink a stress-reduction blend with eleuthero each morning instead. I find that over time I have less muscle tightness and a lot more energy than if I drink caffeine.





REFRESH

Whether you drink it hot on a cool morning or iced on a warm afternoon, Refresh is, well, refreshing. The base is an aromatic masala chai (ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, fennel, and clove) with kukicha. Kukicha tea is the twigs and stems from the tea plant that have been aged and roasted. I like almost all roasted herbs in small quantities: they add deep richness to the flavor, and this one is almost sweet.

Kukicha twig tea is particularly popular in Japan. When buying kukicha, I often seek out types and brands that are almost all twig without much leaf. The clean twig versions work a little better in this blend because it needs to be steeped for around 10 minutes, and if there are too many leaf bits the tea can become bitter. The clean twigs and stems are caffeine-free.

An adaptogenic blend with a slightly chai-like flavor, this tea helps the body manage stress, eases digestion, and supports general immunity. Eleuthero has energizing effects, while burdock is added for a little detoxification and nourishment in the kidneys. Chaga mushrooms are high in antioxidants. Finally, I added mint to Refresh to do just what the tea is named for.



INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts kukicha twig tea
- 1.5 parts ginger
- 1 part cinnamon
- 1 part mint
- 0.75 part cardamom
- 0.75 part burdock root
- 0.75 part fennel
- 0.75 part chaga mushrooms
- 0.5 part codonopsis
- 0.5 part eleuthero (Siberian ginseng)
- 0.25 part clove

STEEPING

Lightly simmer the herbs in a combination of milk and water for 10 minutes or steep in hot water for 10 to 15 minutes. This tea benefits from the addition of a small amount of honey. My sister thinks it tastes better without milk — be courageous and try it both ways.

TASTE: earthy, minty, spicy

HERBAL ACTIONS: supports digestion, adaptogenic

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, digestive, immune



REPOSE

This is a lovely adrenal support tea with a rich, roasted flavor. You can roast your own whole-grain barley in the husk, as often done in Korea (see [Roasting Your Own Barley](#)), or just the grain, as often done in China. Roasted grain teas provide nutritive sugars and feel warming and soothing, especially in cooler climates. Because most of the herbs in this blend are a little on the cooling side, adding a roasted grain or kukicha twig tea neutralizes some of that cooling energy.

Adrenal fatigue affects people differently. This tea was designed for individuals who consistently feel drained and experience patterns of dizziness, touchy emotions, shaky muscles, restless sleep, and an overall feeling of not being able to think clearly. If you tend to feel stressed and overstimulated in situations that feel relatively safe to most other people, then Repose is a great daily tonic for you. Introverts and people who have experienced abuse and are actively trying to repair and heal should try this tea blend as daily herbal support.

I love Repose because it slowly and gently restores balance in people who do not respond well to super-energizing adaptogen herbs. For many of us, life provides too much excitement and anxiety, and having a tea that rejuvenates your endocrine system without stimulating it can be a true gift.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part kukicha twig tea or roasted barley
- **1** part chaga mushrooms
- **1** part astragalus
- **1** part codonopsis
- **1** part rose hips
- **1** part fennel
- **0.5** part reishi mushrooms

STEEPING

DECOCTION: Combine 3 tablespoons tea and 3 cups cold water in a lidded saucepan. Slowly bring to a simmer without allowing the water to boil over. Let simmer over low heat or at least 20 minutes. Strain and enjoy.

TASTE: rich roasted base with a good balance of sweet and slightly sour

HERBAL ACTION: general tonic

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, immune



KIDS' TEA

Vitamin C Tea

Try making this healthy, kid-friendly tea as an alternative to sugary drinks. Kids' Tea is full of delicious fruits and herbs packed with vitamins and minerals for growing kids, and it doubles as a great vitamin C tea for adults.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts milky oat tops
- 2 parts rose hips
- 2 parts elderberry
- 1 part goji berry
- 1 part orange peel
- 1 part cinnamon
- 1 part lemongrass
- 1 part schisandra berries or other dried fruit (optional)
- 0.5 part hibiscus
- 0.5 part burdock root
- 0.25 part licorice

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

TASTE: sweet, citrusy, fruity, and a little tangy

HERBAL ACTION: nourishing

SYSTEMS ENHANCED: general tonic

Masala Chai

Masala chai comes from India and has been used for many centuries. As a health tonic, it combines some of the most therapeutic spices grown in India.



Spicy chai teas were the first teas that attracted me to the idea of tonic teas. I have always been drawn to rich, aromatic foods that simultaneously support digestion and immunity. The combination of masala spices, tea, milk, and sugar create a tea that is both holistic and delicious. One of the main reasons I appreciate a really thoughtful chai is because each sip provides a profoundly full taste experience: chai teas are sweet, spicy, slightly acidic, and even a little bitter. I even add a tiny

pinch of salt so the tea tastes a little brighter. The fat from the milk helps draw out fat-soluble constituents from the herbs and allows the flavors to linger on the palate, lengthening the taste experience.

The process of simmering rich, aromatic spices over the stove for an hour brings life and aroma to your kitchen. My whole chest swells with anticipation when I walk into the kitchen while I am making my chai tea concentrate. The scent of chai tells me I am feeding my body and spirit something truly special and healing.

When I make chai, I begin with a concentrate of decocted spices. The basic spices are ginger; fennel, anise, or star anise; cardamom; cinnamon; and peppercorn. Other spices, such as clove, allspice, bay, orange zest, vanilla bean, saffron, and nutmeg, can be added for a more complex base. When choosing spices try to get whole spices with vibrant color and scent. You can grind them by hand with a mortar and pestle or quickly chop them in a spice grinder before using them. Medicinal potency lasts longer in spices that have not been ground until you are ready to use them.

Chai Spice Basics

Ginger (fresh or dried): Gingerroot has a distinctly spicy and slightly acidic flavor that is common in herbal teas, especially chai. Ginger supports digestion, immunity, and circulation and is highly anti-inflammatory. I absolutely love fresh ginger and use it almost every day. Ginger grows easily in the tropics, but even in Washington State I am able to grow fresh young ginger in a greenhouse and harvest the young roots in mid-fall to use in cooking and tea making throughout the winter. You can use dried ginger in chai, but fresh ginger is brighter and more refreshing. Ginger provides the base for chai, and you will notice that most recipes have a greater concentration of ginger than other spices.

Fennel seeds, anise seeds, or star anise pods: Fennel, anise, and star anise are interchangeable. I usually use fennel seeds because they are inexpensive and they impart a sweet, aniselike aromatic quality to the concentrate. I can easily grow large patches of fennel and harvest the plump seeds midsummer for tea. Star anise is a much more expensive spice from the tropics. I sometimes toss a few star anise pods into my decoction, but I don't find it cost effective to add large amounts. However, star anise helps create a strong base in my decaf chai blends because its flavor has more in common with clove and allspice than fennel.



Cardamom: Cardamom is expensive, so I tend to use it sparingly. I usually buy cardamom pods and grind them just before adding them to my spice blend to preserve their medicinal and aromatic qualities. The essential oils in cardamom are volatile and will evaporate and degrade quickly if stored improperly. And because cardamom is so expensive, it will be important for you to handle it carefully and preserve it. The taste of cardamom is distinct, and many Middle Eastern cultures use cardamom in desserts for its carminative effects on digestion. Cardamom is also antimicrobial, and people have been adding it to foods to reduce the risk of food-borne illnesses for millenia.

Cinnamon: I am a huge fan of cinnamon and find that it helps regulate my blood sugar and provides lots of warming digestive support. Living in a cool, damp climate, I add cinnamon to many of my fall and winter teas. It has a natural drying and warming effect on my body and is a simple protective herb that smells and tastes delicious.

We use several different species of cinnamon for flavoring food and in herbal medicine. They all come from the laurel family and are just a few of the two thousand different species in the genus *Cinnamomum*. Most of the cinnamon grown and harvested for global export comes from Indonesia, Vietnam, or China and is one of three species grouped together and called “cassia”: *C. cassia*, *C. aromaticum*, and *C. loureiroi*.

Cassia is a faster-growing and more sustainable type of cinnamon than *Cinnamomum verum*, a species referred to as Ceylon cinnamon, true cinnamon, or sweet cinnamon. Ceylon cinnamon, grown in Sri Lanka, is more expensive but has been shown to be more therapeutic and medicinal than cassia cinnamons. It also has far fewer coumarins, chemicals that can have damaging effects on the liver when consumed in high doses. Ceylon cinnamon is also more antibacterial than cassia and can be more effective in prevention and treatment of bacterial infections. Both cassia and Ceylon cinnamon have been shown to help balance blood sugar levels and support people with arthritic conditions.

Ultimately, if you are an avid cinnamon consumer or using it in therapeutic doses, I recommend using Ceylon cinnamon, but if you just use it occasionally in chai teas or in cooking, then cassia is fine. I mostly use cassia myself. The difference in flavor is very interesting and worthy of experimentation. Cassia cinnamon tastes spicier than Ceylon, while Ceylon tastes sweeter. The biggest importer of Ceylon cinnamon in the world is Mexico. Modern Mexican cuisine almost exclusively uses sweet Ceylon cinnamon in both savory and sweet dishes.



Peppercorns: Peppercorns add the characteristic sharp spice to chai tea. Black pepper strengthens circulation, aids in clearing congestion, and helps the body metabolize the nutrients we ingest.



BASIC CHAI

This is a basic recipe for a simple, elegant semispicy chai concentrate. It has the rich, full-bodied flavor that is characteristic of chai in India. It can also be used as a base recipe for a more personalized chai using your local spices and herbs. This recipe is for the spice blend only. Following this recipe, I explain how to make a cup of chai that includes black tea, which provides a beautifully dramatic base. Assam is an affordable black tea with a malty taste that is a great base for chai blends. I find that preparing the base first and then adding the black tea at the end results in a tastier cup of chai. Add a teaspoon of honey to draw out the sweetness of fennel and cinnamon.

Depending on my mood, needs, and the time of year, my chai recipes change. But overall, chai does not have to be complicated. It can be as simple as adding a pinch of cinnamon and cardamom to your favorite black tea. Experiment with this recipe and the ones on the following pages, and feel free to improvise your own special blend.



INGREDIENTS

- 4 parts grated fresh ginger (or 3 parts dried ginger)
- 2 parts fennel seeds
- 1 part cardamom
- 1 part cinnamon
- 0.25 part black pepper
- 1–2 crushed bay leaves (optional)

TO MAKE THE CONCENTRATE

Use 2 teaspoons spice mix for every 1 cup water. (For example, use $\frac{1}{4}$ cup spice mix for every 6 cups water.) Combine the spices and cool water in a lidded saucepan. Bring to a slight boil and let simmer over low heat for 20 to 40 minutes, being careful not to let the water boil over. Keep a lid on the saucepan to limit evaporation of both water and essential oils in the spices. The concentrate can be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week. I usually keep the spices in the concentrate and strain them when I am preparing a serving.

TO MAKE A CUP OF CHAI

Combine 1 cup concentrate and 1 cup milk in a lidded saucepan. Warm over medium heat, but try to avoid boiling, which can scald the milk. Once the mixture is steaming hot, add 1 teaspoon black tea and 1 teaspoon honey. Steep for 4 to 6 minutes, strain, and enjoy.

TASTE: rich and spicy from aromatic spices and black pepper balanced with the sweetness of fennel and cinnamon

HERBAL ACTION: general tonic

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: circulatory, immune, digestive

DELIGHT CHAI

This chai is for those who really love rich, deep spices. Added to the basic chai blend is star anise, clove, orange zest, and allspice. You can add a little vanilla bean for even more decadence and delight.

Use 1 teaspoon Assam tea per cup.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts grated fresh ginger
- 2 parts cinnamon
- 1 part cardamom
- 1 part fennel
- 0.5 part star anise
- 0.25 part allspice
- 0.25 part clove
- 0.25 part orange zest
- 0.1 part black pepper
- Pinch of saffron



DECAF CHAI

I recommend this luxurious blend on a cool evening when your body could use a little warmth all the way to your fingers and toes. The flavor of Decaf Chai is accented by allspice and nutmeg, making this tea delicious when combined with milk and a touch of honey.

You can use either rooibos or honeybush as a base. Rooibos has a tangy, bright flavor, sort of like rose hips, while honeybush tends to be a bit more fruity and sweet. For caffeinated teas, you should add the tea at the end of the process, but for honeybush and rooibos you'll find their flavor deepens and develops when simmered in water — and they won't go bitter on you like black tea.

INGREDIENTS

- 3.5 parts honeybush or rooibos
- 3 parts ginger
- 2 parts fennel
- 2 parts cardamom
- 1.5 parts cinnamon
- 0.5 part allspice
- 0.5 part orange zest
- 0.25 part nutmeg

VANILLA CHAI

Well balanced and delicate, Vanilla Chai tastes like a fantastic dessert. Fresh ginger, orange zest, and real vanilla bean transform this blend into a lush sensual experience.

The recipe lists the Darjeeling tea in parts and as 1 teaspoon per cup. This is because this blend also tastes good as a loose-leaf tea steeped in milk if you do not have time to make the concentrate. If you are making the tea as a decoction, omit the 3 parts tea and just add 1 teaspoon per cup when you make a serving. Top off each cup with the uplifting aromatics of fresh orange zest.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts Darjeeling tea, or 1 teaspoon per cup
- 2 parts grated fresh ginger
- 1 part cinnamon
- 1 part cardamom
- 1 part dried orange zest
- 0.5 part nutmeg
- 0.25 part black pepper
- 1 vanilla bean per pound of blended tea
- Pinch of fresh orange zest as a garnish



RAINY DAY CHAI

When you feel achy and damp, take the time to prepare a cup of Rainy Day Chai! This is a great blend to energize the body and mind on a gloomy day. Chai tends to have a drying effect on tissues due to its strong warming and spicy nature. The orange zest will dramatically brighten the flavor and character of the tea.

Use 1 teaspoon black tea per cup.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts grated fresh ginger
- 2 parts fennel
- 2 parts cinnamon
- 1 part cardamom
- 0.5 part allspice
- 0.5 part nutmeg
- 0.5 part clove
- 0.25 part black pepper
- 0.1 part vanilla bean
- Pinch of fresh orange zest as a garnish



CHAI LIGHT

The following three chai blends are designed for infusions — you do not need to decoct the spices by making a concentrate. It is really challenging to make your own traditional chai at work or when you are busy, so keep these blends on hand to drink when you don't have time to make chai using the stovetop method.



BRIGHT CHAI

Bright chai has a sweet and spicy mouthfeel with luxurious aromatics. If you like your tea spicier, you can reduce the amount of black tea or add a pinch of black pepper to each cup.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts black tea (Assam or Ceylon) or rooibos
- 2 parts dried ginger (or 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger per cup)
- 1 part cinnamon
- 0.5 part cardamom
- 0.5 part star anise
- 0.25 part allspice
- 0.25 part licorice root
- 1 vanilla bean per pound of blended tea
- 1 saffron thread per cup

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water or hot milk over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 8 minutes.

MINT AND SPICE CHAI

This is another chai that works great as an infusion, and it has a very different character from the other chai blends. It tastes less spicy and more herbal, while the mint adds a calming and uplifting quality. This tea does not have ginger, so it is not quite as warming. I love this tea as a digestif after a meal. It satisfies my sweet tooth, too.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts Assam black tea
- 1 part mint
- 1 part fennel
- 0.5 part cinnamon
- 0.25 part cardamom
- 0.25 part clove

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water or hot milk over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 7 minutes.



CARDAMOM-ROSE CHAI

Uplifting, digestive, and delicious, Cardamom-Rose Chai will make you feel beautiful. I recommend drinking it in the morning or after lunch. This blend always brings a sense of peace and clarity to my thoughts.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts black tea
- 2 parts cardamom
- 1 part rose petals
- 1 part cinnamon
- 1 part mint
- 1 vanilla bean per pound of blended tea

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 4 to 8 minutes.

APHRODISIACS



BOTH WOMEN AND MEN EXPERIENCE BODY SHAMING in dramatic ways throughout their lives. Our culture is rife with ageism and false standards for beauty. We should be celebrating the miraculous diversity of beauty in our culture rather than defining narrow parameters that are difficult for most of us to fit. These aphrodisiac teas are not designed for male or female virility, per se (though plenty of herbs out there do specifically enhance virility). Instead they are designed to make a person feel really good and beautiful, which naturally leads to more openness and intimacy.

Physical intimacy should be fun and make you feel fabulous! The teas in this section excite and uplift the spirit. They are not intoxicating, but rather allow a person to experience greater self-love, which enhances the connection between two people. Herbs such as damiana have been used for centuries as a natural aphrodisiac that seems to reduce self-consciousness and increase a sense of

closeness and attraction. Cloves increase circulation throughout your body, which can heighten arousal when combined with damiana and cacao.



BLISS

This blend is intended to be fun and uplifting and nourishing to the nervous system. The relaxing effects of passionflower balance the potency of the damiana. Licorice root is an adaptogen herb, helping the body adapt to stress and supporting the immune system. I use licorice in many blends because it has been shown to be protective against adrenal fatigue. Plus, it adds a really nice sweetness that has an immediately soothing effect on the mouth and throat.

Ceylon cinnamon and clove are warming sensual herbs that may strengthen circulation. Rose hips add a kiss of tangy sweetness to the blend and provide a little vitamin C and some antioxidants. Roasted cacao nibs add a subtle roasted character that helps uplift and comfort. Bliss tea rouses the senses!

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts mint
- 2 parts cacao nibs
- 2 parts damiana
- 1.5 parts Ceylon cinnamon
- 1.5 parts rose hips
- 1 part passionflower
- 0.25 part clove
- 0.25 part licorice root

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: an interesting balance of bitter and sweet, with an aroma of mint and chocolate

HERBAL ACTION: aphrodisiac

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, circulatory

HERB SPOTLIGHT

DAMIANA

Throughout Mexico and Central America, damiana has been used traditionally as a nervous system tonic and aphrodisiac. From my own experience, it has an amazing ability to increase energy without increasing anxiety. Because I get a sense of general well-being when I drink damiana tea, I like to rely on it for days when I feel low. When you need some motivation, have a cup of tea with damiana, and you will be out flirting with the world in no time.





LOVE TEA

Love Tea gently nourishes your nervous system and supports libido while enhancing feelings of self-love and natural beauty. Drink this tea to elevate the strong, radiant being within you, and share it with your partner to strengthen heart-centered connection and physical intimacy. This blend is not super potent, so start with one cup and see how you feel. If you feel you need more, make yourself another cup, or a whole pot.

Damiana is native to the southern United States and northern Mexico. It has traditionally been used to relieve nervousness, anxiety, and mild depression, especially connected to sex. Milky oats are a nourishing nervine herb. Muira puama is a South American herb that has long been used to increase libido in both men and women, but also to manage stress and treat mild exhaustion. Eleuthero, an adaptogenic herb that protects the nervous system, is a strong ally in a stressful world. Shatavari is a great ally for women, as it supports healthy hormonal balance. Spicy ginger helps you feel warm, while peppermint, fennel, rose, and vanilla bean add delicious flavor, nourishment, and an accent of beauty. This tea achieves a masterful balance of flavor.

INGREDIENTS

- 5 parts milky oats
- 3 parts damiana
- 2 parts eleuthero (Siberian ginseng)
- 2 parts shatavari
- 2 parts muira puama
- 2 parts fennel
- 2 parts peppermint
- 1.5 parts ginger
- 1 part rose
- 1 vanilla bean per pound of blended tea

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

TASTE: slightly sweet, floral, spicy, and ever so slightly bitter — a gorgeously sublime blend that defies distinct flavor profiles

HERBAL ACTIONS: nutritive, aphrodisiac

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, reproductive



LOVE YOUR LIFE TEA

Rose and vanilla aromatics make Love Your Life an uplifting and intensely enjoyable tea to savor and sip. Chamomile relaxes the body, and the slightly bitter flavor balances the intensity of sweet and floral notes. Rose hips add vitamin C and sweetness, while hibiscus brings a unique tangy flavor, especially if steeped for more than 6 minutes. I love making a large pot of this tea and letting it continually steep while I drink successive cups. This gives me a chance to drink a cup at multiple flavor stages.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part rose petals
- **1** part chamomile
- **0.5** part hibiscus
- **0.5** part rose hips
- **1** vanilla bean per pound of blended tea

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 4 to 10 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: sweet and sour base with floral and vanilla aromatics, delightfully heady

HERBAL ACTIONS: uplifting, relaxing

SYSTEM AFFECTED: nervous



CHOCOLATL

Spiced Drinking Chocolate

You will be blown away by the fragrance and flavor of this raw herbal drinking chocolate. Raw cacao is a wonderful superfood that enhances and is enhanced by other herbs and spices, such as chilies, cinnamon, and mints. I am always captivated by the dance of flavor created by infusing them together in hot water and milk.

Cacao is a truly sensual herb, and when combined with spices it makes a feel-good aphrodisiac tea. You can make this tea as spicy as you want with either chipotle pepper or cayenne. Try it when you crave a little pick-me-up — you'll find it creamy, invigorating, and a little bit sweet. I enjoy it as a dessert tea and often serve it at parties.



INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts raw cacao powder
- 1.5 parts chamomile
- 1 part peppermint
- 0.75 part cinnamon
- 0.35 part star anise
- Pinch of chipotle pepper or cayenne per cup
- 1 teaspoon honey per cup

STEEPING

HOT TEA: Combine $\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water in a saucepan. Bring to a low simmer. Pour hot liquid over 1 to 2 teaspoons tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes. Strain. Add 1 teaspoon honey.

ICED TEA: Pour $\frac{3}{4}$ cup hot water over 1 to 2 teaspoons tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes. Strain. Add 1 teaspoon honey. Refrigerate. Once chilled, add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk and a few ice cubes.

TASTE: bittersweet base with warming aromatics, calming mints, and spicy chilies

HERBAL ACTIONS: uplifting and invigorating

SYSTEM AFFECTED: nervous

HERB SPOTLIGHT

CACAO

We often forget or don't know that some stimulating substances like chocolate and coffee, which are ubiquitous in our lives today, were used sparingly in the cultures from which they came. Cacao was incredibly sacred to the Maya and Aztec people, so much so that it was reserved for special occasions and ceremonies. Often mixed into a frothy tea with chilies, spices, and other medicinal or psychoactive herbs, chocolate was used as a medium that works synergistically with the medicine as it travels through the body and mind of the drinker. Chocolatl tea offers you a chance to meditate on cacao as a medicine and medium, not just an easily accessible sweet treat.



CHAPTER 4

REMEDIAL AND MEDICINAL TEAS

REMEDIAL TEA BLENDS ARE DESIGNED to give you direct herbal support when you need it. They help remedy imbalances gently and effectively. Some of the teas in this section give you extra support through big transitions in your life, such as pregnancy and nursing. Others support your body's natural defenses against stress and disease.



Remedial teas should work with the body's natural intelligence to heal and take care of itself, and also provide some comfort and relief from lingering or uncomfortable symptoms. Listening to those symptoms is important — it is how our bodies alert us to imbalance, inflammation, or infection, helping steer our behavior toward self-care and protection. Let these teas be a basic guide to both nourish the body and treat imbalances. In conjunction with reducing

psychological stress, getting plenty of rest, and adhering to a healthy diet, these tea blends will be impressively effective.



WELLNESS TEA

Make sure you have this tea on hand so the minute you feel a little under the weather you can steep yourself a potent cup. A strong, spicy blend, Wellness should be taken at the onset of colds, flus, and infections, or regularly to support the immune system. Warming spices meld with calming peppermint and earthy yarrow. As with all herbal remedies, the whole is not simply the sum of the parts: all the herbs work synergistically to strengthen a weakened or compromised immune system.

Yarrow and elderflower are diaphoretics — they are warming and induce perspiration. Yarrow in a tea, if taken immediately upon onset of flu, will nearly halt its progression. Once the flu is established in the body, yarrow helps bring on a sweat and generally supports the immune system. Elderflower relieves respiratory infections and congestion. Ginger is at the center of many herbal formulas because it has such varied tonic properties in the body. In this tea it helps relieve stomachaches and provide general immune support.

Ginger, cinnamon, and cardamom are all spicy aromatics. Their strong antimicrobial properties provide a full spectrum of support against the microbes that are at the root of an infection. Licorice is a sweet mucilaginous herb that helps balance the flavor of the tea and provides soothing relief to a sore throat or cough. Licorice is also an adaptogen herb with immune-supporting properties. Mint is another balancing herb used in this formula for flavor and slight calming properties.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part elderflower
- **1** part ginger
- **1** part mint
- **0.5** part yarrow
- **0.5** part cinnamon
- **0.5** part cardamom
- **0.3** part licorice root

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: sweet, spicy, slightly bitter, minty

HERBAL ACTIONS: support immune system

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: immune, digestive

Stopping a Cold in Its Tracks

It's fairly easy to keep yourself from getting full-blown sick if you use immune-support teas at the first signs of a cold or infection. Recognizing the early warning signs, such as a little scratch in your throat, extreme tiredness, or sinus irritation, and acting quickly to prevent your symptoms from progressing, is an invaluable skill. The minute you start to feel unwell, jump into self-care mode. We are each responsible for our own bodies, and it is important to know the general and unique ways your body tells you it is imbalanced.





RESPIRATORY HEALTH

This is a remedial lung and respiratory tea similar to Wellness Tea. You can try both blends and decide which works better for your needs. This blend has more of a warming effect to help provide general immune support. Drink Respiratory Health any time you feel congestion in the lungs.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts eucalyptus
- 3 parts fennel seeds
- 3 parts ginger
- 3 parts peppermint
- 2 parts hyssop
- 1 part elecampane root
- 1 part clove
- 0.25 part licorice root

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 10 minutes.

TASTE: minty, menthol, licorice, spicy

HERBAL ACTION: decongestant

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: lungs, throat, immune



SORE THROAT SOOTHER

We crave sweet, soft, slippery textures when we have a sore throat because we desperately need to coat the throat with cooling mucopolysaccharides. An inflamed, chapped throat is one of the most uncomfortable sensations, and this tea helps cool inflamed tissues, alleviate infection, and reduce burning associated with a cough and sore throat.

Beware: this tea can be very sweet and strong if you do not actually have a cold. If you do have one, it is extremely soothing.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 parts rose hips
- 3 parts cinnamon
- 2 parts licorice root
- 2 parts wild cherry bark
- 2 parts marshmallow root
- 2 parts fennel
- 1 (1-inch) piece of fresh ginger, grated, per cup (optional)

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes. To maximize the benefits of the marshmallow root you can also make a lukewarm infusion by pouring 1.5 cups warm to hot tap water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 20 minutes.

TASTE: sweet, licorice

HERBAL ACTIONS: demulcent, expectorant, cough suppressant

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: respiratory, mucous membranes



CONSTIPATION RELIEF

Constipation is common during periods of intense stress or dehydration or when your diet is too rich in processed foods. The senna in this tea gently softens stools and stimulates peristalsis. For occasional bouts of constipation, this tea is a great option. Eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, and leafy greens, along with drinking lots of water, can help alleviate chronic constipation. Because this tea does not work instantly, you can drink it before you head to bed for relief in the morning. You can even add one part chamomile to the tea if you intend to drink it at night.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts senna
- 2 parts mint
- 1 part fennel
- 0.5 part cinnamon
- 2 dried prunes per cup
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger per cup

STEEPING

Combine 1 tablespoon herb mix, prunes, and fresh ginger in a French press or teapot. Cover with hot water and let steep for 15 minutes.

TASTE: sweet, spicy, minty

HERBAL ACTION: relieves constipation

SYSTEM AFFECTED: digestive



CANCER CARE

If you or someone you love has recently been diagnosed with cancer, is undergoing cancer treatments, or is recovering from cancer, this tea can offer whole-body support. Linden and chamomile are gentle nervous-system herbs that rejuvenate frazzled nerves. An adaptogen herb of your choice will offer adrenal support, help the body resist infections, and encourage a more balanced response to stress (see [Adaptogens for Stress](#)); goji berries and tulsi are excellent options. Fennel, lemonbalm, and ginger are antimicrobial plants, further helping reduce the likelihood of acquiring an undesired infection. Lastly, chamomile, ginger, and fennel are also gentle digestive herbs, providing soothing relief for digestive system complaints often experienced during this challenging time.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part fennel
- **1** part linden
- **1** part adaptogen of choice, such as goji berries or tulsi
- **1** part lemonbalm
- **0.5** part dried or grated fresh ginger
- **0.5** part chamomile
- **0.25** part licorice root

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

TASTE: warm, fruity, and floral, with a slight aniselike flavor that lingers on the tongue

HERBAL ACTIONS: antimicrobial, nervine, carminative, adrenal tonic

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: immune, digestive, nervous



DAYTIME CALM

Stress is a regular fixture in our lives. Something as simple as driving in traffic, handling a difficult situation with a child, or being late to a meeting can cause your nervous system to remain jumpy hours later. Having a calming tea on hand for days when life just feels a little overwhelming helps draw us back into balance.

I tend to live a little tipped over the edge of stress most of the time, so I regularly drink calming teas during the day to remind myself to let go of residual tension. Drinking calming tea is a good way to establish a physical pattern that reinforces healthy and calm breathing, feelings, and actions, helping you navigate tense situations and restore balance.

Along with relaxing herbs, such as chamomile and passionflower, Daytime Calm contains fennel, rose hips, mint, marshmallow, and lemonbalm, nourishing herbs that offer minerals and vitamins to replenish your nervous system and calm your stomach. Schisandra is a tart berry that has adaptogenic properties to help strengthen your ability to adapt to stress.



INGREDIENTS

- **1** part chamomile
- **1** part passionflower
- **1** part fennel
- **1** part mint
- **0.5** part schisandra
- **0.5** part rose hips
- **0.5** part lemonbalm
- **0.25** part marshmallow leaves

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 8 to 15 minutes.

TASTE: slightly sour, minty, and bittersweet

HERBAL ACTION: nervine

SYSTEM AFFECTED: nervous



PREGNANCY TEA

This is a tremendous tea to drink during pregnancy or if you are trying to get pregnant — it's never too early to start preparing your body for the process of growing new life. Pregnancy teas contain vitamin-and mineral-rich herbs that provide bioavailable nutrients to help the mother and baby grow. The herbs in this tea are generally considered safe during pregnancy, but it is always a good idea to consult with your doctor or midwife.

Midwives believe that raspberry leaf helps shorten labor time, reduce labor pain, and support postpartum recovery. It is rich in vitamin C and E, bioavailable calcium and iron, B vitamins, phosphorus, potassium, manganese, and magnesium.

Nettle is one of the Western world's most important nourishing herbs for the adrenal glands and kidneys, which are often stressed during pregnancy. Calming mints and chamomile help relieve digestive upset, while alfalfa and oats provide minerals for healthy growth. Oats rich in calcium and magnesium help relieve anxiety, restlessness, and skin irritations. Dandelion leaf contains vitamin A, calcium, and iron; nourishes the liver; and relieves water retention (mild edema). If you experience nausea and stomachaches, try adding freshly grated ginger to your tea.



INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts nettle leaf
- 2 parts raspberry leaf
- 2 parts peppermint
- 2 parts rose petals
- 1 part chamomile
- 1 part alfalfa
- 1 part dandelion leaf
- 1 part milky oat tops
- 1 part oat straw

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 to 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 15 to 20 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Because this is a nourishing tea, you can try a cold infusion to get a stronger mineral extraction. Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: herbaceous, minty, slightly sweet, floral

HERBAL ACTIONS: relaxes, provides vitamins and minerals, and supports digestion, liver, and kidneys

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: liver, kidneys, nervous, female reproductive; general tonic



POSTPARTUM NOURISH TEA

Having a new baby is an incredible time of joy. It is also a period of intense transition and adjustment. The herbs in this blend feed the nervous system and adrenals, helping you deal with the fatigue and stress of caring for a tiny person around the clock. This blend also encourages connective tissue healing, which is helpful for both vaginal and cesarean births.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts gotu kola
- 2 parts lemonbalm
- 1 part nettle leaf
- 1 part oat straw
- 1 part milky oat tops
- 1 part chamomile

STEEPING

Pour 4 cups hot water over 3 to 4 tablespoons tea. Steep for 5 to 15 minutes.

TASTE: grassy, sweet, slightly lemony

HERBAL ACTIONS: tissue building, nutritive to brain and adrenals

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: connective tissue, nervous



CANDIDA SUPPORT

Candidiasis is a very tricky condition to treat with teas alone. Transitioning to a low glycemic diet, taking probiotic supplements, and adding prebiotic foods and herbs to your diet can work together with this tea to reduce *Candida* in your body for the long term. Glow: Beauty Tea has both dandelion and burdock roots in it. These roots contain inulin, a prebiotic polysaccharide that strongly encourages a healthy balance of intestinal flora and helps reduce *Candida*. Candida Support and Glow Tea together can be a soothing ritual to help strengthen your resolve to stick with all your dietary shifts and topical treatments.

Candida Support tea combines drying, antifungal, and gastrointestinal support herbs that have been shown to limit and reduce candidiasis outbreaks. It is a great preventive tea for people who suffer from recurrent candidiasis.

INGREDIENTS

- 5 parts pau d'arco
- 2 parts milky oat tops
- 2 parts cedar tips (optional)
- 1 part thyme
- 1 part mint
- 1 part calendula
- 0.5 part oregano
- 0.5 part clove

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

TASTE: a fabulous savory tea

HERBAL ACTIONS: drying, antifungal

SYSTEM AFFECTED: general tonic for prevention and reduction of *Candida*



NURSING MAMA TEA

This tea is designed to help restore the new mother and keep her replenished with the essential vitamins and minerals for a healthy breast milk supply. Fenugreek and goat's rue are traditionally used to stimulate lactation. Drinking Nursing Mama Tea two to three times a day for the first two weeks after birth can ensure robust milk production throughout the entire nursing period.



INGREDIENTS

- **10** parts fenugreek seeds
- **5** parts mint
- **5** parts fennel
- **4** parts nettle leaf
- **2** parts lemonbalm
- **2** parts goat's rue
- **2** parts alfalfa
- **2** parts chamomile

STEEPING

Pour 4 cups hot water over 3 to 4 tablespoons tea. Steep for 5 to 15 minutes.

TASTE: slightly bittersweet and minty

HERBAL ACTIONS: galactagogue, nutritive, calming

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: breast milk, nervous, digestive



CALM WATERS

Calm Waters is for when you have an active urinary tract infection. These herbs are astringent and antibacterial, helping eliminate pathogenic bacteria from the urinary tract. This blend is also incredibly soothing and healing to damaged or inflamed tissue. Prepare yourself for the flavor of this one! These herbs are naturally sour and bitter, with a slight sweetness from the corn silk. However, they are powerful allies, so it's worth it.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part dried cranberries
- **1** part dried blueberries
- **1** part Oregon grape root
- **1** part corn silk
- **0.5** part nettle leaf
- **0.5** part uva ursi
- **0.5** part hibiscus
- **0.5** part dandelion leaf

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: fruity, sour, bitter

HERBAL ACTIONS: antibacterial and astringent to tissues in urinary tract

SYSTEM AFFECTED: urinary tract



BLOOD PRESSURE SUPPORT

Living causes wear and tear on the cardiovascular system. This tea helps lower “bad” cholesterol (LDL) and supports healthy blood flow. Because this tea tastes wonderful, it is easy to drink a cup or two a day.

Hawthorn has been used to support heart health since at least the first century ce. Today the leaves, flowers, and berries are used to help protect against heart disease, control high blood pressure and cholesterol, and improve circulation. Hibiscus also helps lower blood pressure. Both hibiscus and hawthorn contain anthocyanins that inhibit angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) and slow the release of hormones that cause blood vessels to constrict. Cinnamon helps regulate blood glucose levels and often lowers blood pressure, especially among those who are type 2 diabetic or prediabetic. Finally, I simply love the fragrance and flavor that linden adds to this blend. Because it is a soothing nervine herb, it works well alongside the hawthorn and hibiscus to reduce hypertension.

Hawthorn, linden, and hibiscus are all rich in antioxidants, but there is no reason not to add more antioxidant-rich dried berries. I typically harvest wild blackberries all summer, dry them in a dehydrator, and keep them on hand to enhance teas such as this one. Adding more berries will increase the tartness of this already tart and tangy tea. If you want to reduce the tartness, you can try adding mint instead, or add a touch of honey.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part hawthorn leaf
- **1** part hawthorn berry
- **1** part cinnamon
- **1** part linden
- **1** part dried berries or 1 part mint (optional)
- **0.5** part hibiscus
- **0.5** part lemongrass
- **0.5** part orange peel

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 to 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes. If desired, add a touch a touch of honey to taste.

TASTE: bright citrus notes with tangy hibiscus and sweet linden

HERBAL ACTIONS: supports cardiovascular health and blood pressure

SYSTEM AFFECTED: cardiovascular



SNOOZE

Snooze tea is a valerian-based sleep tea for people who experience insomnia and restless sleep. This powerful blend calms skeletal muscles and the nervous system to help you get the sleep you need and deserve. Valerian is considered a relaxing herb; some studies show that with prolonged use, it greatly reduces the time it takes to fall asleep. Like most sleep teas, this blend combines several relaxing herbs to reduce physical and mental tension and help you fall asleep quickly and stay asleep.



INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts valerian
- 1 part kava
- 1 part linden
- 1 part mint
- 1 part passionflower
- 0.25 part hops
- 0.25 part nutmeg

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 to 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: slightly bitter, spicy, minty, this tea is a little stinky, and the kava has a tendency to slightly numb the lips and tongue if you drink a lot of it

HERBAL ACTIONS: relaxing, sleep inducing, reduces incidence of restless sleep

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: muscular, nervous

Note: This tea should not be taken if pregnant or breastfeeding.



INFLAMMATION REDUCTION

This tea, based on an Ayurvedic recipe, is practically a meal in a cup and tastes a lot like a rich chai or curry. For many years I struggled to create anti-inflammatory teas for customers because most of the potent herbs with strong anti-inflammatory properties are incredibly bitter. Instead I would end up recommending tinctures or diet changes to help reduce inflammation. But a couple of years ago a friend verbally described this tea to me and I have been experimenting with it ever since.

Besides being two of the most healing tonic herbs in the world, fresh ginger and turmeric are wonderfully anti-inflammatory. You can usually buy fresh organic ginger and turmeric at your local natural foods store, and it is totally possible to grow your own if you live in a sunny climate and have access to a hoop house or greenhouse. I live in a relatively cool region and have been able to grow both in a hoop house from fresh root cuttings I bought at the grocery store. Consistently eating fresh ginger and turmeric — in food, tea, or blended into fresh juice — will greatly improve inflammatory conditions. Anti-inflammatory drugs and standardized extracts might be more potent, but they do not have the balancing effects that the whole plant provides. The harmonizing effects of fresh ginger and turmeric on the immune and digestive systems, in addition to their anti-inflammatory properties, make them a much more obvious choice for me.

This tea is a pretty fun undertaking. Butter is included because the spices contain fat-soluble constituents that won't be fully extracted in water alone. Goji berries are superfoods that improve immune function, are highly antioxidant, and reduce the effects of stress on the body and mind. Combined with turmeric, black pepper improves the absorption of the anti-inflammatory action of the

turmeric in the body. You can use black tea or rooibos, depending on whether or not you prefer caffeine. Because this recipe doesn't lend itself to making in bulk, the ingredients are given in measurements, not parts.



INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
- 2 tablespoons grated fresh turmeric
- 2 tablespoons goji berries
- ½ teaspoon cardamom
- ½ teaspoon clove
- Tiny pinch of black pepper
- 1 teaspoon black tea or rooibos per cup
- 1 teaspoon butter, ghee, or coconut oil per cup
- 1 teaspoon honey per cup

STEEPING

Combine the ginger, turmeric, goji berries, cardamom, clove, and pepper in a lidded saucepan with 4 cups water. Simmer over low heat for 15 minutes. Turn off the heat. Add the tea, butter, and honey. Let sit for 5 minutes. Strain and enjoy. The sugar in the goji berries should help the butter emulsify into the tea. If you find the butter sits on top of the tea, you can emulsify the tea in a blender for 15 seconds.

TASTE: buttery, currylike flavor

HERBAL ACTIONS: anti-inflammatory to tissues, warming, immune supportive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: muscles, nervous, immune, circulatory



HAPPY HEART

A delicious, nourishing tea that calms the physical heart and rebuilds the emotional heart, Happy Heart combines traditional blood purifiers, relaxing heart support, and uplifting aromatics.

Together, linden, nettle, and hawthorn synergize to soothe tense nerves and protect the cardiovascular system. Hawthorn increases arterial circulation and lowers “bad” cholesterol (LDL) levels. It is lesser known for its ability to calm the nerves and ease tight feelings in the chest related to emotional tension or anxiety. Linden, sometimes referred to as lime flower, is another fabulous restorative herb for the nervous system and supports the action of hawthorn. Red sage works with hawthorn as well, to encourage blood circulation. Finally, this blend is centered around the heart-calming properties and protective energies of motherwort.

Everyone goes through heartaches. Motherwort, hawthorn, linden, and red sage are staples in a Western herbalist’s handbag, helpful especially to those who are suffering from psychological trauma that leads to rapid heartbeat or palpitations. This blend is also effective in cases of nervousness and hypertension. Designed for long-term use, this tea is for those who wish to confidently open their heart.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part hawthorn leaf
- **1** part hawthorn berry
- **1** part linden
- **1** part mint
- **1** part nettle leaf
- **1** part red sage root
- **0.5** part osmanthus flowers
- **0.25** part motherwort

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 to 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: bouquet of bright floral fragrance blended with bittersweet and mint

HERBAL ACTIONS: tonic for the emotional and physical heart

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: cardiovascular, nervous



EASE THE PAIN TEA

Acute or chronic pain makes simple daily activities really difficult. Besides the physical pain from an injury, you may also have corrective soreness in muscles and joints associated with movements to guard your pain, as well as emotional stress and lingering psychological impacts. So when I create a tea for pain, I often choose several different categories of herbs to ease all these associated patterns of pain: anodyne, relaxant, antispasmodic, and modifying.

Anodynes are herbs that dull the sensation of pain (but do not address the root causes of it). In this blend I used corydalis, which is a non-habit-forming pain-relieving herb. Skullcap is a great general relaxant, which I like to pair with fennel. To help relieve some of the associated muscle tension, this blend has wild yam. And to balance the blend, I added mint and licorice root. Finally, I added one extra adaptogen herb, codonopsis, to help the body manage the long-term stress associated with pain.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part corydalis
- **1** part skullcap
- **1** part fennel
- **0.5** part wild yam
- **0.5** part mint
- **0.25** part codonopsis
- **0.25** part licorice root

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded saucepan. Keep it warm on the stove for at least 20 minutes. You do not want the tea to get hot enough to simmer or boil, so make sure the heat is on the lowest setting.

TASTE: sweetness of licorice, fennel, and codonopsis balance the bitterness of skullcap, corydalis, and wild yam

HERBAL ACTIONS: pain relieving, antispasmodic, relaxing, and adaptogenic

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: muscular, nervous



MINDSPRING

Mindspring is the perfect tea for intense periods of brain flexing. This blend provides a mental boost to encourage memory, focus, and learning, making it a great tea for anyone who relies on their mental dexterity for their job or schoolwork. It also provides good support for people who experience residual cognitive impairment from a traumatic brain injury. I had many sports-related concussions as a kid, and at times I notice significant cognitive impairment. Drinking tea with tulsi and gotu kola helps reduce stress and strengthen my ability to think.

Tulsi has a beautiful way of bringing youth and grace back to a tired mind. Gotu kola is often taken as a fresh juice in India to bring spark and agility to the mind. Codonopsis, a deliciously sweet root, is a great substitute for Asian ginseng, rejuvenating the nervous system and boosting immunity. Sage is an herb of wisdom and enhances our ability to be mentally present. Green rooibos is less sweet and tangy than red rooibos and is known for its high antioxidant levels and light, bright flavor. Licorice is an herb I like to think of as the deep river of replenishment. It adds sweetness while reducing stress, boosting the immune system, and bringing out the youthfulness in each of us.

Lots of people experience frustration with learning because it is difficult to learn when we feel stressed. Remembering to seek out safe environments to work and learn can go a long way to improve overall mental function.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts gotu kola
- 1.5 parts tulsi
- 1 part peppermint
- 1 part sage
- 1 part licorice root
- 1 part green rooibos
- 1 part codonopsis

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 to 2 tablespoons tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: strong aromatics of mint, sage, and tulsi; tangy base with a sweet aftertaste

HERBAL ACTIONS: supports memory and focus

SYSTEM AFFECTED: nervous

CHAPTER 5

SEASONAL TEAS

WE HUMANS ARE SENSITIVE, PERCEIVING ORGANISMS,
and our health depends on how well our bodies respond to the world around us. It turns out that we can manage a tremendous amount of stress through simple, thoughtful awareness of the seasons. Paying close attention to the growth of the plants and animals that immediately surround you can help you be more conscious of the changes in your own thoughts and feelings as the seasons change.



Those of us living in regions where winter and summer differ starkly often find that our energy ebbs and flows cyclically year after year. The seasons play a driving role in how we think, how we feel, what activities we prioritize, and how well we cope with stress. But paying attention to how nature's cycles affect you doesn't mean dropping all your responsibilities when the seasons change or blaming your behavior on changes in the weather. Instead, it's really about understanding the dynamic influences the seasons have on the body, developing

healthy habits that work in unison with seasonal energetics, and learning to appreciate the opportunities nature provides you day to day, month to month, season to season. You will find yourself becoming more adaptable, and feel more agency, pleasure, and emotional stability in your life.

Each season presents the body with different kinds of support and stress. In the heat of the summer, knowing how to stay cool and hydrated with nourishing iced teas can have a powerful impact on your energy, stamina, and cardiovascular function. During the winter, the body struggles to keep warm, so different herbs and teas are used to boost immunity and feel cozy in your own skin. Drinking teas for seasonal health does not have to be complicated. I usually have half a dozen teas on hand during each season to provide the tender support my body needs. I create teas that I find pleasurable to drink, and I encourage you to do the same. The recipes in this book are just to get you started; it is likely that you will alter some of the recipes to better suit your own body and taste preferences.

By anticipating what your body needs, you can mentally and physically prepare for each season — before seasonal stress catches you by surprise and takes a negative toll on your body.

Cold brewing a green tea with fresh herbs in the summer has a different quality and feel than hovering over your hot cup in anticipation of a strong, spicy, immune-support tea in the middle of winter. Drinking tea *should* be different from season to season, since our bodies are processing and perceiving strikingly different environmental conditions and energetics. The combination of herbs and steeping methods you use will vary depending on general characteristics about the seasons where you live.

Seasonal teas take center stage in my life because I try to notice and feel the little shifts in light, dark, seasonal weather, and the expansive or contracting energy of the season. My body knows when it is time to start shifting my personal apothecary up or down the spectrum of cooling and warming or moistening and drying herbs. Simple awareness about how you feel in relationship to your place in any given part of the year makes managing your

health a lot less complicated. This chapter should give you inspiration for building healthy patterns in your life with seasonal teas.

SPRING

EARLY SPRING IS A TIME OF REBIRTH. Winter is rapidly receding, giving way to spritely young leaves and shoots. It is time to put energy into visioning your spring and summer and planning how you will get new projects off the ground. To get the most out of spring energy, break down large projects into small, bite-sized pieces that bring about the eventual transformation you are seeking.



Gardeners have fun and surprising work to do in early spring: starting seeds, cleaning up beds, taking inventory as plants come back to life, and removing dead plant material from the previous year. I love springtime gardening and its unpredictable weather; a renewed desire to get out and work pushes and tugs at your heartstrings and patience. Warm days tempt you to start planting, but cold nights force you to hold back until that daytime warmth lingers and blankets the nights. Sun, wind, hail, and rain seem to loop endlessly. I'm inspired by the sun to jump up and start a project outside, only to find myself sprinting for cover a few minutes later as an intense downpour suddenly moves in. I never get bored predicting what the day might bring in spring.

The resilient energy of spring can help foster all kinds of creative projects. Perhaps you'll be motivated to refocus on a neglected project or start something entirely new. I do a lot of experimental gardening with native edible species from all over Washington and Oregon, and in early spring I just cannot wait to start inventorying plants. If the winter was severe, I take note of any casualties, but mostly I live each moment in a state of awe that so many delicate plants reemerge with such vibrancy and personality.

By mid-spring we see dramatic, rapid change and growth that sets the tone for the rest of the growing season. The whole ecosystem wakes up: soil critters begin to wiggle and reveal themselves, dormant seeds suddenly sprout, and after a grand showy display from early spring flowers, the leaves emerge and eventually form the lush canopy that shades us during the heat of the summer.

The unpredictability of spring weather can be really confusing to your body. The teas in this section are varied to reflect the transitional character of spring. Because spring is temperamental, we must learn to be flexible and adaptable. We can take a lot of inspiration from nature. Listen to your body, notice where you are holding stress, and use teas that help establish resilience and physical and mental flexibility. If your brain is in overdrive because spring has opened up a complex web of ideas and desires, it is a good idea to protect your nervous system and encourage muscular and mental energy. But you also might need to drink nervine teas at night to calm a chattering mind. If you feel strongly affected by quick changes in weather, try drinking nutritive and grounding teas and make sure you stay hydrated. Experiment with different teas to help balance your physical and emotional energy.

The taste most associated with spring is sour — not necessarily like citrus or hibiscus, but rather that of new growth. Unfurling buds and shoots reaching toward the sky often have a fresh, youthful flavor and are rich in organic acids. The bright, sour taste of young fir tips or miner's lettuce are perfect examples. This flavor is incredibly refreshing and has a lush, green energy.

Where I live, in the Pacific Northwest, the practical aspects of spring start earlier than the spring equinox. Look around you and notice when the landscape starts to burgeon; let your place be your guide.



ALLERGY TEA

Have Allergy Tea blended and on hand by early March. Local nettles, honey, and bee pollen can help reduce the severity of seasonal allergies, but you have to start taking them early in the season (a few weeks before you typically start feeling spring allergies) as a food or in tea.

The herbs in this blend reduce springtime pollen sensitivity and allergy symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose, congestion, inflamed sinuses, and watery eyes. Nettles have a natural antihistamine in their leaves and a soothing effect on the respiratory system. Try to buy fresh or carefully dried local nettles. Otherwise, search for freeze-dried nettles if you are serious about using them as an antihistamine supplement. Eye bright is helpful for puffy, red eyes, as is elderflower, which can also reduce fever. Red clover flower has long been used in allergy blends for its expectorant properties, and catnip is a natural decongestant with calming properties. Marshmallow is a demulcent herb; it has a smooth, slimy texture (from sweet mucopolysaccharides in the tissue of the plant) that soothes dry, irritated, or inflamed tissues of the throat and lungs.

Bee pollen can help desensitize the body to allergens. A daily low dose is very helpful for some people. It is definitely worth trying!

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts nettle leaf
- 1.5 parts catnip
- 1.5 parts peppermint
- 1.5 parts anise seeds
- 1 part eye bright
- 1 part elderflower
- 1 part marshmallow root
- 1 part local bee pollen or 1 teaspoon local honey (optional)
- 0.5 part red clover blossoms

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Cover and steep for 10 to 15 minutes. Add a touch of local honey for a sweeter taste.

TASTE: grassy, with accents of mints and anise

HERBAL ACTIONS: reduces seasonal allergic response and relieves allergy symptoms

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: sinuses, immune, and nervous

HERB SPOTLIGHT

NETTLES

In springtime I get really excited about making tea with fresh or freshly dried nettles, one of the first medicinal plants to reemerge after a long winter. Nettles come up amid the heavy, cold early spring rains, fearless of late frosts and perfectly timed to help rebuild tissue and blood after the cold, immobile winter. Full of chlorophyll, protein, minerals, and vitamins B, K, and A, nettle is nature's multivitamin.

I really like herbalist Matthew Wood's description of nettle. He visualizes the "nettle spirit as an older lady with a broom or a switch exhorting people to get going, get a move on, don't just sit around, do something." The nettle way is to move stagnant energy by building tissue strength and removing excesses. Nettle works on the kidneys and mucous membranes (it can help remove excess mucus and bring about balance). I have also read accounts of nettle helping to break fevers. I often like to include it in spring and winter blends along with other warming herbs, because, just as Matthew Wood described, it motivates me to get going.

I always harvest nettles with gloves on, carefully drawing up the top two layers of leaves and cutting the stem right at the point of their third level of leaves. When cooking with fresh nettles, it is very important not to overblanch them, which can quickly break down their delicate nutrients.

Drink and eat nettles whenever possible during the spring when they are at their peak perfection! I recommend rich, creamy leek and nettle soup made with bone broth and wild spring mushrooms, or simply blanch and sauté them with garlic and aromatic spices. I also enjoy nettle spreads made from quickly blanched nettles, yogurt or tangy soft cheese, lemon

or champagne vinegar, chopped garlic and onion, and a healthy sprinkling of toasted and crushed cumin, fennel, and coriander seeds.





SPRING REVIVAL!

This is a nourishing caffeinated spring blend. As winter opens into spring, you will have highly energetic days mixed with sluggish days as your body adjusts to the change in season. It's a great tea to drink on the sluggish days as it helps nourish the body with energizing vitamins and minerals but also has caffeine.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part nettle leaf
- **1** part black tea or oolong
- **1** part fennel
- **0.5** part mint
- **0.5** part rose petals

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 3 minutes. Strain. Re-steep for another 4 minutes. It is important to strain the tea out of the water in between steepings so the black or oolong tea does not go bitter on you.

TASTE: dark, malty base with accents of sweet mints, rose, and fennel

HERBAL ACTIONS: nutritive, energizing

SYSTEM AFFECTED: nervous



SPRING NUTRITIVE TEA

Lush, nutritive spring teas taste so good. Because we have primarily been eating foods that are either preserved, processed, or shipped from faraway places during the winter, we instinctually crave fresh, grassy flavors in spring. These herbs revive both the body and the spirit. Most people don't think of oat straw and alfalfa as foods, but both are incredibly nutritious and have quite a combined range of vitamins, minerals, and protein. Using them in teas allows you to extract a lot of nourishment without having to process all the fiber. This tea is basically a powerhouse of nutrients to feed your tissues after a long, slow winter. As our bodies and minds become more active in spring, it is important that we get the basic nutrients necessary to build, maintain, and restore muscles, bones, blood, and joints.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts fenugreek seeds
- 2 parts milky oat tops
- 2 parts oat straw
- 2 parts goji berries
- 2 parts mint
- 1 part alfalfa
- 1 part eleuthero (Siberian ginseng)
- 1 part anise seeds
- 1 part nettle leaf

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 20 minutes. The longer you steep, the more vitamins and minerals will be extracted. If you decide to steep for more than 20 minutes, use 2 cups of water so the flavor of the tea isn't too strong.

TASTE: mellow flavor of sweet milky oats, goji berries, and anise paired with grassy nettles and alfalfa

HERBAL ACTION: nutritive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tonic



ELEGANCE TEA

White teas are soft and airy in nature, as reflected in their light color and smooth taste. They remind me of spring's delicacy and help me reflect on the aspects of myself that are reemerging after winter. It takes courage for plants to expand and spread toward the sky when the weather and future are uncertain. It is equally courageous for people to focus and continue to develop as we age.

White teas are some of the earliest spring pickings from the tea plant. The light, elegant aroma and taste of white tea is perfectly complemented by rose petals and osmanthus flowers. Osmanthus flowers are sweet and intoxicating, while rose petals are bright and enchanting. The balance achieved among the three is miraculous as they gently captivate your senses. You are whisked away, rising above the cup as you breathe in the fragrance, and as you are carried through the high floral notes, you begin to notice the ever-so-subtle scent of the tea leaves: earthy in comparison to the flowers. Take a sip. The profound sensual experience of this tea will warm, energize, and inspire you.



INGREDIENTS

- **1** part white tea
- **0.5** part rose petals
- **0.25** part osmanthus flowers

STEEPING

I like to use a tea pitcher and a gongfu-style tea set to make the most of my caffeinated teas. Because this tea can and should be steeped many times, I use just a small amount of tea, about a teaspoon. Also, I rinse my tea set as well as the tea itself in hot water before I steep my first cup for drinking. I do this by pouring hot water over the leaves as if I were making a cup of tea. I let them steep for about 15 seconds and then pour off the water or strain the tea. Then I pour fresh hot water to steep the tea for drinking — but I only steep it for about 30 seconds. You can probably steep Elegance Tea five or six times before the flavor starts to wane, though you can continue to steep it up to nine or ten times. This process allows you to experience a dramatic spectrum of flavors and scents as the tea and flowers are extracted.

TASTE: light and grassy, a wonderful play between fresh white tea and sweet osmanthus and rose

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, uplifting

SYSTEM AFFECTED: nervous



SPRING AID

Spring Aid is a unique, tangy, vitamin-rich tea. I originally formulated it as a tea to drink after exercising. Rich in electrolytes and minerals, it is refreshing and delicious without all the artificial and natural flavorings of store-bought sports drinks. This blend supports muscle recuperation, strengthens energy and resilience, and can be drunk as a general tonic for active individuals.

During spring getting exercise and fresh air is thrilling. Our bodies feel electrified with possibilities and potential. It is great to have a sports tea that you can take with you on a long walk or a bike ride that will keep you hydrated and satisfied.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 parts rose hips
- 3 parts lemonbalm
- 3 parts ginger
- 3 parts orange zest
- 3 parts lemongrass
- 3 parts schisandra
- 2 parts cinnamon

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 4 to 8 minutes.

TASTE: bright sweet-and-sour taste with a touch of spicy ginger and aromatic cinnamon

HERBAL ACTIONS: thirst quenching, nutritive, tissue building

SYSTEM AFFECTED: muscular



SPRING STRENGTH

How well you nourish your body and how emotionally strong and healthy you feel are powerfully connected. When you treat yourself to nourishing herbal teas that taste amazing and strengthen your body, you naturally feel like a confident, powerful being.

This is a more warming iteration of Strength tea. Deliciously dark and aromatic, this simple blend of some of spring's most beloved herbs is one I especially recommend as a daily tonic for women. This tea helps build muscles and bones, tones the female reproductive system, improves mood, and strengthens digestion. Having a cup of Spring Strength is a powerful ritual that encourages vitality and health.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part nettle leaf
- **1** part raspberry leaf
- **1** part fennel
- **1** part mint
- **0.5** part ginger
- **0.5** part rose petals

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for at least 8 minutes.

TASTE: a great aroma of licorice, mint, and rose; deep and earthy, with rising notes of spices and mints

HERBAL ACTION: nutritive tonic

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: strengthens many organ systems



SPRING TONIC

This is a general spring tonic that needs to be decocted to extract its full range of beneficial nutrients. It is designed to help the body remain strong as you add more physical stress to your life. During winter, our bodies tend to slow down and focus inward. When spring arrives, our energy moves outward. As we step out into the world on warm days and begin outdoor projects, we are often surprised by how tired and limited our bodies feel after a relatively sedentary winter. Designed to help increase muscle stamina and recuperation, support immunity, and provide digestive support, Spring Tonic is wonderful for overall wellness.

You can make a large batch of Spring Tonic and add a cup to your water bottle each time you fill up.



INGREDIENTS

- **1** part dandelion root
- **1** part burdock root
- **0.5** part ginger
- **0.5** part cinnamon
- **0.5** part codonopsis
- **0.25** part reishi mushrooms
- **0.25** part astragalus
- **0.25** part licorice root

STEEPING

Combine 2 tablespoons tea and 4 cups room-temperature water in a lidded saucepan. Simmer over low heat for 20 to 60 minutes. Strain. Let the tea cool down a little, and enjoy.

TASTE: earthy with accents of sweet, spicy, and slight bitterness

HERBAL ACTION: nutritive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tonic



CLARITY

White teas are perfect for spring and early summer. Clarifying, light, and full of antioxidants, they help lift energy. Ginger and cinnamon are great for supporting the immune system and digestion, and they balance the body on days when it feels hot one minute and cold the next. Schisandra, a sour Chinese herb, helps stimulate digestion and has a wonderful tonic effect on the nervous system. Lemonbalm is a great spring nervine herb to calm the nerves and adds nice citrus notes alongside the lemongrass. Rose hips provide a tangy sweetness and lots of vitamin C. They are also anti-inflammatory.

This blend is to help hail the coming warmer weather. It's meant to provide digestive support and soothe cravings for both sweet and spicy as the weather improves. My hope is that it is bold enough to steer you from less healthy drink choices.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts white tea
- 1 part rose hips
- 0.5 part ginger
- 0.5 part cinnamon
- 0.5 part lemongrass
- 0.25 part schisandra
- 0.25 part lemonbalm
- 0.25 part orange zest

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 teaspoon tea. Steep for 2 minutes. Strain. Steep again for 4 to 5 minutes.

TASTE: a nicely balanced blend of sweet, sour, and spicy; wonderfully bright and tangy

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, immune supporting, nutritive, tonic

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, immune, skin



SPRING IMMUNITY

The spiciness of this immune-support tea will heat your body and eventually induce sweating. The heat of spicy teas and foods create an inhospitable environment for many types of pathogens. Heat can denature foreign proteins in the body, which is why we often experience fevers when we have the flu — our bodies are trying to kill pathogens by raising body temperature.

Though echinacea is touted as an immune-boosting herb, in this tea I use it more for its antimicrobial properties. Fairly bitter in taste, echinacea is most effective when taken at the first onset of sickness. I tend not to use it often in herbal teas because I feel that many other herbs and herbal combinations consistently work better for immunity when administered in a tea form.

Ginger is one of my favorite tonic herbs for keeping the body healthy. It is safe to use every day and performs really well in immune-support teas in concentrated quantities. It is antimicrobial, warming, anti-inflammatory, and a tonic to the digestive system, easing queasiness and nausea. Tulsi, usually used as an adaptogen for the nervous system, also strengthens the immune system's response and helps you recover quickly after an acute infection. I think of tulsi as a powerful strengthener. Lastly, lemongrass and mint add balance and flavor, brighten mood, and help clear and protect sinuses with their volatile essential oils.

Drink Spring Immunity when you need to quickly eradicate an infection. It is strongly diaphoretic and antimicrobial. I drink a cup or two of this tea whenever I start to get a pesky spring cold.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part tulsi
- **1** part ginger
- **1** part mint
- **0.5** part lemongrass
- **0.5** part echinacea
- **0.1** part cayenne

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: a bold blend of bittersweet and spicy

HERBAL ACTIONS: supports immunity

SYSTEM AFFECTED: immune



GREEN LOVE

Green Love has a wonderful spring taste and nutritive properties, and sencha is a bright, grassy Japanese green tea that carries a quintessential spring flavor. Green love is formulated for tea lovers who just cannot get enough spring in their step and love to surround themselves with the fragrance and tastes of a reemerging season.



INGREDIENTS

- 5 parts sencha tea
- 2.5 parts milky oat tops
- 1 part nettle leaf
- 1 part red clover blossoms

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 to 2 tablespoons tea. Steep several times with short durations, no more than 2 minutes per steep. This will allow you to get the most nutrients from the blend and keep the sencha tea from developing a bitter taste.

TASTE: distinctly grassy with a touch of sweet grains

HERBAL ACTIONS: nutritive, energizing

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tissues, nervous



WAKE UP!

This robust, caffeinated morning blend with deliciously dark and enigmatic keemun tea will certainly start your day off right. It's ever so slightly bittersweet, which can help improve morning digestion. Hawthorn is a strong and wonderful cardiovascular tonic herb that strengthens the physical and emotional heart. As part of your morning routine, Wake Up! should help increase circulation and provide the vitamins and minerals you need for a get-up-and-get-moving attitude. You can also drink it as an afternoon pick-me-up if you need a little motivation after lunch.

The flavor of this tea is finely balanced between an earthy bittersweet base, ephemeral citrus, and aromatic spices that seem to dance above the cup as you sip. The keemun tea, hawthorn, tulsi, and nettles provide the base for the flavor. Then you begin to taste the mood-brightening citrus notes from the orange zest and lemongrass, and finally you notice the lovely sweetness from the cinnamon, hawthorn berries, anise, and rose hips. If your mouth is sensitive, you will also experience a lingering tingle on your tongue from the tulsi, which is totally amazing (and normal).

INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts keemun tea
- 2 parts orange zest
- 1.5 parts tulsi
- 1.5 parts rose hips
- 1.5 parts hawthorn leaf and flower
- 1 part hawthorn berries
- 1 part lemongrass
- 1 part cinnamon
- 1 part nettle leaf
- 1 part anise seeds

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 4 minutes. Strain. Enjoy. Then steep again for another 4 minutes. You will experience two distinctly different but equally delicious flavors.

TASTE: nice medley of bittersweet, spicy, and earthy

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, heart strengthening, nutritive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: cardiovascular, nervous, musculoskeletal

SUMMER

IN SUMMERTIME, WHENEVER I DRIVE FROM THE CITY BACK to my farm, I am overwhelmed by fragrance and rich beauty as soon as I open the car door. I love that moment, when my body ceases to be strictly cerebral, relaxes, and becomes grounded in the familiar sensual footprint of my home. Just about everywhere I walk, I notice the unique smells from the volatile essential oils of flowers, leaves, fruits, and seeds.



Inspired by the energy and intuition of nature, we find our energy is often directed outward in spring and summer. Sensually, we tend to be more attentive to the voices outside ourselves; we are more physically aware and less analytic.

In summertime, let yourself be renewed and immersed in the world around you. Use your senses to their fullest. Let yourself be slowed down by the heat and captivated by the showy beauty of the season.

The summer solstice marks a pivotal moment when the days begin to shorten and contract again. Plants notice this change and begin to focus more energy on reproduction, with summer flowers coming into full swing by early July. Flowers often have a slight bitterness and astringency in their taste but overwhelm the senses with their intoxicating scents. Some of my favorite flowers to use in tea are linden, hawthorn, and rose. At times when you start to feel too stimulated or inflamed, add bitter herbs like skullcap, dandelion, and California poppy to help cool tissues.

As summer progresses, fruits become ripe and provide a whole spectrum of sweet flavors to explore in your teas. Sweetness indicates nutritive qualities, and sweet herbs often have a cooling, moistening effect on tissues. Important sweet herbs commonly used during summer are those with mucopolysaccharides, such as mallows and licorice. Other examples of sweet herbs for teas are milky oat tops, corn silk, burdock, berries, and fruits.

As summer begins to wane, we naturally feel an instinct to begin processing and storing our bounty for the winter months. Our hands work in high gear so that we can have fresh, vibrant nutrients and flavors in the cold, dark recesses of winter. But for many people, summer has a lot fewer seasonal stressors than the other seasons. Teas that promote sleep, muscular recuperation, cardiovascular strength, and digestion, as well as teas that cool the body down during a hot afternoon, are the most important teas for summer. Green teas with their fresh taste and caffeine help keep you energized and ready to explore nature. Many of my summer iced teas incorporate fruits instead of sugar.

Summer should be a time of edible opulence. Indulge in fresh, locally grown herbs and foods. Let yourself enjoy the simple pleasure of eating and drinking spectacular wholesome flavors. Everything you ingest gets broken down, and most of it gets metabolized and transformed into the tissues that make up you. Summer is a perfect time to form deeper friendships with the foods and herbs that inevitably build the best version of your physical body.



SUMMER SOLSTICE

This nutritive blend contains the best of both spring and summer and celebrates both our forests and gardens. By mid-June, Douglas fir tips begin to deepen in color and texture as they mature. You could use tips from other conifers that grow in your region, just make sure they are safe to use in tea. I harvest and dry the tips of Douglas fir for teas several weeks before the solstice, when they have the bright, soft energy of youth. Personally, I think of Douglas fir as a symbol of perseverance and virility. It is a tree that seems to refuse to struggle with the seasons, providing us with protection from both summer heat and heavy winter rains. Their tips taste simultaneously earthy, resinous, and citrusy.

Aromatic roses and mints offer their uplifting and refreshing properties to this blend while hawthorn leaf and flower protect the physical and emotional heart. Anise is at its peak in my garden around the solstice and its mild licorice flavor helps balance and slightly sweeten the tea. If you decide to use this blend for iced tea, the anise will be more noticeable.

Nettle adds depth to the flavor but also provides minerals, kidney support, and nervine properties. Along with Douglas fir and hawthorn, nettles can be foraged and dried during spring.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 part Douglas fir tips
- 1 part hawthorn leaf and flower
- 1 part nettle leaf
- 1 part mint
- 1 part rose petals
- 1 part anise seeds

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 4 to 8 minutes.

TASTE: bold, fresh, and aromatic

HERBAL ACTION: nutritive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, cardiovascular, general tonic



SUMMER SOL

The long-expanding energy of spring has fully stretched out. As summer officially arrives, the days get hotter, but the sun slowly starts to move back toward the equator, signaling plants to spend more energy producing flowers, fruits, and seeds. Summer Sol tea is a celebration of the sun.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part Douglas fir tips (cedar or spruce tips work, too)
- **1** part rose hips
- **1** part tulsi
- **0.75** part hibiscus
- **0.5** part calendula flowers

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 4 to 8 minutes.

TASTE: tangy, with sour hibiscus and rose hips making a refreshing base for aromatic tulsi and fir tips

HERBAL ACTION: hydrating

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tonic

Sun Tea

The combination of fresh, seasonal fruits, herbs, and sunshine often makes a bright, complex summer thirst-quencher. For sun tea, you can use fresh or dried herbs. All you do is combine the herbs and water in a mason jar and leave it in a warm, sunny place for a few hours. Once you make your sun tea, you can stick it in the fridge for iced tea or drink it as a warm infusion. Because I sweat a lot more in the summer, I like to make a strong sun tea with mineral- and vitamin-rich herbs and fruits and add a cup or two to my water bottle every time I fill it up. This way, I'm continually recharging my body.

For most people, sun teas are not formulaic but improvised. I use whatever fruits I have on hand and then add a few nutritive herbs that support how I am feeling in the moment. If I am stressed out, I consider adding lemonbalm, rose petals, or chamomile. If I have a lot of physical work to do, I might add nettles, raspberry leaf, and maybe some eleuthero. For a digestive sun tea, add freshly grated ginger, mint, and fennel. Just listen to your body and try not to overthink your blend. Keep it simple and delicious — it is supposed to be loose and fun, after all.

Note: Adding any kind of sugar during the extraction process can cause unwanted bacterial growth if you leave the tea out in the sun too long. It's best to add honey or other sweeteners after you've brewed your tea (and before refrigerating it).



BERRY SUN TEA

Sweet, tangy flavors are characteristic of summer as they quench thirst and provide essential nourishment. Berry Sun Tea is a delicious way to combine fresh herbs and fruits with dried hibiscus. This playful blend makes a great addition to a quick lunch or afternoon snack. You can start the tea in the morning and have it ready to go by midday. The subtle, delicate flavors you'll achieve by using fresh ingredients are ephemeral and inspiring.



INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups fresh berries
- 1 handful of fresh mint leaves
- 1 ounce dried hibiscus
- 1 lemon, sliced

STEEPING

Combine all ingredients with 2 quarts water in a lidded jar. Place it in the sun for 1 to 3 hours and shake vigorously any time you walk by. Strain, and add a little local honey for sweetness if desired. Add ice for iced tea.

TASTE: refreshing blend of sweet berries, tart hibiscus, aromatic mint, and bright lemon

HERBAL ACTIONS: cooling, hydrating, refreshing

SYSTEM AFFECTED: cardiovascular



SUMMER BREEZE SUN TEA

Fun to make, this is a delicious, bright, lightly spicy tea to quench thirst and cool you down on a hot summer day.



INGREDIENTS

- **1** handful of fresh mint, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon, sliced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce hibiscus
- **1** ($\frac{1}{2}$ - inch) piece fresh ginger, grated
- **1** sprig fresh rosemary

STEEPING

Combine all ingredients with 4 cups water in a lidded jar. Place it in the sun for 1 to 3 hours and shake vigorously any time you walk by. Strain, add about a tablespoon of honey, and enjoy with ice, or refrigerate.

TASTE: sweet, sour, spicy, and fruity

HERBAL ACTIONS: uplifting, strengthening, refreshing, digestive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: cardiovascular, digestive



NUTRITIVE SUN TEA

Our bodies require extra nutrients during the summer as we are more active and quick to perspire. Offering these nutrients to your cells as you keep yourself hydrated continually feeds your skin, muscles, and energy reserves. This tea uses five herbs that are quite easy to grow in a small herb garden in your backyard. You can make this tea using fresh or dried herbs.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part nettle leaf
- **1** part fresh or dried raspberry leaf
- **1** part fresh or dried mint
- **0.5** part rose petals
- **0.5** part fresh or dried lemonbalm

STEEPING

Combine 2 to 3 tablespoons tea and 4 cups water in a lidded jar. Place it in the sun for 1 to 3 hours and shake vigorously any time you walk by. Strain and enjoy with ice, or place in refrigerator for an hour before drinking.

TASTE: light, with slight earthy, minty, floral, and citrus tones

HERBAL ACTION: nutritive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tonic

Iced Teas and Cold Infusions

Traditional iced teas are made by refrigerating a hot steeped tea. You are able to get a full extraction of dense or highly aromatic herbs through this method. Another option, which I almost exclusively prefer, is to make a cold infusion (or cold brew) by combining tea and cold water in a lidded jar and keeping it in a cool spot. I usually just keep them in the fridge so that I have a really cold tea ready for me when I am thirsty.

Cold infusions are a great way to get the most out of our precious nutritive herbs and fruits. Cold water extracts a different spectrum of phytochemicals than hot water. By extracting in cold water, none of the temperature-sensitive vitamins and minerals are lost. You will notice a difference in flavor between hot infusions cooled into iced teas and cold infusions. Cold infusions are basically raw herbal teas. Sun tea and cold extractions achieve similar results, but cold infusions last a lot longer in the fridge and have a more delicate and complex flavor.

Simple, cold-brewed black or green teas are delicious, and there are lots of creative possibilities for zesting them up. Garble (see [here](#)) fresh fruits and herbs in your cold brew tea for a delicious, refreshing drink.



MINT GREEN TEA

Using fresh mint in this tea is ideal. Fresh mint has such a strong, intoxicating fragrance and mouthfeel that it is worthy of sharing water with sweet-scented jasmine green tea. You can also add a little fresh lime zest and juice for a brighter, even more refreshing tea.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part jasmine green tea
- **1** part fresh or dried peppermint
- Lime juice and lime zest (optional)

STEEPING

Combine 2 tablespoons tea and 4 cups water in a lidded jar (along with a splash of lime juice and a little lime zest, if you like). Refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: delicate, sweet, perfumy notes of jasmine, and refreshing peppermint

HERBAL ACTIONS: hydrating, uplifting, energizing

SYSTEM AFFECTED: nervous



LEMON GINGER ICED TEA

A perfect summer treat, this tea makes a great midday pick-me-up. You can make your own lemonade using fresh lemons and honey or buy a jug of lemonade for this blend. When you cold brew black tea it tastes smooth and slightly sweet because the bitterness of black tea does not get extracted in cold water.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** cup lemonade
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
- **2** teaspoons black tea
- **1** ($\frac{1}{2}$ -inch) piece fresh ginger, grated

STEEPING

Combine all ingredients in a lidded jar. Place in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour. I often leave it in the refrigerator overnight for a strong black tea infusion.

TASTE: malty black tea paired perfectly with tart lemon and spicy ginger

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, refreshing, hydrating

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, digestive, general tonic



APPLE GREEN ICED TEA

Sweet iced drinks continue to be extremely popular during summer, despite how much processed sugar they contain. However, low-sugar iced teas sweetened with fruit juice are delicious. I often make this Apple Green Iced Tea when I have special lunch and dinner events in the summer.

When formulating sweet teas, it is nice to balance the sweetness of the juice with a bit of spice, tartness, and bitterness. Ideally, you will strive for a complex taste. This blend is a simple way to make “sweet” iced tea with an added bite from fresh ginger.



INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup water
- ½ cup apple juice
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cranberry juice
- 1 handful of fresh mint, minced
- 2 teaspoons green tea
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- Zest of ½ lemon

STEEPING

Combine all ingredients in a lidded jar. Refrigerate overnight. Strain and drink.

TASTE: sweet, spicy, sour, citrusy

HERBAL ACTIONS: refreshing, hydrating, cooling

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, general tonic



SOL MATÉ

Served hot or cold, Sol Maté integrates the vibrant tastes of summer for an incredible caffeinated tea. With a perfect balance of earthy, mint, fruit, citrus, and floral, this blend is really all about teasing your taste buds.

I have a strong affinity for the taste and aroma of this tea. From the moment you smell the mingling of the dried herbs to when the last sips are barely warm in the cup, there is so much subtlety at play. I get swept away by the sweet, floral fragrance of osmanthus, which loosely tangles with the mint and lemongrass. This tea is also distinctly herbaceous, which is typical of yerba maté and grounds the flavor. Elderberry adds a perfect amount of tart fruitiness, while the linden is slightly sweet. The linden and peppermint help balance the strong stimulating effect of the maté. I usually try to balance strongly stimulating teas with herbs that nourish and protect the nervous system.

I often like to stick my nose over a cup of Sol Maté and take really deep breaths until I feel sufficiently energized. As the tea cools, a menagerie of changing flavors captivates the palate.



INGREDIENTS

- **1** part yerba maté
- **0.5** part lemongrass
- **0.5** part peppermint
- **0.5** part osmanthus flowers
- **0.5** part elderberry
- **0.25** part linden
- **0.25** part yerba santa

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 4 to 8 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 tablespoons tea and 4 cups water in a lidded jar. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Shake, strain, enjoy. You can add a touch of honey if you like a sweeter tea.

TASTE: a heady combination of sweet linden, elderberry, and osmanthus, rounded out by the rich aromatics of mint, lemongrass, and yerba maté, which linger on the palate

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, refreshing, nutritive

SYSTEM AFFECTED: nervous



SUMMER GODDESS

Summer Goddess is a bright, nutritive, tangy tea. This blend can be made into a sun tea or cold infusion. I added chrysanthemum to this blend because it aids in clearing heat, especially in the liver. This blend is full of vitamins and minerals, cools the body, and helps the body manage stress.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part tulsi
- **0.5** part mint
- **0.5** part hibiscus
- **0.5** part raspberry leaf
- **0.5** part fennel
- **0.25** part chrysanthemum

STEEPING

Combine 3 tablespoons tea and 4 cups water in a lidded jar. Place it in a warm, sunny place for 1 to 3 hours. Shake vigorously. Strain and enjoy with ice, or refrigerate.

TASTE: bittersweet with a touch of sour, balanced by mints and fennel

HERBAL ACTIONS: adaptogenic, nutritive, liver supportive, cooling

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: cardiovascular, nervous

Sweating Is Good!

One of the best things about summer heat is sweating. Spicy foods and drinks induce sweating, which dramatically cools you down. Cleansing and refreshing, sweating releases metabolic wastes from the body and stimulates thirst. The cycle of drinking nourishing iced teas and sweating is one of my favorite parts of summer. It is easy to loathe heat and sweating, but just think about how replenished you become when you consistently hydrate yourself. I somehow manage to feel incredibly clean in the heat of the summer because I am drinking so much clean water and consuming healthy fresh herbs and fruits all day long. It's wonderful!



SERENITY

Serenity encourages a state of tranquility. With lots of vitamins, minerals, and uplifting aromatics, it will help restore and reset your mind and body during the summer months.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 parts milky oat tops
- 1.5 parts elderberry
- 1 part hawthorn leaf and flower
- 1 part linden leaf and flower
- 1 part fennel
- 1 part cinnamon
- 1 part lemongrass
- 0.25 part osmanthus flowers

STEEPING

Combine 2 tablespoons tea and 4 cups water in a lidded jar. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Shake, strain, and enjoy.

TASTE: well-balanced, with notes of grassy, citrus, berries, floral, grains

HERBAL ACTIONS: nutritive, heart tonic, refreshing, uplifting

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: cardiovascular, nervous, musculoskeletal



COCONUT GREEN

Toasted coconut adds a nice nutty character to an otherwise subtle green tea. Coconut is grown where summer never ceases. Away from the equator, it perfectly complements the summer season. Green tea is high in flavonoids (antioxidant plant-derived compounds) and is the best nutritional source of catechins, a group of flavonoids that preliminary research has shown to have a number of disease-fighting properties, including more potency than vitamin C or E in limiting oxidative damage to cells. Additional benefits of regularly drinking green tea include reduced blood pressure and reduced risk of heart disease.

Because it is picked early in the growing season and carefully processed to limit oxidation, Dao Ren has significantly more antioxidants than more mature green teas. It comes exclusively from the famous Dao Ren Peak in the Zhejiang Province of China and is named for the Dao (taoist) priests who meditated on the mountain in ancient times. This tea was carefully cultivated for the priests themselves, but now it is shared with the world. Picked at the height of spring, Dao Ren is lightly fermented, just enough to capture both a floral and tannin character. It is a delight for both the tea connoisseur and the novice.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part Dao Ren green tea or other green tea of choice
- **0.5** part toasted coconut

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 2 minutes. Strain immediately. Re-steep two or three more times for 1 to 2 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 tablespoons tea and 3 cups cold water in a lidded jar. Shake. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Strain and enjoy. You can add a little lime zest and sugar for a truly delicious tea.

TASTE: light, floral green tea with toasted coconut

HERBAL ACTION: energizing

SYSTEM AFFECTED: nervous

Seasonal Work

Years of observing and cultivating a relationship with the seasonal shifts of my home has transformed how I see my circumstances. I have allowed myself to let go of a tremendous amount of self-judgment and fear associated with my fluctuating work ethic, interests, and mood. For example, I know that during the heat of the summer, I start to feel drained and exhausted. I have trouble focusing and get down on myself for not being as productive as I would like. Depression rises out of the discord between how I feel and what I think I should be doing. On those hot summer days, when I have 10 or 12 hours of farmwork to do and my body is begging me to relax, I need to step back and listen.

I have learned to manage my work and emotions based on the cyclical patterns I experience each season. In the short term, I may not be as productive as other people in my profession, but I also have a feeling that I will be able to continue to do good work for many more decades if I pace myself and treat myself with the respect I deserve. During the summer, I give myself more breathing room to spend time engaging directly with nature and work on projects at the pace at which my body feels comfortable. I try to evaluate which projects are worth working on when I feel drained and try to prioritize projects that make me feel good and balanced. Summer is really a time to cherish quality time with family and friends and slow down to experience the excitement of the natural world around you.

Working with the seasons makes me feel like I am functioning as part of a connected, intuitive system. It feels healthy to be in a direct conversation with the place that I live. The work I do takes on more

meaning when I know that I am supporting a larger complex ecological system and, in turn, that system supports me.



CHILLAXIN

Chillaxin is a fun blend that I pretty much only make in the summer. In Hawaii and throughout Polynesia, where kava is from, kava is exclusively extracted in cool water. I think it is important to honor the way a medicinal herb has been used in the places where it is native, so I always extract kava by leaving it in cold water in the refrigerator. Kava root is a really good therapy for tense skeletal muscles. If you hold anxiety in your muscles, kava can help loosen you up.

Kava has a taste and mouthfeel that can be uncomfortable for some drinkers. Basically, it slightly numbs the tongue and lips, though the sensation lasts for only a few minutes after drinking a cup.

The kava in Chillaxin is blended with other herbs to dilute the flavor and sensation and provide a mellow kava experience. Lemongrass, when steeped in cool water, tastes almost sweet and floral. Oats are highly nourishing to the nervous system and support relaxation. For the dried berries, I prefer a mixture of rose hips and blackberries, which provide extra vitamins, a little sweetness, and a tartness that balances the blend.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part kava root
- **1** part lemongrass
- **1** part milky oat tops
- **1** part dried berries of choice
- **0.75** part dried or grated fresh ginger
- **0.25** part licorice root
- **0.25** part rosemary

STEEPING

Combine 2 tablespoons tea and 3 cups cold water in a lidded jar. Shake. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours, shaking whenever you think about it. Strain and enjoy any time after 4 hours. I usually just leave this tea in the refrigerator overnight for a full extraction.

TASTE: sweet, fruity, citrus, earthy

HERBAL ACTION: calming

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: musculoskeletal, nervous

Note: Kava is not recommended for use during pregnancy or nursing, or if you have acute liver disease.

HERB SPOTLIGHT

KAVA

Kava is a native root to Polynesia. Pacific Islanders have been using kava for centuries. The root is typically harvested and used fresh in a cold infusion. Traditional cups of kava resemble muddy water that quickly numb the tissues in your mouth. The aerial portions of the plant are toxic. Kava has a bad reputation on the Internet due to lack of education and awareness about the plant. Though Pacific Islanders never use any of the aerial parts of the plant for medicine, only the root, many studies done on kava have been done with the whole plant.

I have heard stories of people in Hawaii and Polynesia excessively indulging in cups of strong kava — over 20 cups in an evening — so that their muscles become so relaxed they can hardly walk or talk. However, small amounts of kava can be great for calming anxious and tense muscles without diminishing cognition.

Drinking straight kava at a kava bar is like drinking mouth-numbing mud. It doesn't taste great, but it has been used for many centuries throughout the Pacific Islands for relaxation.





CUCUMBER-JALAPEÑO BREEZE

This refreshing, spicy tea provides a fun way to use herbs and spices that you can easily grow in a summer garden. The classic Mexican blend of citrus, cilantro, and spicy peppers is combined with green tea for energy, chopped cucumber to cool inflamed tissues, fresh mint for a refreshing accent, and honey to sweeten the deal. It's one of the best drinks on a hot day, ever!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 teaspoon green tea
- 1 medium cucumber, chopped
- 1 sliced lime
- ¼ jalapeño, sliced
- A few sprigs cilantro
- A few sprigs fresh mint
- 1 tablespoon honey

STEEPING

Combine all ingredients and 4 cups cold water in a lidded jar. Refrigerate overnight.

TASTE: a dazzling palate pleaser — fresh jalapeño, cucumber, lime, and cilantro pair beautifully with a grassy green tea

HERBAL ACTIONS: hydrating, cooling

SYSTEM AFFECTED: cardiovascular



NERVINE COLD BREW

When the heat of summer begins to fray the edges of your nerves, try this delicious cold brew. I often have trouble sleeping in hot weather — my body feels restless and annoyed when I lie down for bed. If I prepare a liter or two of Nervine Cold Brew early in the day, it will be ready to drink by bedtime. Each of the herbs in this blend are cooling and refreshing to your nervous system, allowing for quiet relaxation at bedtime.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part raspberry leaf
- **1** part nettle leaf
- **1** part mint
- **0.5** part skullcap
- **0.5** part rose petals
- **0.5** part chamomile

STEEPING

Combine 2 tablespoons tea and 3 cups water in a lidded jar. Place in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: a base of leafy, herbaceous-tasting herbs, paired with the showy aromatic experience of rose, chamomile, and mint

HERBAL ACTIONS: nutritive, calming

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tissues, nervous



SUMMER CHILL

Summer Chill has a deep summer vibe. Tangy hibiscus and lemongrass give the blend a slightly tropical taste, complemented by sweet linden, Ceylon cinnamon, and dried berries. As an herbal iced tea, it doesn't really get any better than this. This tea will help you feel hydrated and refreshed on a hot summer day and is delicious hot or cold.



INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts hibiscus
- 2 parts lemongrass
- 2 parts dried berries
- 1 part linden
- 1 part Ceylon cinnamon

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 4 to 8 minutes.

ICED TEA: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 4 to 8 minutes, then chill.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 tablespoons tea and 3 cups water in a lidded jar. Place in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: sweet-and-sour herbs and berries accented by aromatic cinnamon and lemongrass

HERBAL ACTIONS: hydrating, cooling

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tonic



REVIVE

Summer can be brutal with piercing sun and heat, and it's nice to have a refreshing minty tea that will get you rehydrated and back into a cooler state of mind. Revive is both decadent and thirst quenching. Mints are great for cooling us off in the summer, especially when they are made into iced teas. This one is ever so slightly sweet to satisfy your sweet tooth. If you live in a really dry - climate, consider adding moistening herbs such as fennel and marshmallow root.

Make this tea as a hot or cold infusion and store it in the fridge.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts honeybush
- 1 part spearmint
- 1 part peppermint
- 1 part fennel or 0.5 part marshmallow root (optional)
- 1 vanilla bean per pound of blended tea
- 0.25 part lemon zest or juice plus zest of 1 small fresh lemon per cup

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 4 to 8 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 tablespoons tea and 3 cups water in a lidded jar. Place in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: soothing cool mints, fresh lemon, and sweet, tangy honeybush, with uplifting addition vanilla

HERBAL ACTIONS: hydrating, cooling

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tonic



SHISO ICED TEA

Shiso Iced Tea is absolutely marvelous and to most people tastes exotic and spicy, like basil and anise in one. Shiso is easy to grow in a summer garden, which is ideal since it is hard to source as a dried herb. It is a stunning herb that comes in several types: purple, green, and variegated. (I prefer the taste and look of the variegated type.) It has a refreshing anise flavor that complements the malty Assam tea and cooling mint. This tea can be made hot or as a cold infusion and stored in the fridge.

INGREDIENTS

- 2.5 parts Assam tea
- 1 part shiso (dried or fresh)
- 0.75 part mint
- 0.25 part licorice root
- 1 drop lemon essential oil or pinch of fresh lemon zest per cup

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 4 to 8 minutes. Add the lemon oil or zest.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 tablespoons tea, 4 cups water, and lemon oil or zest in a lidded jar. Place in refrigerator for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: slightly sweet and malty, with an aniselike flavor, aromatic mint, and a pop of fresh, revitalizing citrus

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, refreshing

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, digestive, immune



BLACK BEAUTY

Mint and rose do not instinctively pair well together, as their fragrances compete for your attention. But in small amounts, rose beautifully accents the grassy flavor of mint and mellows its sharpness. I make a lot of teas with both rose and mint because they surprise your senses in a fun and enjoyable way. Typically, rose is combined with spices such as cardamom and cinnamon, but do not be afraid to use rose to subtly enhance or draw out the perfumy qualities in other herbs. In the fall, Black Beauty also makes a great hot tea.



INGREDIENTS

- **1** part black tea
- **1** part fresh or dried mint
- **0.5** part rose petals

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 4 to 8 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 tablespoons tea and 4 cups water in a lidded jar. Place in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: a base of malty black tea, with sweet mints and floral rose

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, uplifting

SYSTEM AFFECTED: nervous



ICED CHAI

Variations on iced chai are really fun and delicious in summer. All types of black tea will work, but I strongly recommend formosa black tea from Taiwan if you have access to it. Formosa black teas are known for being smooth, perfumy, and a little fruity. Fresh ginger adds a bright, almost citrusy freshness, but you can reduce the amount of ginger if you do not want the tea to make you sweat. As an iced tea, this blend is soothing and sweet, almost like dessert.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts grated fresh ginger
- 1 part fennel
- 1 part cinnamon
- 0.5 part cardamom
- 0.25 part nutmeg
- 0.25 part licorice root
- Honey or sugar
- Black tea

TO MAKE THE CONCENTRATE

Combine 5 cups water and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup spice blend in a lidded saucepan. Simmer over low heat for a minimum of 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and add 2 tablespoons honey or sugar. Cool the concentrate in an ice bath or in the refrigerator. Once cool, add 4 tablespoons black tea and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

To Make a cup of iced chai

Combine 1 cup strained chai concentrate and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup milk. Pour over ice.

TASTE: sweet and spicy

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, immune boosting

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tonic



ICED CHOCO-CHAI

This beautiful tea is simple yet complex. Roasted cacao chaff along with a mellow combination of spices creates an energizing, comforting, and palate-pleasing cold infusion. Try it as a sweet treat after a meal!

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts ginger
- 2.5 parts cinnamon
- 2.5 parts fennel
- 2.5 parts cardamom
- 2 parts roasted cacao skins (chaff)
- 2 parts black tea (optional)
- 1.5 parts chaga mushrooms
- 0.5 part black pepper

STEEPING

Combine 2 tablespoons tea and 4 cups water in a lidded jar. For extra sweetness, add a teaspoon of honey. Place in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: smooth roasted cacao chaff combined with a bouquet of sweet and spicy

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, immune supportive, digestive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, digestive, immune

FALL

AS THE LAST SULTRY BREATHS OF SUMMER GIVE WAY TO THE COOL, chilly whispers of fall, our focus, energy, and intentions slowly shift inward. Perhaps you feel relief as you sense a moist chill in the air after a hot, dry summer. Crisp, cold mornings force muscle contractions and add a little speed to your glide as you use your own energy reserves to stay warm.



Organizing the gardening tools, harvesting fall crops, preserving foods, and collecting seeds for next year are all part of our final goodbye to the growing season. I love fall because it offers us the breathing room to tidy up our external world, celebrate and show our gratitude for a successful harvest season, and

transition into a period of rest and restoration. After spending a whole summer exploring the world around you, fall symbolizes a coming home, a return of focus to your inner self and your community. Take advantage of the energy of fall to help you assess where you are in your life and establish or reaffirm healthy values and relationships.

Once fall hits and the weather begins to change, we really start to notice the short days and can often feel constricted. This is totally normal and an important part of sensing the world around you. As a result, we are more inclined to seek out familial closeness as our mood becomes more fragile. We band together as the days get darker and colder to share stories, song, and food with our loved ones. Being part of a supportive community helps mediate the introspective work you will do during fall and winter.

Because temperamental fall weather can catch you off guard, make sure you wear layers and listen to your body. Cold and flu season start as early as October. The best way to stay healthy and take care of yourself is to use nutrition and herbal teas to provide your cells with the basic nutrients you need to stay in balance physically and emotionally. As summer's energy wanes, try to support digestion and metabolism by cooking with aromatic spices and seeking out local fall crops like collard greens, carrots, beets, kale, broccoli, apples, nuts, and seeds to keep fresh, vibrant foods in your diet.

In fall, I tend to focus on herbal tea blends that promote healthy thoughts and immunity. Brain tonics, nervines, and immune teas, many of which you'll find in [chapter 3](#), are the most important types of teas I drink during the fall. I tend to promote lots of brain tonics during fall because most people either go back to school, have kids who are going back to school, or have to establish renewed focus on their indoor work after summer vacations and reduced productivity at work.

The natural rhythms and cycles of the fall season tend to promote rest and sleep. Unfortunately, most of us cannot strictly devote our bodies to the restorative energetics of fall. So many of the teas in this section are formulated to keep you healthy and happy even as it gets harder and harder to stay focused and energized as darkness bookends short days. Green tea, tulsi, gotu kola,

rosemary, and ginseng are important herbs for the mind during fall. Black teas and oolong teas can help increase energy and improve digestion. Deeper flavors with a spicy component are important during both fall and winter. Spices are warming and improve digestion and immunity.

Now that the outward energy of spring and summer are behind us, fall is a time to become more intimately familiar with the flavors, fragrances, and medicinal characteristics of dried and preserved herbs. As our bodies experience greater stress, we should lean on herbs and spices to help create a bright, healthy inner life. The rich foods and teas of fall and winter are nutritionally dense with complex flavors for increasing energy and enjoyment of food and drink. As temperatures drop and we spend more time indoors, we need these savory spices and herbs to help insulate and stoke the fire within.



GENERAL FALL TONIC

Better get a jump on strengthening your immunity before cold and flu season. This tea is a daily tonic for your immune system but also provides a little liver and kidney support. As our metabolism slows down during fall and winter, it is a great idea to drink a daily immune tonic. I prefer general wellness tonics such as this one because they quickly and quietly restore subtle imbalances as they come up. I drink more specific immune-support teas only when I feel like I am really coming down with something.

Reishi and chaga, in addition to being anti-inflammatory, adaptogenic, and providing immune support, are very grounding. Astragalus is a great root to have in your daily life because it supports the body's general resistance to stress and disease and helps strengthen immunity. Dandelion and burdock support the liver and kidneys, which are the primary organs of toxin elimination. The spices in this blend provide digestive support, flavor, and resistance to infection.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts reishi mushrooms
- 3 parts dandelion root
- 3 parts burdock root
- 3 parts fennel
- 1.5 parts ginger
- 1 part chaga mushrooms
- 1 part cinnamon
- 1 part astragalus
- 1 part clove

STEEPING

Combine 3 tablespoons tea and 4 cups water in a lidded saucepan. Slowly bring to a simmer. Simmer for at least 30 minutes.

TASTE: smooth, light taste and fragrance

HERBAL ACTIONS: tonic, adaptogenic, digestive, immune supporting

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tonic for multiple organ systems



THE FALL (FALL REPOSE)

The Fall is a soothing blend designed to help restore and build energy reserves from the inside out. Chaga, astragalus, and reishi are gentle adaptogen herbs that help relieve stress, support the immune system, and slowly build up energy reserves. Roasted barley adds a satisfying and comforting sweet roasted flavor. Barley tea is beloved in Asia and is often drunk in the afternoon and evenings with meals. (If you are sensitive to gluten, try using kukicha twig tea or roasted buckwheat instead of roasted barley.) Aromatic spices add a warming quality to the tea and enrich the overall flavor.

INGREDIENTS

- **3** parts roasted barley
- **1** part chaga mushrooms
- **1** part astragalus
- **1** part reishi mushrooms
- **0.5** part cinnamon
- **0.5** part star anise
- **0.5** part burdock root

STEEPING

Combine 3 tablespoons tea and 4 cups water in a lidded saucepan. Slowly bring to a low simmer and continue to simmer for at least 10 minutes.

TASTE: roasted grain base with sweet herbs and spices

HERBAL ACTIONS: adaptogenic, immune supporting

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, immune

Roasting Your Own Barley

When I first started making The Fall, I was constantly trying to find Korean or Chinese organic roasted barley tea in bulk but without a lot of success, and the organic barley teas I did find were excruciatingly expensive. So I started making my own using store-bought organic barley. It's a tiny fraction of the price — and really easy. Just spread the barley on a sheet pan and roast at 350°F (180°C) for about 25 minutes. You will know it is done when you start to smell the rich, roasted fragrance and the barley grains turn a few shades darker in color.



MULLING SPICES

Mulling spices create a comforting aromatic blend that you can simmer in apple cider, hard cider, or wine, adding complexity and immune-boosting properties to some of our favorite cozy beverages during fall and winter. They are especially popular to serve at holiday parties and gatherings.

Serving hot cups of spiced hard cider and mulled wine has been part of community celebrations in Northern Europe for centuries. People rarely need an excuse to gather around cups of hot, spicy libations, as they bring people together during the dark, cold months of the year.

The volatile essential oils in cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and cardamom are antimicrobial, which partly accounts for their aid in combating colds and flus. They also help build internal heat and support healthy digestion. In late fall and winter, when a diversity of fresh foods becomes limited, mulling spices infused into hot cider or wine help keep the body healthy.

This recipe will spice 6 to 8 cups of cider or wine. Add fresh ginger and orange slices for more spice and tang. For dry wines and hard cider, you'll probably want to add honey as well.



INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons anise seeds or star anise
- 1 teaspoon whole or slightly crushed clove
- 1 teaspoon cardamom
- 1 teaspoon orange zest or zest from 1 fresh medium orange
- 1 teaspoon astragalus
- 1 teaspoon rose hips
- ½ crushed or zested seed of nutmeg
- ¼ vanilla bean or ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

MULLING INSTRUCTIONS

Combine 6 to 8 cups cold cider or wine and spices in a lidded saucepan. Slowly heat until steaming, but do not boil. Let the herbs extract in the liquid for 20 minutes. Keep it on the stove on the lowest setting so that it can be served hot, and strain the liquid as you pour each cup. Taste the cider before serving. If using wine or hard cider, add 1 teaspoon honey to each cup before serving.

TASTE: comforting scents and flavors of cinnamon, cardamom, and clove, accented by citrus and real vanilla bean

HERBAL ACTIONS: digestive, immune boosting

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: digestive, immune



PEACE TEA

This tea promotes calm at the end of a busy fall day, bringing peace and homeostasis back to your nervous system. This blend is a little cooling, so if you already feel deeply chilled, add extra fresh ginger.

Nettle is extremely nutritious, and catnip and skullcap calm the nerves but also have a lot of vitamins and minerals. You might not notice their effects after just one dose, but if you become good friends with them, they will hold your hand through the good and bad times. I find skullcap to be an excellent remedy for racing thoughts, helping me quiet my mind so I can sleep or focus on the present moment. It can also break addictions and relieve nervous tension (especially tension arising from obsessive thoughts). Catnip is calming like mint but has more pronounced relaxing properties, making it common in insomnia blends.

Rose petals and hips together add uplifting floral and fruity tones. Rose hips are high in vitamin C and have pronounced anti-inflammatory properties. Hibiscus is tangy and helps reduce blood pressure. Chamomile can help relieve mental tension, irritability, and headaches caused by the heat of anger or frustration.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 part skullcap
- 1 part catnip
- 1 part nettle leaf
- 1 part raspberry leaf
- 1 part rose petals
- 0.5 part chamomile
- 0.5 part rose hips
- 0.5 part hibiscus
- 1 vanilla bean per pound of blended tea
- Small piece of fresh ginger, grated, per cup

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 8 to 10 minutes.

COLD INFUSION: Combine 2 cups cold water and 1 to 2 tablespoons tea in a lidded jar. Shake the jar to make sure all the tea is saturated. Place in the refrigerator or a cool place for at least 2 hours.

TASTE: grassy with floral and sweet tangy notes

HERBAL ACTIONS: relaxing, nutritive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, general tissues



BRAIN TONIC

Brain Tonic will lift your spirits, increase energy and immunity, and keep you motivated to make it through the cool, dark days of late fall. This daily tea strengthens your resolve to appreciate where you are in your life and make the most of what nature throws at you, especially as fall rains and winds return.

Strong, spicy herbs, such as cardamom and cinnamon, are essential for keeping your body upbeat, invigorated, and motivated to be a joyful presence in the world. Drinking spicy teas helps the body tackle viruses that threaten to overcome us during fall and winter. They also play positive roles in digestion. Eleuthero is an adaptogenic herb that I like in fall because it helps increase my stamina at a time when I feel tired and sluggish. Gotu kola is a tremendous memory-supporting herb. Rosemary is warming and traditionally considered important for memory. Peppery tulsi supports memory and focus but also aids in stress management, immunity, and digestion. Mint is incorporated into the blend for its balancing properties.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 parts tulsi
- 2 parts mint
- 1 part eleuthero (Siberian ginseng)
- 1 part gotu kola
- 1 part rosemary
- 1 part cardamom
- 1 part cinnamon

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: highlights of aromatic spices, mint, and rosemary

HERBAL ACTION: brain tonic

SYSTEM AFFECTED: nervous



GOLDEN GARDEN

As the days get shorter, it's nice to have a few delicious caffeinated tea blends to help wake up your mind while you are working. The best way to drink Golden Garden is in hot or steamed milk with a touch of honey. Creamy milk tends to mute the bitter taste of lavender on the tongue and enhances the sweetness of cardamom. Vanilla bean and cardamom complement the malty tones in the black tea while the lavender adds a lovely floral contrast.

A smooth black or cooked puerh tea that is malty without much bitterness is ideal for this blend. These characteristics pair well with crushed cardamom pods and lavender blossoms. If you choose to use a cooked puerh (called "red" tea because it is fermented to a point between green and black tea), try to find one that is a little aged. Puerh teas are often aged for decades, and the older cooked puerh teas often have a stronger developed flavor without the bitterness of black teas.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 parts black tea
- 1 part cardamom
- 1 part lavender blossoms
- 1 vanilla bean per pound of blended tea

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot milk over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 4 to 6 minutes. Strain. Add 1 teaspoon honey.

TASTE: malty black tea enhanced by spicy cardamom, floral lavender, and uplifting vanilla bean

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, uplifting, digestive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, digestive

A Cautionary Tale

Before I really knew what herbalism was, I lived with two friends in a house that had no electricity or insulation. It was cold, dark, and damp almost every day from October through March, but the space was bright with love and companionship, with candlelight and a big friendly dog.

Having been a cook for a couple of years, I started experimenting with the level of spices in the foods that I ate and primarily strived to control the intensity of aromatic flavors just enough to warm my body without making me too sweaty. My hope was that I could use spices and herbs to keep my body consistently warm.

I distinctly remember the day my roommate Beatrix came home with a recipe for warming peanut butter balls. They had rhodiola, roasted peanut butter, cacao nibs, sesame oil, honey, cinnamon, and ginger as their primary ingredients. They were the energetic equivalent of the sun itself.

We started making many iterations of these little sun replacements sometime in late fall. I was going along pretty well, happy to have warm fingers and toes each day, when I realized after about six weeks of eating these rhodiola balls that I was developing pretty intense rosacea. My skin appeared flushed and felt hot all the time. My face basically looked sunburnt in the middle of a particularly cold, wet Pacific Northwest winter. I also felt anxious and overstimulated. The combination of rhodiola with aromatic spices was stoking my inner hearth far too dramatically. Up to that point I hadn't realized how drastically basic herbs and spices could alter a person's homeostasis. I had to spend several weeks tuning down the rhodiola balls and spent a lot more time outside exercising, which helped clear some of the heat.

As a result of this experience, I developed a much deeper respect for herbs and spices and how they influence my body. I also realized I needed to live in an environment that was more supportive to my physical needs. Relying exclusively on herbs and spices to mediate the stress of living conditions created unexpected imbalances. Maintaining health is really about knowing your natural boundaries and comfort zones and being able to make informed choices about your living environment. We do not often get to choose our socioeconomic starting place in life, but we can all learn to create personal and social habits that become strong supportive sanctuaries. Herbs and herbal teas are just one aspect of building a living sanctuary for yourself.



KUKICHA GOLD

This tea feels like a hearth. Delicately roasted kukicha twig tea is enveloped in a warming blend of aromatic spices to encourage a fierce, warm core. I love this tea in fall when the angle of the sun pierces my eyes but its heat hardly penetrates my skin. As the sun moves farther away, we begin to rely on our own movement and warming aromatic herbs, like clove and cinnamon, to maintain a sense of comfort and warmth.

No “natural flavorings” are used in this orange-spice blend, so your body receives the full therapeutic benefits of the herbs themselves. Cinnamon, clove, orange peel, cardamom, and allspice have important aromatic essential oils that are warming and antimicrobial. Drinking Kukicha Gold is a delicious and audacious way to feel invigorated and protect your body from infections.



INGREDIENTS

- **10** parts kukicha twig tea
- **5** parts cinnamon
- **3** parts orange peel
- **3** parts codonopsis
- **3** parts cardamom
- **2** parts clove
- **1** part allspice
- **1** part licorice root

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water or milk over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: roasted base with accents of orange spice

HERBAL ACTIONS: digestive, warming

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: digestive, circulatory



DELIGHT

Delight tea is a great homage to the memory of spring and summer. This tea reminds us that even as the weather changes and the outside world suddenly seems dull, we were smart, thought ahead, and preserved these herbs to brighten our mood and outlook in fall and winter. It is a mélange of summer past on a base of rich, roasted cacao skins that plants us squarely in the present. Imagine roots descending from your feet and firmly grounding you, but your head is turned, longing for the past . . . that is what this tea is about.

INGREDIENTS

- **3** parts honeybush
- **3** parts cacao skins (chaff)
- **1** part nettle leaf
- **1** part peppermint
- **0.5** part jasmine blossoms (or 1 drop jasmine essential oil)
- **1** vanilla bean per pound of blended tea

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: sweet and minty base with an aroma of roasted chocolate, vanilla, and jasmine

HERBAL ACTIONS: nutritive, uplifting

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, general tonic

HERB SPOTLIGHT

HONEYBUSH

Honeybush, also referred to as “red tea,” is sometimes confused with rooibos. Common names in South Africa include bush tea, bergtee, and bossietee. Honeybush is endemic to South Africa and normally grows in the coastal areas of the Western and Eastern Cape provinces from Darling to Port Elisabeth. Wild populations are found mostly around mountain peaks, perennial streams, marshy areas, shale bands, and wet southern slopes. The tea is harvested and fermented to bring out the reddish color and sweet, tangy flavor.

Honeybush does not contain caffeine. Traditionally, the tea is prepared by boiling 2 to 3 tablespoons per quart of water for 20 minutes. It is often consumed with milk and sugar, but neither is necessary to get a sense of its honeylike flavor. Traditional medicinal uses include easing constipation and reducing water retention, and it can be used to treat coughs, due to its piniton content. Piniton is an expectorant sometimes used to make cough syrup and is being studied for its reputation to lower blood sugar levels. The herb also contains isoflavones and coumestans, which are considered phytoestrogens and may help ease menopausal symptoms. A cup a day of mineral-rich honeybush is very nourishing.





HONEYBUSH SPICE

Honeybush Spice is a great choice when you are in the mood for a decaf spicy chai tea without the milk and sugar. Honeybush makes a delicious base that is slightly sweet and tangy, and the complexity of the honeybush gets amplified the longer you steep it. Ginger and anise aid in digestion and circulation. Cinnamon and cardamom are also warming herbs, but, in addition, they support the immune system and have strong antimicrobial properties that strengthen your body against illness. Orange zest and vanilla bean are added for their uplifting properties.



INGREDIENTS

- 4 parts honeybush
- 3 parts cinnamon
- 1.5 parts ginger
- 1.5 parts star anise
- 1.5 parts cardamom
- 1 part clove
- 1 part orange zest
- 0.35 part licorice root
- 1 vanilla bean per pound of blended tea (optional)

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes. For a stronger cup, simmer 1 tablespoon tea in 2 cups water in a lidded saucepan for 10 minutes.

TASTE: similar to chai but slightly less spicy

HERBAL ACTIONS: warming, antimicrobial

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: digestive, immune



LIFT THE GREY

Sometimes it is nice to have a tea that can help you rise above the gray, whether actual clouds or mental fog. The rich, citrus tones of lemongrass and bergamot in this blend provide an almost immediate clarifying uplift. Clove's rich, aromatic tones increase circulation while the rose and vanilla bean create a lovely, comforting accent. Let your mind perk up and deep satisfaction wash over you as you smell and sip this tea.

This tea is so much about aromatherapy. Warm floral, citrus, and clove tones are comforting and help transform sluggishness into movement and clarity.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** part Earl Grey tea
- **0.5** part lemongrass
- **0.25** part rose petals
- **0.2** part clove
- **1** vanilla bean per pound of blended tea

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot milk or water over 1 to 2 teaspoons tea. Steep for 4 to 7 minutes. Add a touch of honey.

TASTE: smooth black tea coupled with uplifting aromatics of bergamot orange, lemongrass, and rose; lingering flavor of warm, deep, sensual cloves

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, uplifting

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, immune



VIRA PROTECT

If you have young kids, and your kids know other kids, or you spend time around lots of other people, then you might just want to have this little gem on hand starting in the fall. Wonderfully antibacterial and antiviral, this tea will help mediate a debilitating infection. Most of us have extremely full schedules, and it is easy to get run down. Drink this tea right away when you feel under the weather to help your body resist infections during the cold and flu season.

INGREDIENTS

- 6 parts elderberry
- 6 parts ginger
- 5 parts mint
- 3 parts tulsi
- 3 parts anise seeds or clove
- 2 parts orange zest
- 1.5 parts yarrow
- 1 part licorice root

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: slightly bittersweet and spicy with accents of mint and citrus

HERBAL ACTION: immune supportive

SYSTEM AFFECTED: immune

WINTER

WINTER IS OUR COLDEST SEASON AND SHOULD BE A TIME of physical and mental restoration. But because we have a tendency to celebrate a long holiday season, we don't always get the relaxation we need until winter has firmly set in. In our culture, our minds and bodies are exceptionally stimulated for much of the darkest period of the year, which is counterintuitive to the way we actually feel and sense the world.



Generally, once most plants have completed their life cycles or gone to sleep in the late fall, we, too, should take a load off. Most people would benefit from taking time in winter to restore their bodies and cultivate inner peace. The stillness or darkness of winter helps focus our energy inward, and this can be a really good thing for cultivating a resilient heart and mind. Instead of dreading

winter weather, try framing winter as part of a natural cycle that slows you down just enough to provide an opportunity for emotional and spiritual growth.

Remind yourself that winter is a time when plants rest and a chance for you to reflect on parts of yourself that are vulnerable. If your body is telling you to retreat from external stress, or if you feel a resistance to forcing major physical changes in your life, then it is best to listen to what your body is telling you. Wait until you have the momentum of spring to start a new project or make a move. There is absolutely no shame in listening to your body and practicing self-care. Being true to yourself creates patterns of health and happiness.

Winter also offers quiet sanctuary to begin envisioning the future. With each successive month, you will start to feel the energy associated with the lengthening days. By midwinter our bodies, too, begin to make an energetic shift. You may notice that you sleep a little less and have a natural tendency to start imagining the upcoming seasons. Where I live, as soon as I notice the subtle shifts in the landscape that reflect the hospitality of spring, I begin to feel inflated with ideas. When you feel the pull, start making plans and dedicate a little time each day to creating a vision for the coming seasons. Do you want to start a garden in your backyard? Do you have a networking idea that could benefit your community? Is there a business, music, or art project that has been stewing inside you for ages?

I feel intense grounding energy in winter, and I create teas to align myself with that energy. To help you stay healthy, optimistic, and centered during winter, most of the teas included here are strong, spicy, and rich. Dark, earthy black teas are combined with aromatic spices and the occasional rosy nudge to remind us that spring is just around the corner.



WINTER SOLSTICE TEA

Winter solstice marks the moment when the contracting energy of summer and fall meets the expansive energy of winter and spring. We celebrate the transition by honoring both sides of the pendulum. Around the solstice we fill our homes with the wonderful scents of cedar, pine, cypress, and fir to honor the protective energy of evergreens, as they offer us respite from both summer and winter weather.

The cedar in this tea will help ground you and energize your senses. Chaga, elderberry, and clove contribute earthy, fruity, and spicy flavors, respectively. Honeybush is a great base, adding much-needed vitamins and minerals. This tea doubles as an immune tonic. Please enjoy it as you reflect on the last year, and let the herbs help transform you into an agent of love and compassion!



INGREDIENTS

- 4 parts honeybush
- 2 parts elderberry
- 1 part cedar tips
- 1 part chaga mushrooms
- 0.5 part clove

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: sweet honeybush base accented by earthy chaga, evergreen foliage, fruity elderberry, and spicy cloves

HERBAL ACTIONS: nutritive, immune supportive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general winter tonic



MEMORIA

In memory of the other side of year, Memoria evokes the rich complexity of our ephemeral summer season. Fruity and floral in flavor, with citrus notes from the lemongrass for balance and brightness, Memoria is delicious and wonderfully antioxidant.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts rose hips
- 2 parts honeybush
- 2 parts elderberry
- 1.5 parts rose petals
- 1 part calendula flowers
- 1 part lavender blossoms
- 1 part lemongrass

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: a stunning combination of sweet, tangy, fruity, floral, and citrus

HERBAL ACTIONS: nutritive, uplifting, hydrating

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tonic



WINTER COMFORT

This is a great tea for December. I highly recommend some introspective time on the day of the solstice with a hot cup of Winter Comfort. This blend is somewhat evocative of holiday spice blends but also displays some deep, earthy, evergreen energy.

The slightly aromatic Douglas fir needles have a mild citrus flavor and create the red hue of this tea. Doug fir is a good source of vitamin C and is just so darn delicious. You can harvest Douglas fir needles yourself if you have a tree in your yard. The young spring tips are best for cooking and make a slightly sweeter tea, but the mature foliage can still be harvested after a windstorm when big limbs fall. Use the needles fresh or remove them from the stem and dry them for later. If you dry the needles in a dehydrator, you'll enjoy the vivid aroma of Christmas for several days. Make sure your dehydrator is on the lowest heat setting.

Fenugreek provides the maplelike sweetness in this blend. In Western herbalism, it is best known for its use as a galactagogue herb, supporting nursing mothers. With its slightly bittersweet flavor, fenugreek is more commonly used as a spice in many Indian curry dishes. It also helps decrease digestive complaints. Immune-boosting cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, and nutmeg are part pleasure, part therapy.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts Douglas fir tips
- 2 parts fenugreek seeds
- 1 part chaga mushrooms
- 1 part cinnamon
- 1 part cardamom
- 1 part ginger
- 0.5 part nutmeg

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: comforting blend of winter spices and fresh evergreen foliage

HERBAL ACTIONS: uplifting, immune supportive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general winter tonic



REJUVENATE

I hope you will learn to love this tea, because it's worth it! If you drink Rejuvenate on a regular basis, its adaptogenic herbs will help restore and protect your body from the damaging effects of stress. Reishi and chaga mushrooms, astragalus, codonopsis, rhodiola, and ashwagandha support the nervous system, immunity, and the musculoskeletal system. Codonopsis and rhodiola are energizing, so if you suffer from chronic tiredness associated with stress, try experimenting with these herbs rather than drinking caffeine.

Because we often eat rich foods and are less active during winter, we develop deficiencies in the liver and kidneys. Dandelion and burdock roots work well together to support your liver and kidneys, respectively. They are considered cooling herbs, so if you already feel cool or notice your digestion is slow, add some fresh ginger or cinnamon to help create more of a warming effect. One added cosmetic benefit of having healthy functioning liver and kidneys is that your skin looks and feels much clearer.

This tea is helpful for people with environmental stress, but also for people who suffer from PTSD, head trauma, and chronic fatigue.

INGREDIENTS

- 5 parts burdock root
- 3 parts dandelion root
- 3 parts fenugreek seeds
- 2.5 parts ashwagandha (Indian ginseng)
- 2.5 parts codonopsis
- 2 parts chaga mushrooms
- 2 parts rhodiola
- 2 parts astragalus
- 2 parts cinnamon (optional)
- 1 part reishi mushrooms
- Fresh ginger, grated (optional)

STEEPING

Combine 3 tablespoons tea and 4 cups water in a lidded saucepan. Slowly bring to a simmer. Simmer for 20 to 60 minutes or longer. The longer you decoct the tea, the more potent the tea becomes and the more water is necessary for the simmer. If you do not initially like the strong, potent flavor, use more water to dilute and mellow it.

TASTE: earthy roots paired with aromatic spices

HERBAL ACTIONS: supports the whole body

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: general tonic



DEEP WELLNESS

I created Deep Wellness tea for those with cold symptoms that seem to linger. When I feel damp and experience the remnants of a cold, I love to drink this tea. I almost instantly feel a harmonizing effect in my lungs and sinuses.

Elderberry has been used for centuries to treat respiratory illnesses associated with colds, flus, and infections. It imparts a nice fruity flavor, which can be refreshing during the winter months when this tea will be indispensable. Elecampane — with actions that are expectorant, antifungal, antitussive, and warming — is able to clear congestion in the lungs and lower throat and is used to treat bronchitis and asthma. Eucalyptus is the main ingredient in many herbal chest rubs for kids and adults with deep chest colds. In tea form, it has a nice menthol character that helps clear mucus blockages. Its uplifting aroma also helps brighten the mood. Yerba santa is native to the mountains of the southern Cascades and Sierras and is typically used for respiratory health. I adore its rich, aromatic resins.

For supporting herbs, I included licorice for its sweet flavor and to soothe sore throats, and lemonbalm for its antiviral properties and nervous-system support. Spearmint is more for flavor and aromatics to help clear sinus congestion and remove excess heat if there is any. Slightly sweet, slippery elm is great for soothing inflamed tissues in the mouth and throat, especially if you have a cough.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 part elderberry
- 1 part elecampane root
- 1 part echinacea
- 1 part eucalyptus
- 1 part spearmint
- 1 part lemonbalm
- 0.5 part licorice root
- 0.5 part yerba santa
- 0.5 part slippery elm or marshmallow root

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: sweet and moistening with strong menthol aromatics and hints of berries and citrus

HERBAL ACTIONS: immune supportive, decongestant, demulcent

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: immune, respiratory



FIRE TEA

Smoky teas can be difficult for some people to enjoy. I try to balance the smoky aroma and taste by using them as accents rather than the driving taste of the blend. This tea is full of complexity, and I hope you are able to sit peacefully and embrace it with a sense of intrigue and fun. What does this tea remind you of? So many memories come to mind when I sip Fire Tea, especially around the solstice.

Lapsang souchong hails from the Wuyi Mountains in southeast China but is primarily exported to the West. The leaves for this tea are the last pickings from the tea plants for the season. Because they lack some of the luster and complexity of the earlier pickings, they are perfect for being smoked over pine needles. I adore lapsang souchong blended with other herbs. It creates smoky notes similar to a fine bourbon. I tend to love teas that are made with roasted or smoked herbs because they have warm energy.

Tulsi and gotu kola, often found together in my blends, support brain health and provide a wonderful mental boost. Tulsi also aids in digestion. The aromatics in peppermint dance together beautifully above the cup with the smoky tea. Licorice and goji add just enough sweetness to brighten the flavor so you can clearly taste all the respective parts as they register upon the palate.



INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts lapsang souchong
- 1 part tulsi
- 1 part peppermint
- 0.5 part gotu kola
- 0.5 part goji berries
- 0.5 part licorice root

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: wood smoke contrasted with sweet mints and licorice, plus the aromatic, peppery tulsi

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, nutritive, supports brain and memory

SYSTEM AFFECTED: nervous



LATE WINTER WOODSMAN TEA

This is a truly delicious blend inspired by darkness and memories of the light. Lapsang souchong is a black tea smoked over pine needles for a dark, distinctively smoky flavor. Kukicha is a roasted twig tea. The smoky and roasted flavors of lapsang and kukicha together signify the earthy aspects of winter and the necessity of fire and heat to stay warm.

Nettle nourishes the body and spirit and supports increased metabolic activity. Cedar tips are antimicrobial and grounding. Both bridge the seasons by being one of the earliest signs of spring. The uplifting flavors and fragrances of jasmine and vanilla promote creative inspiration and are incredibly beloved by humans. Jasmine oil is really expensive, but it adds incredibly mood-elevating and relaxing aromatherapy.



INGREDIENTS

- **1** part lapsang souchong
- **1** part nettle leaf
- **1** part kukicha twig tea
- **1** part cedar tips
- **0.5** part jasmine flowers (optional, mostly for color and subtle taste)
- A few drops of real jasmine essential oil per pound of blended tea

STEEPING

HOT INFUSION: Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes.

TASTE: a full, sensual experience of flavors and aromas — a rich, smoky, roasted base, with cedar and jasmine playfully dancing above the cup

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, immune supportive, uplifting, nutritive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, immune



KAHWA

This is a unique tea inspired by a Kashmiri tea traditionally made in a samovar, a metal urn with a spigot. In Kashmir, kahwa is usually served to guests after dinner, and saffron is often added for the most special guests.

I find green tea and cardamom to be a stellar combination. The rose, cinnamon, and almonds add a lot of depth and richness to this well-rounded tea.



INGREDIENTS

- 2 parts green tea
- 2 parts roasted almonds
- 1 part rose petals
- 1 part cardamom
- 0.5 part cinnamon
- 1 saffron thread per cup (optional)

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 10 minutes. Alternatively, simmer in a saucepan over low heat and add a little sugar to create a unique bittersweet taste.

TASTE: nutty, floral, spicy, and grassy

HERBAL ACTIONS: energizing, uplifting, digestive

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: nervous, digestive



TRAVELER'S TEA

If you are one of the many who do a lot of traveling during the holidays, I hope you keep this tea on hand as you head out via train, plane, or automobile. Traveler's Tea is loosely based on a traditional Bedouin tea made from black tea and Arabian Desert herbs, such as wild thyme and desert sage. The Bedouins use specific regional desert plants that are probably closer in flavor to bitter sagebrush than our delicate culinary varieties.

I deeply admire the historical and contemporary herbal practices of nomadic peoples around the world. It is hard for me to even begin to imagine the relationship these people have with the landscape. A family or clan has to fully engage with their place in order to provide nourishment, medicine, water, and safe shelter. Many nomadic peoples have distinct seasonal migratory patterns that form a complete loop each year.

The immune system is fully tested when we are traveling, and having Traveler's Tea in tow ensures safe and healthy passage from place to place. I designed this tea around common herbs and basic black tea that you already have in your kitchen or can get easily at the grocery store. Black tea will give you the endurance you need to get where you are going while the herbs are warming, antimicrobial, and antiviral. The licorice helps restore the nervous system.

INGREDIENTS

- **10** parts black tea
- **3** parts cinnamon
- **2** parts sage
- **2** parts thyme
- **2** parts winter savory
- **2** parts licorice root
- **2** parts rosemary

STEEPING

Pour 1.5 cups hot water over 1 tablespoon tea. Steep for 5 to 8 minutes.

TASTE: bold black tea with savory herbs and sweet licorice

HERBAL ACTIONS: immune supportive, energizing

SYSTEMS AFFECTED: immune, nervous

LIVING AMID YOUR MEDICINE



CHAPTER 6

STARTING AN HERB GARDEN

GROWING YOUR OWN HERBS FOR FOOD AND TEA builds a deeper connection with the place where you live and a more seamless partnership between you and your medicine. Like cooking or tea making, growing plants takes no formal training — just time, curiosity, and practice. Much of the work is about simply being attentive. When you get out and tend a garden you are giving yourself an opportunity to be the grand perceiving organism that you are. Fully perceiving nature helps you learn to think with your compassionate heart. You also develop a powerful sense that you can positively influence the resilience of your place.



No garden space is too small. Tiny window herb boxes are as important and valid as full backyards filled with luscious gardens. In cities, our spaces are often small and compact. Therefore, some herb gardens will be tiny and adapted to thrive with almost zero access to bare ground. I've grown many varieties of aromatic flowers and culinary herbs inside city apartments. For a few weeks each year, beautiful scents of jasmine and gardenia provided profound aromatherapy in my living room.

The act of gardening is imbued with health benefits that enhance the quality of the medicine you are producing. Plus, you can shake off cabin fever and invigorate your mind and body by experiencing weather directly on your skin and developing a strong feeling for how it influences what you grow. No matter the size and shape of your garden, it will provide you with fresh healing herbs, offer moments of quiet sanctuary, and teem with life.

What to Grow

An herb garden expresses beauty and allows you to create a personalized living sanctuary. You will choose plants that hold deep meaning in your life and work well in your body. When contemplating and planning an herb garden, listen to your body, grow plants that you love, and pay close attention to what you can realistically accomplish in a growing season. If you are just beginning your foray into gardening, you might want to focus on herbs that you already use often. Starting with herbs that you already have a kinship with is potent energetic medicine in itself and will ensure you create an engaging and manageable garden.

You'll also want to grow plants that thrive naturally where you live. The best gardens tend to be those that utilize mostly perennial plants and can thrive with or without constant attention and resource input. You will be surprised at how well some plants from different bioregions will grow, especially if you do a little research and start off by knowing the basic requirements of the particular species and then finding or creating an appropriate microclimate on your property. But it is also important to remember that your time is a resource, and hundreds of wonderful medicinal plants have chosen your bioregion as their ideal growing conditions. And in terms of medicine, for most common ailments you can usually find a plant that grows in your bioregion that has a similar herbal action to a plant from another bioregion.

It can take a long time to find the right balance between adventurous gardening with exotic species and growing stable, reliable herbs. Humans and plants migrate. It is natural to take plants with you as you move from place to place, especially medicinal and food plants. Which is why we have so many cosmopolitan medicinal plants that are adapted to a huge range of ecosystems. I think it is important to both respect and work with plants that are part of your

ancestry and also learn to work with plants that are specific to the current place you reside.

For each aromatic or flavorful plant you grow, you will learn which sensual aspects of a plant are responsible for their medicinal quality and figure out for yourself how to grow really valuable medicine. You'll also learn which plant parts are used for medicine and learn to curate your growing and tending techniques to accommodate whether you are growing a plant for its flowers, fruits, leaves, seeds, roots, or shoots. The beauty of growing medicinal plants is that you get to learn so much more about the plant than if you buy dried herbs from an herb shop or wholesaler.

Herbs Speak

I often find that the medicinal plants in my gardens seem to speak to me directly. If I start to feel a cold coming on in early spring, I would usually reach for my formulated Wellness Tea blend, but if I walk past my garden and see hyssop, bee balm, and thyme looking quite spritely, I am suddenly reminded that I have incredible fresh medicine at my disposal. I start listening to each plant and harvesting specific herbs for a fresh tea. Feeling a little sick also reminds me to stop what I am doing and begin planning and preparing a whole meal with medicinal plants that will nourish me back to health.

Herbs will begin to speak to you in nuanced ways the more you experiment and learn to understand the energetic tone and subtle effects each plant has on your body. You will develop an interesting system for using the plants you are most familiar with.

As we live among our medicine we see opportunity for health and healing everywhere. We have the potential to surround ourselves with living medicine that we can include in our daily tea and meals, letting us feel like a part of a profound medicinal ecosystem.

Garden Design

When deciding what to plant and where, the biggest time and labor saver is starting off with a plan that considers your climate and natural landscape features. It is really quite easy to develop a landscape plan that looks naturally pretty and complements your home without spending lots of money on professional garden designers. One of the most fulfilling aspects of designing and implementing your own garden is doing a lot of physical and intellectual work. This work will enable you to better understand your property and be better equipped to fix and change parts of your garden over time. The trial and error that naturally accompanies any new project helps teach you how things work. Plus, when you garden with plants that you have chosen and planted yourself, you will be more excited to get out into the garden and spend time with your plants.



Pick Your Style

The size and shape of your garden will depend on your access to space, the amount of time you have to garden, and your personal needs. The look and feel of your garden will be unique to your sensibilities.

I recently planted an herb garden for a friend that was supposed to be highly organized with distinct linear edges where one type of herb met another. I was

quite frank with my friend from the get-go that as the garden grows, a lot of work will have to be done to maintain the clean edges. Halfway through the first season, I stopped by the garden a number of times and realized it was turning into a wild garden, much different than my friend had wanted. Because of time and energy constraints, he was not able to tend his garden regularly enough to keep the plants from taking advantage of the freedom they were given. Perfectly manicured gardens take a lot of work. Allowing yourself the flexibility to keep the structure loose is often the better route if you are very busy — especially because a tightly filled-in wild garden often leaves little room for weeds to get a foothold.

Doing a little research into garden styles can help you discover what you like. Organized chaos is probably the most typical way home gardeners approach herb gardening. My seed gardens are always really dense and wild. I try to organize the different herbs so that the overall look is full and there are a few focal points throughout the season. Planting many different species together in relatively dense garden beds increases the diversity and density of the pollinators, too. On any given summer day, I can witness dozens of different insect species crawling, climbing, bumblng, and flying from flower to flower.

On the other hand, for ease of harvesting I also plant long, straight rows of slightly intermixed herbs. In a backyard herb garden, it might be fun for you to landscape with perennial herbs that make up your pollinator gardens and build raised beds where you grow more solid patches of individual herbs for tea. Let your creativity flow when it comes to your gardens and do not be afraid to screw up. Medicinal herbs are a lot easier to grow than most vegetables and require quite a bit less maintenance.

Planting groups of herbs together that all share some of the same needs, such as amount of water, nutrients, and access to sunlight, is probably the most natural way to organize your garden. Herbs like yarrow or oregano are self-sufficient and require little work on the part of the gardener to grow successfully year after year. Other herbs, like roses, have greater requirements for nutrients, water, and direct sunlight. Reading up about the ideal growing conditions for

your favorite herbs and finding areas that suit their needs can go a long way to a successful gardening experience.

I recommend using mostly perennial herbs or self-seeding annuals in your garden because these tend to be more resilient over time and don't require digging up the soil each spring. Perennial medicinal plants include herbs, shrubs, and trees — which is great, because creating layers of different kinds of plants will not only make your garden feel lush and beautiful year-round but will also produce a lot more medicine, mimicking a forest ecosystem. A sun-loving peach or linden tree can create a seasonal canopy that provides shade during the hot summer months for herbs like comfrey, mints, or English thyme. At the edge of the shade line, you can create nice hedges of berries and edible flowers, such as osmanthus, jasmine, or rose, that help create a little height and visual contour without obstructing the view across your landscape. The possibilities are truly endless.

Make a Sun and Contour Map

Late winter is the right time to start visualizing your garden plan and mapping out your space for the growing season. Take a walk around your potential garden space, and think about where the sun will be positioned for the majority of the growing season. Then create a map indicating sunny spots and shady spots. This will give you an idea of where to position your plants for summer.

Next, consider the contour of the space and denote any significant sloping on your sun map. Gardening on a hill is a lot different from gardening on a flat surface. And if your property slopes to the north, you will have a different microclimate than a property that slopes to the south or west. Also, soil on a slope is often more shallow than in flat areas and can easily erode if not properly terraced or planted with perennial shrubs and trees. Hillsides often require more watering. You can also mark with colored pencils any really wet, dry, or rocky areas on your map to begin to delineate different ecotypes or ecozones on your land, and research plants that might do well in such areas.

Garden Design Tips

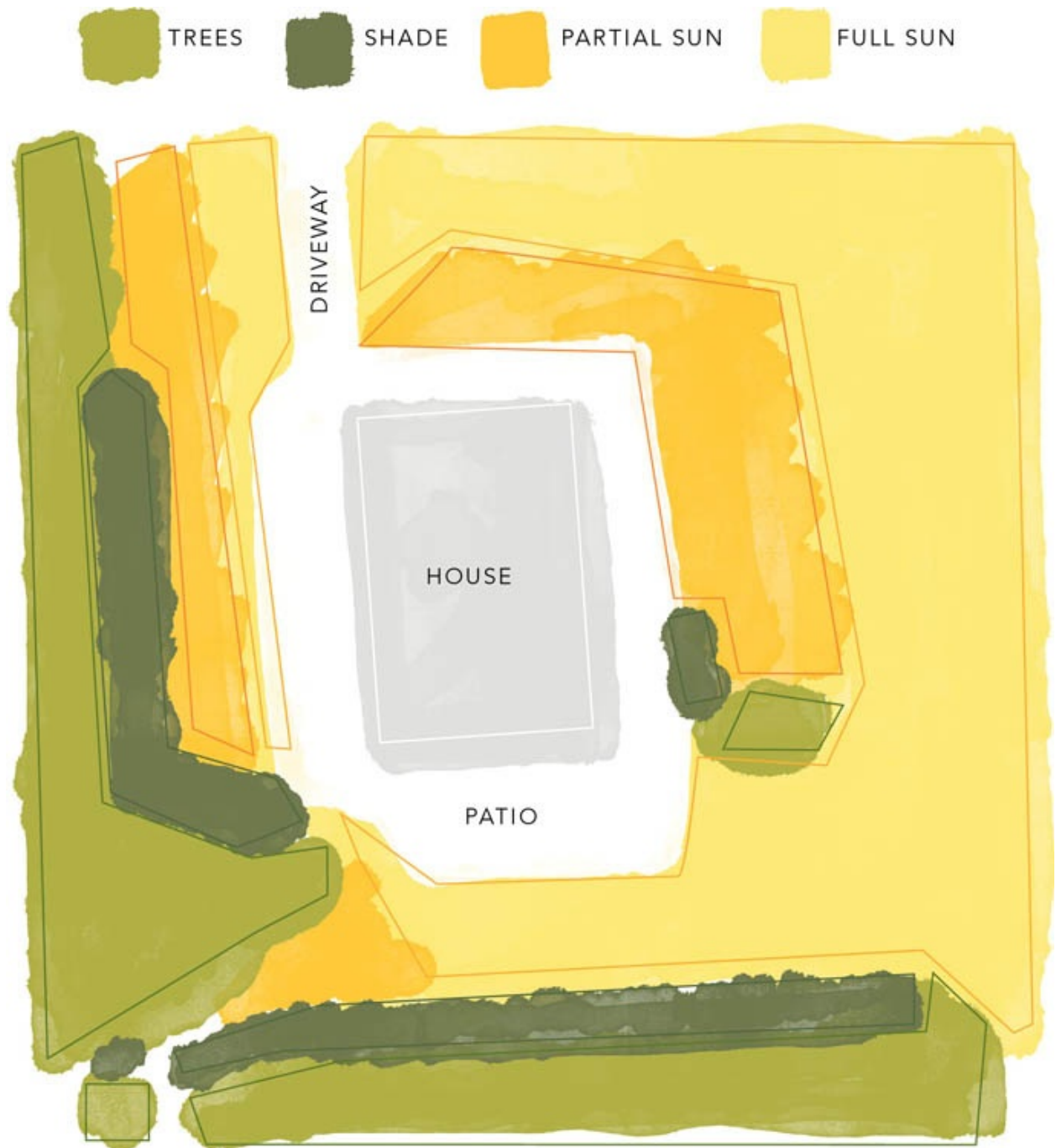
Your garden is a complex system, and you do not always need to know all the microscopic details of what is happening in it. But considering a few basic things when designing your garden will help ensure your property is a place of biological refuge where you cultivate resilience year after year:

1. Combine both native and naturalized edible perennial plants into your garden design.
2. Create mixed species (polyculture) garden beds.
3. Collect and save seeds.
4. Learn horticultural and ethnobotanical details about each plant you grow.
5. Plant species together that share the same resource needs.
6. Think of your garden as a living ecosystem that has the potential to provide you with food, medicine, fuel, fodder, fiber, beauty, and fertilizer.

If you live on a rocky slope, you can utilize hardy perennial herbs and integrate them into your permanent landscaping. Rocky soil is sometimes difficult to work with because roots have to maneuver around rocks to find nutrients. But if you live in a climate with a short growing season, you can utilize areas with rocky soil to extend your growing season. Rocks can be used as heat sinks: they warm up the soil around them on a sunny day and hold that heat into the night.

If you have a relatively flat rectangular space and want to establish raised beds, you can either make linear raised bed boxes from untreated lumber, or you can use stones to create organically shaped raised beds. Ideally you will be able to use your landscape contour to your advantage and grow perennial herbs as part of your permanent landscaping and use raised beds for annual herbs and foods.

SUN MAP



Make a Plant List

Once you have a good sun map, you can start making a list of all the plants you have and those you wish you had in your garden. You probably have a pretty good idea of what plants grow well in your region just from seeing what other people grow or visiting a local nursery. Include fruits, nuts, and berries you might want to grow. Consider including a few native edibles to honor the long ancestry of your place and provide sanctuary for native animals and insects.

I usually compile a large list of plants and pare it down based on how much space I have and how likely I am to be able to process and use the fruits or herbs when they mature. Think about which herbs you use the most and approximately how many plants you will need to provide a significant portion of your annual or seasonal needs. For example, I use a lot of thyme in my cooking and in homemade winter immune tea, so I estimate that I will harvest the majority of a single mature plant per week during the growing season and possibly get two harvests a season from each plant. When mature, one blue elderberry tree will supply me with enough elderflower and elderberry for myself and my family for the year. If you plan to grow garlic, think about how many heads you go through per week and multiply that by 52. Add 10 percent if you want to also grow your own seed garlic (which saves you a lot of money in the long run).

It is also easy to grow some herbs in plastic or clay pots, which are relatively light and easy to move around your yard. I like to grow lots of culinary herbs in pots each season and keep them close to my kitchen door for easy access. If you love tropical herbs, such as ginger and lemongrass, you can grow them in pots indoors until the weather warms up, then move them outside, then return them indoors in the fall. You can easily grow many perennial tropical plants in small quantities so long as you grow them in pots that are easy to maneuver.



Place Your Plants

Now that you have your sun map with contours and your list of plants, you can start mapping out where each plant should go. When I start new gardens on my property, I often consider the footprint of the big permanent plants first and then start to visualize the diverse collection of smaller annual and perennial herbs and flowers that will fill in the edges. This process is highly flexible, and you will

likely find that your map changes as you go along. The major thing to initially map out is the placement of your long-lived edible perennial trees and shrubs.

For easy access, it is smart to plant foods and herbs that you use almost every day close to your home. As you move out toward the edges of your property, you should plant sprawling trellised berries, fruit trees, and medicinal roots.

Position plants that require more sun and heat in areas where they receive the most sun exposure on your property. Partial-sun and shade-tolerant plants will be perfectly happy in the shadow of trees, shrubs, and buildings.

Grouping plants from similar ecosystems together will make it a lot easier to care for your garden. Planting prairie species together, for example, will allow you to create a whole section of plants that have similar water, light, and nutrient requirements. Developing a healthy, robust garden is all about understanding the natural patterns of the ecosystem where you live and finding neat ways to mimic nature. Sometimes this means finding plants that naturally occur in your area. At other times this means creating microclimates that closely align with a particular plant's needs or creating a community of plants that share the same water, light, nutrient, and heat requirements.

GARDEN PLAN



1. Bay

8. Skullcap & catnip

2. Fig	9. Garlic
3. Jasmine	10. Lemonbalm
4. Rose	11. Astragalus
5. Culinary boxes	12. Oats
6. Chamomile & poppy	13. Tomatoes & peppers
7. Mints	14. Roots

A Farm Reclaimed

I finally bought my own farmland a year ago and did some major clearing to open up areas for an edible landscape and create fields to farm herbs. In the process, I had to remove much of the vegetation close to my house. When I bought the property, it was a derelict Christmas tree farm. The fir trees were planted less than 5 feet apart and had grown to more than 25 feet tall. They were severely choking each other out and encroaching on my house. But once I cleared most of the Christmas trees, my home looked completely naked and lonely perched atop a gentle sloping hill.

Now I have begun the long, slow process of replanting with edible native and naturalized species. The first few years of any relandscaping project can be a little shocking because your permanent tree layers take lots of time to grow and visually fill the space. But your shrub and herbaceous layers can quickly restore and protect your precious soil, even in the first year. Medicinal herbs are often really good at quickly filling any bare ground. They can form an early successional dense cover until shrubs and tree layers are established. Once you have your tree layer, you can plant shade-tolerant herbs under the tree canopy and sun-loving herbs at the edge of the canopy. Plants usually find ways of spreading to their ideal location, so as you begin working with medicinal plants in your garden, you will discover precisely where they want to be.

Start Small and Pace Yourself

Once you have a strong vision and a plan to achieve your vision, you get to start bringing that vision to fruition. Gardening is a big project that spans the whole length of your growing season, but it does not have to feel overwhelming. I am a strong optimist and believe that bit by bit, day by day, I can complete really large projects.

I am definitely not superwoman — I have many physical and mental limitations — so I have developed a system to keep myself from starting projects with lots of energy and quickly losing focus and quitting. One of my basic practices is that I only bite off small tasks at a time. I mean tasks that can be completed in between 2 minutes and 2 hours. On any given day I usually focus on a single project for a few hours, then stop when I start to feel my productivity lull, and work on a different project for a few hours. Stress is really damaging to the body over the long term, so I try hard to reduce how worked up I get about how much or how many things I have to do. It is more gratifying to be calm, happy, and excited about doing meaningful and important work in your life. Nothing profoundly good usually comes out of emotionally stressful situations.

Like all good things, gardening takes persistence, so as a home gardener you do not need to prep and plant your garden all in a single weekend. Plants can teach you a lot about the practice of slow transformation. The first year you garden, you might make a simple goal of building and planting a single raised bed for herbs. The following year, you might plant another or install a berry patch. If you are busy it is important to start small and work your way up. A small, well-loved and maintained garden is probably more productive than a whole yard of half-finished gardening ideas. Putting in a few hours a week consistently over the course of the season is usually enough for a small garden.

When you are considering growing your own herbs, let yourself have fun, learn with curiosity, and find ways to stay positive about the progress you are

making. Every little step is imbued with meaning when working with plants. Give yourself the time to notice the details and move through a project with patience and attention.

A Story of Pacing

With a machete and a small handsaw, I recently cleared a half-mile-long, 10-foot-wide path along the perimeter of my property to install a section of fence. This particular section of the property was a dense thicket with extremely moist soil and two steep ravines — too delicate, steep, and wet for any machinery to drive through. My dad, a saint of a man, decided to help me. (As a side note, my dad is amazing: he has Parkinson's disease and still takes pleasure in working alongside me on all my farm projects, never complaining of his limitations.)

We spent several days leading up to the clearing debating how long it would take. I had it in my head that we could easily clear the land using hand tools in about 12 to 15 hours total. Dad balked, thinking there was no way we could work through the muck and seemingly endless thorny bushes and trees in such a short time. I kept reassuring him that we most definitely could, and I had three mornings one week and two mornings the following week to complete the project.

The first day, the first thing we both did was sink almost up to our knees in the mud. I had to drag myself out and then help my father up. I reassured him that this was not an omen, and we got straight to work. We cleared about a hundred feet that first day. After three hours we were both tired. "Okay, that's enough for today," I said.

"*What?* We are done for today?!"

"Yes, Dad. We'll come back out tomorrow morning and start again."

He is the kind of person who likes to start a project and focus on it single-mindedly until completion. But I knew that if we kept working our

frustration and fatigue would build, and we would make slow progress as the day and week progressed.

The next morning, refreshed and motivated, we cleared twice the distance we had the day before. After three hours, as we were again starting to feel tired and fatigued, I expressed excitement for how much progress we had made and demanded I treat him to a hot lunch back at the house. We would resume clearing the next day.

Each day we worked on the clearing we outpaced the previous days until the project was completed (in just under 15 hours). Each day we quit with physical and mental energy to spare for other farm projects that were less physically demanding. In the end, we finished the project quickly without major aches and pains or feeling burnt out.

Starting from Seed

Starting plants from seed is a rewarding way to learn a lot about plants. Each plant seed has a personality, physical characteristics, and a legacy to share with you, and they will give you a much deeper understanding of how plants grow. I like to start plants from seed whenever possible, but I also see the value in buying tree and shrub seedlings. Many fruit-bearing plants, such as grapes, apples, and mulberries, are often grafted onto pest-resistant rootstock, which is a good reason to buy seedlings or learn the amazing skill of grafting. Grafting, a form of horticultural cloning, also ensures you are getting a seedling that is true to the parent plant.

Sourcing Seeds

Sourcing medicinal plant seeds is tricky only if you are looking for a plant that is not commonly grown. Buying culinary herb seed is easy. Finding a small regional seed company that sells what you need is ideal, but you can always source from large commercial organic seed companies, too.

You will save a lot of money over the long run if you collect your own seed. Seed collecting also requires that you let some of your medicinal plants go all the way through their life cycles without harvesting from them, a practice that supports beneficial insects. I have visited and worked on medicinal plant farms that have not been able to sustain healthy bee colonies — most of the plants they are farming are harvested before or just at the flower stage, the same moment the beneficial insects, such as bees, are trying to collect nectar. Having lots of plants grown specifically for seed helps an herb garden support a much richer biodiversity. Bees love seed gardens!

It is quite easy to avoid genetically modified herb seeds if you buy organic seed from a responsible grower. Most medicinal herb seeds, as far as my

experience goes, are not genetically modified. Seed growers often select seeds from their most vigorous plants, and over many generations this creates seeds that are incredibly well suited to the conditions where the seed was grown. Because I believe that genetic diversity is important, I always grow and source seeds from open-pollinated fields.

Once you have your seeds in hand, you will need basic information about how to germinate each kind of seed. Medicinal plant seeds can sometimes be a little tricky to start, depending on the natural cycles the plant undergoes in its wild habitat. But don't be discouraged: there are lots of tricks to give even your most challenging seeds a good chance at germination. To help you along the way, there is plenty of detailed information available in books dedicated to growing medicinal plants.

As the Garden Grows: Love and Witness

Once plants are securely in the ground, aside from remembering to water them, I suggest spending a lot of time with them. Each year it's fun to get reacquainted with each species you grow and watch them do their thing. Plants sense what is happening all around them and respond to their situation in fascinating ways. With the nourishment in the soil and the energy of the sun, they swiftly transform at a surprising pace and begin to rise, reach, and sprawl.

Take pleasure in your garden design and enjoy how your best-laid plans begin to get redesigned by nature with each passing sun-filled day. As your plants adapt to their surroundings, they will begin to show off and speak clearly to the world. Your garden is a sensual retreat. I spend a lot of hours curiously watching plants transform from delicate seedlings into strong, robust plants with dramatic visual displays and truly magnificent scents. I slow down and attune my senses to how plants are communicating to the world. I begin to feel myself as part of the living world in a closely interconnected system. My self-consciousness subsides, and I feel so lucky to be a plant tender.

I feel like my body is made up of a diverse fleet of organisms that work together to inform and maintain the health of my flesh and skin. Herbs and medicinal foods keep the fleet afloat over the long course of our lives. The crust of the earth is a flesh of sorts, too, and the organisms that make up the soil, animals, and plants make up its skin. We are part of the earth's body, and we owe it to ourselves and the earth to give back by living kindly and regeneratively.

Starting Plants from Cuttings

A great number of medicinal plant species grow perfectly well from cuttings, including mints, lemonbalm, thyme, rosemary, elderberry, mulberry, willow, cottonwood, and nettle.

Many herbaceous plants (such as mint, scented geranium, and lemonbalm) are especially easy to start from cuttings because the plant itself produces plenty of growth hormone to send out roots at the base of the cut stem. You simply take a small section of stem with about two sets of leaves and soak the stem in water until roots begin to sprout from stem nodes. Stable temperatures around 70°F (21°C) help establish a good set of roots. When the young roots are about an inch long, transplant the herbs into flats or pots, or plant directly into the garden, making sure to provide enough light, warmth, and water to help the roots get established in the soil.

I usually root tree or shrub species (elderberry, sea buckthorn, hawthorn, jasmine, and mulberry are some of the easier ones) in fast-draining soil mix or plain sand. Once the plant has gone dormant, diagonally cut a 6-inch section with a few live leaf buds. Using younger sections often yields better results. Dip the bottom ½ inch of stem into liquid or powdered rooting hormone (purchase a nonsynthetic version if possible) and stick the cutting in a container of potting medium. Water the cutting regularly, every day if necessary, to keep the potting medium moist. It sometimes takes a month or more to start seeing signs of root development. Once the roots have developed, it is best to keep the shrub or tree in a decent-sized container with well-draining soil for a full growing season, continuing to water regularly, before transplanting into your garden.

Harvesting

Herbs are quite hardy and will often surprise you with their strength and adaptability. Once the plant is established and rapidly growing, you can start to harvest its edible shoots and leaves. However, giving general advice about harvesting is a little tricky because some plants are stimulated by small amounts of regular pruning, while others are better suited for one large harvest per season. Harvesting any portion of a plant while it is growing is a form of stress on the plant; how much depends a great deal on how adaptive a plant is and on soil fertility. I try to express deep gratitude for the herbs before I harvest them and take a lot of care to honor their freshness and potency. I try not to waste plant material or mismanage my drying process.

If you are just growing the plants to harvest them, then your practices will be a little different than if you are using herbs as landscaping plants in addition to harvesting them for food and tea. If you are growing herbs as part of perennial edible landscaping, then I encourage you to plant more plants than you anticipate needing in a single season so you can harvest less from each plant. If I am growing plants for their ecological landscape functions and for food, I tend to harvest between 10 and 25 percent of the plant per season.

Experiment with the perennials in your garden and read about how to harvest from specific plants. For example, plants in the mint family, such as mint, skullcap, catnip, sage, marjoram, thyme, and lemonbalm, sometimes have a weedy growth habit. Harvesting them from their edges to contain them from spreading is a great way to keep them as a beautiful part of your landscaping and have enough for your personal needs.

Harvesting Tips for Different Plant Parts

For medicine, you will use leaves, flowers, shoots, tubers, roots, bark, seeds, and fruits. Here are some techniques for harvesting different plant parts:

LEAVES: For herbs, clip the upper 50 to 75 percent of the aboveground portion from the stem. For shrubs or trees, handpick leaves from branches.

FLOWERS: Handpick flowers from bushy tree, shrub, or herb species, such as calendula, rose, or hawthorn bushes. For most herbs, you can clip flower heads from their stalks.

ROOTS: You have to dig up the whole plant to harvest roots. With a shovel, hori hori (Japanese gardening knife), or pitchfork, loosen the soil around the root as deep as it goes and slowly dislodge the root from the ground.

SEEDS AND FRUITS: Hand harvest fruits, berries, and seeds without disturbing the parent plant.

SHOOTS, BARK, AND TUBERS: Often you will harvest these parts from healthy perennial plants. To minimize negative impacts on the health of the host plant, take the time to learn the harvesting techniques particular to each species.



How Much Do You Need?

This is an important question to ask yourself when you envision your garden, but also later when you get ready to harvest. If you are planning on drying and saving herbs, avoid harvesting more herbs than you and your community can realistically use in a given year. The energy and work it takes to grow a plant should not be taken for granted. Depending on your drying system, you might

only be able to harvest part of your crop at a time. Think ahead and make sure you have the drying capacity before you head out and harvest. Keeping good records of how much you planted, when and how much you harvested, your drying schedule, and the dry weight of your harvest can help you keep track of what you are doing from year to year.

Most aerial portions of herbs are about 80 percent water. This means that they will lose about 80 percent of their weight in water during the drying process. So, for example, if you harvest 100 pounds of fresh nettles, you will end up with approximately 20 pounds of dried nettle.

An herb farm will typically harvest 75 to 100 percent of an annual plant each year. For perennial herbs, harvesting 50 to 75 percent of the aerial portion is normal. For leaves from perennial trees and shrubs, it is more common to harvest less than 20 percent. When I am harvesting hawthorn leaf or flower, for instance, I often only harvest a tiny portion of a single tree, but I harvest from many different mature trees to meet my harvest needs. I spread out my impact as much as possible to avoid placing a lot of stress on each plant.

Harvesting season is a bittersweet time. I love to appreciate plants and let them live peacefully, taking only a small portion of a plant if I can. But it takes a lot of space and abundance to treat your yard as you would wild spaces. My heart is aligned with wild tending rather than production farming, so I try hard to find a balance so that I can maintain the same patches of herbs for many years, slowly increasing abundance through growing and tending techniques.

Drying

After harvesting herbs, you should dry them as soon as possible without letting them get too hot because heat and light break down phytochemicals once the plant is harvested. Herbs will dry quickly at a temperature around 95 to 105°F (35 to 40°C) with lots of airflow from fans or wind.

If you live in a drier climate, you will likely be able to dry small amounts of herbs by hanging them in bunches in a shady space with lots of airflow. Because I live in the Puget Sound where the climate can be cool and moist, this method doesn't work as well as I would like. So when I am drying a small amount of herbs I use a dehydrator on a low setting. I have an Excalibur dehydrator with nine shelves that works really well for most of my small-scale drying needs. For drying larger batches of herbs on my farm, I built a hoop house covered with shade cloth with wooden shelves that the drying screens slide into. Big fans circulate air, and we keep the doors open to ensure the evaporating moisture escapes easily.

I have a friend who dries herbs and mushrooms in his basement using hand-built screens he slides into used commercial kitchen speed racks and big commercial fans to circulate air. I have set up strange drying systems in tents and cabins to quickly dry seaweed during spring seaweed harvest when the weather is not cooperating for an outdoor drying system. That's all to say that there are lots of easy ways to dry plants so long as you have a warm environment with plenty of airflow and vents for moisture to escape as plants are drying.

Garbling

Once your plants are dried, you usually have to remove any stem parts from the leaf or flower parts. This process is called garbling. The simplest way is to slide your fingers down a stem to separate the leaves from the stem. For larger quantities, it is helpful to set up a ½-inch mesh screen with a tarp underneath. Roll a handful of plant material back and forth across the screen; the leaf and flower bits will fall through the screen onto the tarp, and the long stems remain on the screen to be discarded. This also helps break up the leaves to a perfect size for loose-leaf tea.

Storing Your Herbs

The best way to store dried herbs is in a cool, dark room or cabinet in an airtight container.

I usually use thick, clear plastic bags and squeeze out all the air before securing the top. Make sure you label each batch with the herb's name and the harvest or dry date. I cannot tell you how easy it is to mix up herbs if they do not have their name clearly written on the container. This is also important so you will remember to use the oldest batch of an herb first. I don't like selling products with herbs that are more than a year old because I want to be absolutely sure the tea is fresh and potent — my company's reputation depends on it. For your own use, however, you can probably get away with keeping homegrown herbs for more than a year if you store them properly. Use your senses: Does the color, scent, texture, and taste of the herb still seem fresh? If so, continue to use it.

I recommend you store your herbs in separate containers and mix your tea blends in small, ½ -pound batches that you then store in your kitchen in opaque containers. This ensures freshness, and you'll be less likely to make more than you need.



Seed Saving

Seed saving is an important ritual done at the end of a plant's seasonal life cycle to ensure diversity for future generations of the species. The act of collecting seeds from your garden completes the cycle from seed to seed. Each summer and fall I collect seeds for the following year's seedlings. Some seeds are enclosed in sweet fruits; some are protected by a large, hard exterior fruit, such as nuts; others fall loose from their pods to the ground as the seed head on which they have been maturing is shaken by wind or rain.

Each plant produces seeds that are suited to their ideal germination and ecological niche. Most seeds contain growth-inhibiting hormone in their seed coat that must get broken down or removed before the seed will germinate. Time, weathering, and cold stratification eventually promote germination for many plants. But some seeds that are surrounded by a fruit need to undergo a fermentation process, either by passing through an animal (or human) digestive system or by being tossed in a pile where the fruit can ferment. This is why seedlings are often found sprouting up from the compost in the spring. Bears, birds, humans, and deer have been spreading seeds for millennia across the landscape. A creature eats the berries, takes time to digest them, and by the time the animal has a bowel movement, the seeds are in a totally different location, excreted into a perfect wet pile of compost with suitable nutrients for a seedling's early life.

Some plants produce a huge amount of readily viable seed per plant. Weedy species often produce a lot of seeds, which partly accounts for their role as quick colonizers of disturbed or bare ground. St. John's wort, yarrow, calendula, and chamomile come to mind as plants that produce an excessive volume of viable seed each year; as soon as their seed is mature, it often germinates quickly unless harvested and stored until spring. With these heavy seed producers, you won't

need to collect from too many plants in order to get all the seeds you need for the following year.

Seed collecting preserves the genetics of the plants on your property over generations, enabling you to cultivate plants that are highly adaptable to your growing conditions. You can do this simply by harvesting seeds from your most successful and healthy plants, or from plants that capture a strongly desired trait.

Harvesting your own seed also saves money because good seeds are pricey. It really doesn't take much space to grow a seed garden or keep a few plants to harvest for their seeds. I usually do not harvest seeds from plants that were previously harvested for medicine. It takes a lot of energy for a plant to produce healthy viable seed. Harvesting a significant portion of a plant's leaves or flowers, even once in a season, can cause stress in a plant, which can affect the health of the seeds.

You'll need a few basic tools for seed collecting from your home garden:

- Garden shears for clipping seed heads
- Screens for garbling, sorting, and sifting seeds
- Paper bags for hanging seed heads in while seeds are released from their flower head
- Paper seed envelopes or plastic Ziploc bags for storing seeds

Study up on how to collect seed from each plant you grow. Some plants need zero processing, while others are more complicated. Don't forget to label your seeds!

What Is a Seed?

A seed is a matured embryo, a little embryonic plant surrounded by a seed coat. Because it needs to wait for the perfect growing conditions, all the necessities it needs to sprout (except sunlight and water) are housed in a cozy shell or skin that protects the potential seedling inside while it waits for its opportunity to come alive. Simple and elegant in design, a seed is a little package filled with all of life's possibility.

CHAPTER 7

WILDCRAFTING A BETTER WORLD

EACH YEAR I SPEND TIME IN THE WILDERNESS learning to honor and support the relationship between plants and humans in wild landscapes. Wildcrafting, foraging, and regenerative wild tending are terms that express ways that humans can kindly and respectfully harvest plants and mushrooms from wild populations.



If you are interested in learning to gather plants from the wild, remember that wildcrafting can be a sustainable, powerful, and regenerative practice when done with care for the resilience of the whole ecosystem. It requires botanical identification skills and ecological awareness, both of which you can easily learn through teachers, through regularly spending time observing changes in your landscape each season, and through self-study.

Gaining the self-awareness to understand how your actions are affecting the plants and animals around you takes patience and time. Humans have been wildcrafting for tens of thousands of years. Ethical wildcrafters today dedicate much of their lives to deeply understanding the subtle dynamics and complex patterns of the ecosystems in their bioregions. They can recognize how plants, animals, natural disturbance patterns, and nutrient cycles affect the diversity and vigor of plant and animal communities. They bridge the gap between humans and nature by using their tools and movements to mimic natural patterns that benefit the ecosystem.

Wildcrafters both intuitively and empirically understand where to find what they are looking for in the wild. For example, where I live in the Puget Sound, I know where and when to find nettles. Nettles like wet, enriched areas. I see a huge abundance of them near rivers and adjacent to old mining lands, downslope of roads or developments, and places where lowland deforestation has left lasting impacts. Nettles help repair the earth's blanket after large-scale disturbances, forming dense thickets with their horizontally spreading rhizomes. They are often found below maples and alders where they get plenty of light in the early spring before the deciduous trees fully leaf out.

Harvesting nettles requires an understanding of the local area to ensure that you get them from places with clean water and soil. The way you move through a patch of nettles is important: because they are often found on seeping slopes, you must walk carefully to prevent erosion and soil compaction. Also, when you are focused on harvesting a particular species of plant or mushroom it is easy to ignore other plants in the same vicinity. Learning the names of other plants that grow in the same ecosystem will help you recognize their presence and importance. Walk gently and avoid removing or disturbing other plants in your effort to harvest the plant you want.

Harvesting for Resilience

I do not usually harvest more than 10 percent of a population of any wild plant unless it is a fast-spreading species that is negatively impacting the health and diversity of an area. (Japanese knotweed is an example of an invasive plant that should be harvested to help control its spread.) This 10 percent rule is a standard metric to ensure sustained growth and resilience.

Harvesting shoots and leaves from a plant mimics the behavior of plant-eating animals. A small amount of harvesting can stimulate growth in a species like nettles, but too much harvesting reduces the vigor of a plant population and can weaken its immunity. Plus, you never know who else might be harvesting from the same spot after you've left. For a species as abundant as nettles, I often harvest far less than 10 percent from popular areas that have a lot of foot traffic. Many wildcrafters go a step further and actively collect and spread plants and seeds into nearby areas that have been recently disturbed and could benefit from a particular plant.



A Long Partnership

We are often bombarded with sad stories of human development destroying ecosystems through slash-and-burn practices, clear-cutting, and the paving over of sacred sites. In response to these devastating techniques, biodiversity quickly disappears. Our instinct is to preserve remaining wildlands by restricting access to them beyond recreational hiking trails. But the truth is that our wildlands could benefit from the kind of human influences that skilled wild tenders and wildcrafters can provide. We need to end the destruction of our wild places and relearn the practice of careful tending.

Nourishing humans and protecting wild spaces do not need to be mutually exclusive. In fact, well-tended forests, meadows, and wetlands are more resilient and provide important foods and medicines for humans. In some ecosystems, such as the sagebrush steppe in Washington and Oregon, we are seeing the disappearance of indigenous food plants because humans are not managing these ecosystems the way they did in the past. Many plant species evolved with human interaction and benefit from that relationship. In the sagebrush steppe, the act of carefully digging up edible roots and spreading them helps loosen hard clay soils and creates beneficial microclimates for seeds to germinate.

In many of the ecosystems where I live, the forest encroaches on historical meadows because human tending and natural disturbance regimes are prevented. Controlled burns are essential to the rejuvenation of many native plants that thrive in meadows, woodlands, savannas, and prairies throughout the world's temperate climates. Controlled burns were historically practiced in cycles of several years to keep meadows open and promote the growth of myriad food plants for both animals and humans. By not allowing people to practice forest thinning and the ancient ritual of controlled burning, we end up with dense forests and massively destructive large-scale forest fires.

I am totally enamored with wild food and medicine plants from Washington and Oregon. I am especially in love with edible roots and seeds from wet and dry prairies. I have spent the last five years learning to identify and tend edible and medicinal lomatium, lilies, oaks, yampas, fritillaries, and camas, to name a few. I have spent many months with friends traveling around, cataloging and mapping out areas where remnants of vast wild edible gardens once existed. I experiment with techniques to replant areas with these native food plants and try to learn from others how to revitalize landscapes using native edibles.

People can learn how to care for wild spaces in ways that actually increase diversity, abundance, and resilience. And we are in dire need of a new generation of farmers, gardeners, and ecologists who will develop large-scale land-management plans that work with the natural disturbance cycles of our forests, meadows, prairies, and wetlands to increase their native biodiversity, productivity, and resilience. If we work in partnership with nature in our own backyards and in the wild, we can together create abundant healing landscapes.



INDEX

Page numbers in *italic* indicate photos.



A

adaptogens, stress and, 52

Allergy Tea, 135

alteratives, 32

anise seed, 85

aphrodisiacs, 95–101

Apple Green Iced Tea, 154, 165

astringency, 30

Athlete's Tea, 74

B

Balance, 70, 71

balance, finding, 3

barley, roasting your own, 187

Basic Chai, 88–89

Berry Sun Tea, 156, 157

bitter taste, 31–33

Black Beauty, 180, 181

blending, 11, 19, 40

Bliss, 96

Blood Pressure Support, 121

Brain Tonic, 191

Bright Chai, 93

C

cacao, [102](#), [103](#)
calendula, [59](#), [59](#)
Calm Waters, [120](#)
Cancer Care, [111](#)
Candida Support, [117](#)
cardamom, [85](#), [85](#)
 Cardamom-Rose Chai, [94](#)
cautionary tale, [193](#)
chai, [87](#)
 Basic Chai, [88–89](#)
 Bright Chai, [93](#)
 Cardamom-Rose Chai, [94](#)
 chai light, [93–94](#)
 Decaf Chai, [90](#)
 Delight Chai, [90](#)
 Iced Chai, [182](#)
 Masala chai, [84–85](#)
 Mint and Spice Chai, [94](#)
 Rainy Day Chai, [91](#)
 spice basics for, [84–86](#)
 Vanilla Chai, [91](#)
Chillaxin, [172](#)
Chocolatl, [100](#), [101](#)
cinnamon, [86](#)
Clarity, [146](#)
Coconut Green, [170](#)
cold infusions, [15](#), [19](#), [161](#)

colds, 107

Constipation Relief, 110

cross-contamination, 7, Z

Cucumber-Jalapeño Breeze, 174

D

Daily Adrenal Support, 78

Daily Mineral Tea, 53

damiana, 97, 97

dandelion, 62, 62

Daytime Calm, 112, 113

Decaf Chai, 90

decoctions, 15–16

Deep Wellness, 209

Delight, 196

Delight Chai, 90

diaphoretics, 37

digestion, 28, 61

Digestive Tonic, 60–61

direct trade, 5

Dream, 57

E

Ease the Pain Tea, 128

Elegance Tea, 140, 141

eleuthero, 79, 79

equipment, 6, 6–7

garbling and, 241

seed collecting, 243, 243

F

fair trade, 5

fall teas, 184–201

Fall, The (Fall Repose), 187

Fall Tonic, 186

farm, reclaimed, 231

fennel seed, 85

Fire Tea, 210, 211

flavors, 13. *See also* taste food, tea as, 27

formulation, 21–43

free-form, 40–42

pyramid, 38–40, 39

G

garbling, 240–41

garden design, 222–230, 223, 230

 enjoying your, 255

 placement of plants, 229

 plant list and, 227–29, 228

 style, 222–24

 sun and contour map, 225–27, 226

 tips for, 225

General Fall Tonic, 186

gift, tea as, 42

ginger root, 84, 88

 Gingerade, 64, 65

Glow: Beauty Tea, 58

Golden Garden, 192

gotu kola, 73, 73

Green Love, 148, 149

H

- Happy Heart, [126](#), [127](#)
- Harbor Herbalist, [40](#), [41](#)
- harvesting herbs, [237–240](#), [238](#)
 - ecosystems and, [247–48](#)
 - quantities, [239–240](#)
 - tips for, [237](#)
 - wildcrafting and, [246–47](#)
- herb(s). *See also* harvesting herbs
 - astringent, [30](#)
 - cold infusions, [19](#)
 - drying, [240](#)
 - hot infusions, [16](#), [17](#)
 - sourcing, [2–5](#)
 - storing, [12–13](#)
 - taste of, [24–25](#)
 - using fresh, [16–19](#)
- herbal actions, formulation and, [21–43](#)
- herbalism, [2](#), [21](#), [27](#), [47](#)
- herb garden. *See also* garden design, [216–17](#)
 - about, [219–220](#)
 - plant selection, [220–21](#)
- honeybush, [197](#)
 - Honeybush Spice, [198](#), [199](#)
- hot infusions, [15](#), [16](#)

I

Iced Chai, 182

Iced Choco-Chai, 183

iced teas, 161

 Shiso Iced Tea, 179

imbalances, 14, 38, 41

Indulge, 67

Inflammation Reduction, 124–25

infusions, 14–15, 17

 cold, 15, 19, 161

 hot, 15, 16, 17

K

Kahwa, 214

kava, 173

Kids' Tea, 83

Kukicha Gold, 194, 195

L

land, clearing, 233

Late Winter Woodsman Tea, 212, 213

Lemon Ginger Iced Tea, 163

Lift the Grey, 200

Love Tea, 98

Love Your Life Tea, 99

M

Masala chai, 84–85

medicinal teas, 41

Memoria, 206

Mindspring, 129

Mint and Spice Chai, 94

Mint Green Tea, 162

Mulling Spices, 188, 189

N

nature, learning from, 22

Nervine Cold Brew, 175

nettles, 136, 137

Nursing Mama Tea, 118, 119

nutritive tonics, 49–67

P

pacing yourself, [232–33](#)

Peace Tea, [190](#)

peppercorns, [86](#)

plant list, [227–29](#), [228](#)

plants. *See also* garden

design

cuttings, starting from, [236](#)

defenses and, [35](#)

resilience of, [246–47](#)

selection of, [220–21](#)

Postpartum Nourish Tea, [116](#)

Pregnancy Tea, [114–15](#)

pungent taste, [37](#)

Q

quality control, 12

R

Rainy Day Chai, 91

recipes, written in parts, 8

record keeping

 harvesting herbs, 239

 tea blends and, 9, 9

Refresh, 80, 81

Rejuvenate, 208

rejuvenating tonics, 68–94

Repose, 82

Respiratory Health, 108

Respite Nervine Tea, 54, 55

Respite without Mint, 56

Revive, 178

rhodiola balls, 193

S

salt/salty taste, [30–31](#), [32](#)

seasonal teas, [41](#)

seasonal work, [171](#)

seeds

described, [242](#)

saving, [241–43](#)

starting from, [234–36](#)

Serenity, [169](#)

Shiso Iced Tea, [179](#)

Snooze, [122](#), [123](#)

Sol Maté, [166](#), [167](#)

Sore Throat Soother, [109](#)

sourcing

herbs, [2–5](#)

seeds, [234](#), [236](#)

sour taste, [26](#), [28–29](#)

Spiced Drinking Chocolate, [101](#)

spices

cautionary tale, [193](#)

chai spice basics, [84–86](#)

Mulling Spices, [188](#)

spicy taste, [37](#)

spring teas, [133–150](#)

Spring Aid, [142](#)

Spring Immunity, [147](#)

Spring Nutritive Tea, [139](#)

Spring Revival! [138](#)

Spring Strength, 143
Spring Tonic, 144, 145
star anise pods, 85
storing teas/herbs, 12–13, 241
Strength, 50, 51
stress, 52, 61
summer teas, 151–183
 Summer Breeze Sun Tea, 158, 159
 Summer Chill, 176, 177
 Summer Goodness, 168
 Summer Sol, 154
 Summer Solstice, 153
sun tea, 155
 Berry Sun Tea, 156, 157
 Nutritive Sun Tea, 160
 preparing, 19
 Summer Breeze Sun Tea, 158, 159
sweating, benefits of, 168
sweet taste, 34, 36

T

taste, 25
 bitter, 31–33
 chemistry of, 28
 pungent and spicy, 37
 salty, 30–31
 sour, 26, 28–29
 sweet, 34, 36
 umami, 36–37
taste buds, training, 23–25
tea-making process, 1–19
 blending, 10, 11
 cup of tea, 14–19
terroir, 2
therapeutic dose, 48
Think, 72
tonics, 47–48
 aphrodisiacs, 95–101
 nutritive, 49–67
 rejuvenating, 68–94
Traveler's Tea, 215
tulsi, 69, 69

U

umami, 36–37

Urinary Health Tea, 75

V

Vanilla Chai, 91

Vira Protect, 201

Vital Tea, 66

Vitamin C Tea, 63

Kids' Tea, 83

W

Wake Up! 150

Wellness Tea, 106

wildcrafting, 245–48

 plant resilience and, 246–47

winter teas, 202–15

 Winter Comfort, 207

 Winter Solstice Tea, 204, 205

Women's Blend, 76, 77

workspace, 7

Converting Recipe Measurements to Metric

Unless you have finely calibrated measuring equipment, conversions between US and metric measurements will be somewhat inexact. It's important to convert the measurements for all of the ingredients in a recipe to maintain the same proportions as the original.

FORMULAS FOR METRIC CONVERSION

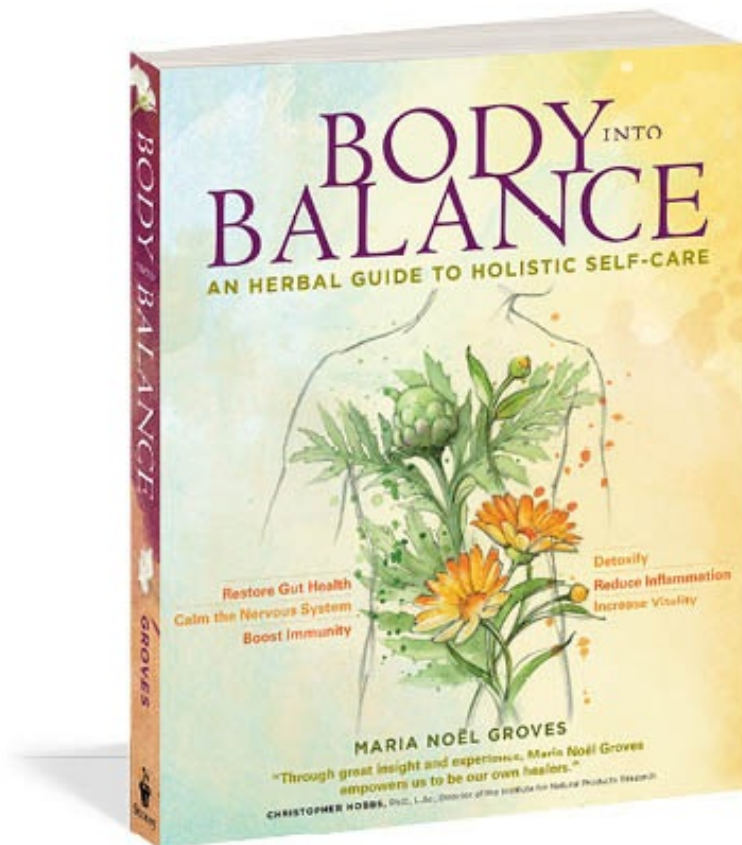
To convert	to	multiply
ounces	grams	ounces by 28.35
teaspoons	milliliters	teaspoons by 4.93
tablespoons	milliliters	tablespoons by 14.79
cups	milliliters	cups by 236.59
cups	liters	cups by 0.24
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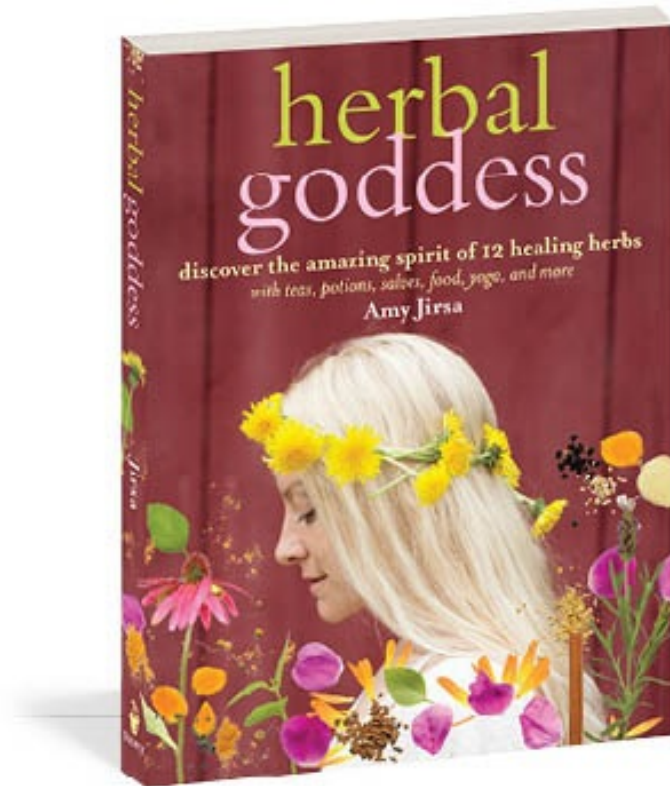
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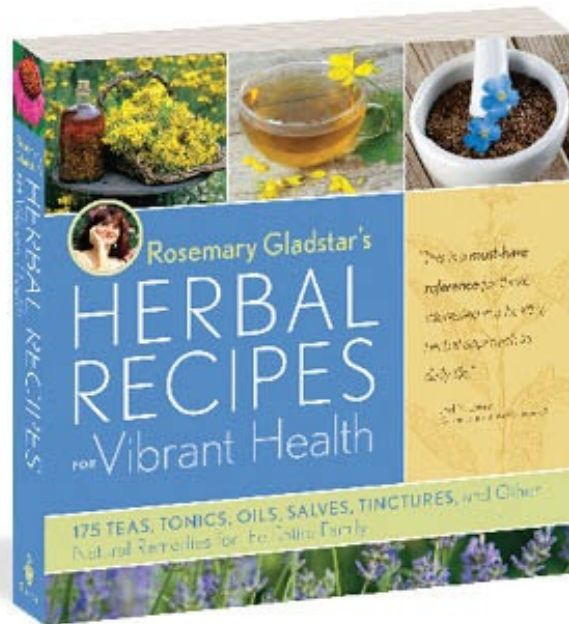
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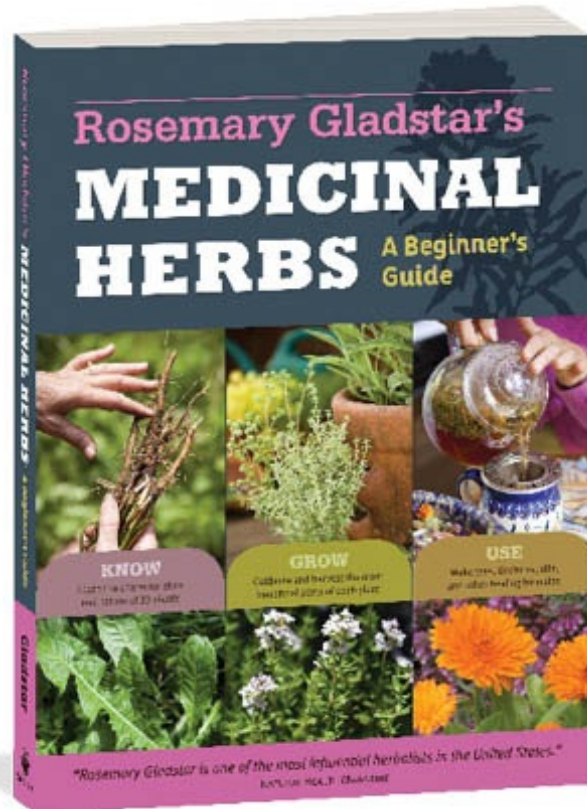
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