

APHRODISIAC

THE HERBAL PATH TO HEALTHY
SEXUAL FULFILLMENT AND VITAL LIVING

AUDIOBOOK SUPPLEMENT MATERIAL

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Introduction

Take a moment right now to lightly and slowly brush one finger across your lips. Feel the shape of them. Tune in to the exquisite sensation of your own touch. Sink into the joy of sensuality.

Sensual pleasure and healthy sexuality are our birthright. They are sources of deep satisfaction, joy, creativity, self-confidence, and success. They are fundamentally about connection—connection to our bodies, each other, and the world around us.

This book is a journey of exploration into the world of connection and sensation. The path we are stepping onto together is one of curiosity and discovery about our full capacity for pleasure and the deliciousness of living a sensually alive, vital, and even ecstatic life. I am your guide on this journey and the plants are our allies.

I have been working with herbs for the past 20 years. My husband, John, and I began as herbalists just as we were starting our family.

He was apprenticing at RavenCroft Garden when I was pregnant with our son, and the herbs naturally wove themselves in to our lives together. Just after my daughter was born, I also completed a three-year herbal apprenticeship at RavenCroft. The herbs had become a passion for both of us, and we were amazed by how they nourished and healed our family on a daily basis. We wanted to share what we had learned with other families, so we founded LearningHerbs.com. Teaching people about herbs became the heart of our work in the world.

Sensuality and sexuality have also been sources of deep nourishment and vital life energy for me throughout my life. At the heart of my ministry, which I call Trail of Beauty, are ceremonies and practices that celebrate the sacredness of being fully embodied and connected to sensation and the natural world. I delight in helping people fully inhabit their bodies and experience sensation. As I have delved more and more deeply into my own experience of sensuality and exploration of healthy sexuality, it has been natural for me to turn to the plants as allies and to weave these two passions together.

In preparation for writing this book, I gathered a group of friends and we went on a year-long journey together, experimenting with the aphrodisiac qualities of 13 herbs. These were herbs I had become curious about as I had been doing herbal research on aphrodisiacs over the course of the year before the book-writing project began. We experimented with a different herb each month, noticing how it impacted our bodies and our lives. The participants in this Aphrodisiac Circle are characters in this book. (They each chose a pseudonym to protect their privacy.) We'll look in depth at each of the herbs we experimented with, and I will share our experiences

with you in the hopes of enhancing and enlivening your own journey.

I chose to undertake this intimate, vulnerable exploration with a small group of friends who I know and trust. There were 14 of us in the group, ranging in age between 30 and 65. Three couples participated and 10 of us were in committed partnerships, some exploring open relationship as part of that commitment. Several participants identify as bisexual. Nine of us were parents and one became a parent in the midst of the project. Several were going through periods of expansion and exploration in the area of their sexuality, and one was just rekindling the possibility of romantic and sexual exploration after many years of celibacy following the death of her husband. Four were healing from past sexual trauma and abuse, and one was just reeling from the ending of a multi-year partnership. Three of the women were in the midst of their transition through menopause.

Each of us began in a unique place, and each of us made discoveries along the way. Our small circle in no way represents the full diversity of human experience (for more information about each participant, see Appendix A), but what I know is that sexuality is a fundamentally *human* experience, bringing each of us to a naked, vulnerable place, regardless of race, class, gender, or age. Also, the herbs are potent and effective healers that are accessible to us all, and the herbs that we engaged with hold potential benefits for every body.

Just as the Aphrodisiac Circle went on an exploratory journey together seeking herbal support for greater sexual fulfillment and vital living, I have organized this book as a journey of personal exploration for you. Rather than following the Aphrodisiac Circle journey or focusing on

one herb per chapter, I was inspired to take you through a series of experiences. Within the chapters you will find recipes and opportunities for cultivating the flow of erotic energy in your life.

I suggest you find a way to express and reflect on your learnings as you go along. Perhaps you would like to pick out a beautiful journal. Or maybe you would like a pad of drawing paper and some art pens or pencils. You can write or draw about your experiences and add to it as more emerges for you over time. Or perhaps you would like to sculpt with clay or express yourself through body movement or dance, or through song. You could make voice recordings. The important thing is to find a means of expression that resonates for you so you can honor your own unique journey. I encourage you to take time and make space for this in your life.

My herbal teachings are spread throughout the book (sometimes in the form of recipes, sometimes set apart as dedicated sections, and sometimes woven in with the flow of text) so that your herbal knowledge can grow organically, right along with your experience of your sexuality. I spread the teachings out and continually invite you into experiences because that is how I know effective learning happens—*slowly, one experience at a time*.

Each chapter contains a monograph for the herb that we explored in the Aphrodisiac Circle that I feel most aligns with the energy of that chapter. These monographs contain detailed information about each of these 13 herbs. You will find yourself flipping forward and backward in the book to consult these monographs as you consider whether a recipe is right for you. Each experience preparing an herbal recipe and taking herbs into your body will help you gain herbal skills and confidence.

Let's take our first step working with herbs right now by repeating that opening exercise of running a finger over our lips and bringing the plants into it. Let's imagine doing the same thing with a rose petal instead of just your finger. Participants in the Aphrodisiac Circle found this to be an absolutely exquisite sensual experience. In fact, if you happen to be reading this book at a time when you can pick yourself a rose (chemical free), I recommend this as your first step onto the herbal path to sexual fulfillment and vital living.

Go and pick yourself a rose. Place it in a vase or jar in a special place just for you, dedicated to your journey of sensual, sexual exploration. Place your journal, drawing paper, or clay here in this special place too. Once your rose is in its place, enjoy its delicate beauty, the evocative scent of it. Feel the softness of its petals. Now, pick just one petal. Choose your favorite one. Lightly and slowly brush the petal across your lips. Close your eyes and allow yourself to feel the sensation as fully and deeply as possible.

If it is not the right time of year to pick yourself a fresh rose, I invite you to enjoy the anticipation. Anticipation is, after all, another one of the delights of erotic experience. Our minds are one of our main sexual organs, our imaginations one of our most lovely erotic tools.

Over the course of this journey together, I am going to highlight and gift you with many tools to help bring more erotic, vital energy to your life. The recipes for herbal preparations and activities will help you deepen into sensation and connection with your own body, with your lover(s), with the plants, and with the natural world. Just as we are all at different places in our sexual journeys, different activities will resonate more deeply for each of you, and your level of wanting to engage

with the plants will also vary. Whether you want to dip your toe in lightly or dive in as deeply as possible, you are welcome on this path.

Stepping onto the herbal path can be as simple as picking that rose, placing it in a special place, and running a petal over your lips. In the pages that follow, I will suggest other simple steps you can take. In order to prepare the recipes, you will need to gather some herbs. Some you may buy from a local herb shop or an online source. Others may grow right around you, and you will have the opportunity to be in direct relationship with them as you harvest the flowers, leaves, roots, bark, or seeds. I highly recommend engaging with the plants in these ways if it is possible for you. These experiences harvesting and preparing herbal creations are sensual experiences in themselves and can be a powerful part of the healing and nourishment available on this herbal path.

Over the course of reading this book, you will have the opportunity to explore what herbs are right for you at each moment of your personal journey, whether you need to heal and nourish your body or you are seeking to enhance your experience. There is a science and an art to discovering your perfect herb and preparation. The process has many parts, and we will be exploring them organically together, getting to know the plants and learning through sensual exploration and play. We will ask ourselves questions and listen deeply for answers. Our bodies are a great source of information about what tools, preparations, and activities are just right for us right now, so we will continually come back to a place of embodied sensation.

Here is a meditation to help you come into embodied sensation. You can use it anytime you want to bring yourself fully present and sensually alive:

Close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths, fully filling your lungs with air and feeling the resulting expansion in your body. Exhale completely so that your belly button naturally pulls inward. Allow your breath to return to a normal rhythm and begin to notice your body sensations. Feel the air on your skin. Is it warm or cool, still or breezy? Feel the places where your clothes or your hair brush against your skin. Feel those places where one body part is resting on another. Tune in to your internal landscape. Are there places in your body that are tight or tender? Breathe some loving energy into those places. Are there areas that feel expansive or soft? Tune in to your genital area. Notice what sensations you feel there in those private, tender places. How is your belly feeling? Is it in knots today or at ease? Your heart? Head?

Notice any scents that are present in the air today. I'm writing outside by a beautiful river in Twisp, Washington. I smell an earthy forest smell. And in the background I hear the gentle flow of river water over rocks, a constant, soothing lullaby. What are the sounds you hear around you? Do these scents or sounds lead to body sensations for you? Bring your awareness to those sensations. Breathe into them. Give yourself space and time to feel them.

When you are ready, open your eyes. Look around you, and find something beautiful in your environment. Rest your eyes there. Sink into the colors and textures, the pleasing shapes and patterns. Curl the corners of your mouth up into a smile and breathe into your heart as you rest in the beauty.

From this place, I invite you to reflect for a moment on what led you to pick up this book. The answer to this question will be different for each of you, and what I want you to know is that your unique answer is the absolutely perfect answer for you right now. Wherever you are on your journey of sensual and sexual empowerment is the perfect place for us to begin. Maybe you are heartbroken, scared, or shut down in some way. Maybe you are turned off and your turn-on feels very far away. Or . . . maybe you are ecstatic most of the time and just curious if this book can expand your pleasure even further.

I know, for me, living through this global pandemic has changed my daily experience of sensuality with others. Many more of us are suffering some degree of touch deprivation as we stay socially distant to protect each other's health. I know the lack of friendly hugs is impacting my nervous system. Going through a challenging time without being able to physically hold each other is something I hope we need never face again. The initial draft of this book was written before COVID-19 became widespread. Revisions are happening within the first year of social dis-

tancing, and I find myself wondering if this book will serve as a reminder of the pre-COVID-19 world and help us remember the importance of touch and find our way back to ease and comfort with one another.

Whatever your reason, thank you for picking up this book, for stepping onto this path with me, for daring to prioritize pleasure—sensual, sexual pleasure—as a source of energy and joy in your life. The further I go down this road of seeking healthy sexual experience, the more convinced I become that this is a bold act. Bold because it challenges what our culture teaches us about our bodies and our very lives. Bold because it takes us to a core place—a place of tenderness and vulnerability. A place where we can no longer hide behind masks. This is the place where I want to meet you. In that tender, raw place where your heart is open. Where you can barely breathe because you are feeling *soooooo much!*

The pages that follow are me opening my heart and extending my hand to you, inviting you to revel in sensation and expand your capacity to feel and dwell in pleasure, joy, and gratitude.



ONE



SLOWING DOWN
TO ENJOY
THE EROTIC
ENERGY
OF LIFE

Aphrodi-Tea

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon dried tulsi leaf
- 2 tablespoons dried rose petals
- Honey, to taste

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ Teas are very basic herbal preparations. I loved the result of this recipe, and you can vary the taste and effects of herbal teas by varying the amounts of the herbs used and /or the steeping time. You may also get a different result using fresh herbs rather than dried. Experimenting and noticing subtle differences will help you grow your herbal knowledge and confidence.
- ◆ Generally, longer steeping times will increase the amount of herbal constituents being drawn into the water. This affects both the taste and effectiveness of the tea. Longer is not always better. Tulsi, for example, becomes bitter when steeped too long.

PREPARATION

- 1 Pour 1½ cups boiling water over the tulsi and rose petals (loose or using a mesh tea strainer).
- 2 Cover and steep 10 minutes.
- 3 Strain the herbs from the hot tea.
- 4 Add honey to taste.



Cardamom Chocolate Mousse Torte

Rosalee de la Forêt

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces bittersweet chocolate
½ cup coconut oil
½ cup honey
½ cup cocoa powder
1 (13.5-ounce) can coconut milk
2 eggs
1 tablespoon cardamom powder
2 tablespoons vanilla extract
sliced almonds and cocoa powder for the topping

PREPARATION

- 1 Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
- 2 Melt the chocolate and coconut oil in the top of a double boiler.
- 3 Remove from the heat. Add the honey and cocoa powder. Mix well.
- 4 Add the coconut milk and mix well.
- 5 Whisk the eggs in a small bowl.
- 6 Add the whisked eggs, cardamom, and vanilla extract to the chocolate mixture. Mix well.
- 7 Pour the mixture into a slightly oiled 9-inch pie pan.
- 8 Bake for 30 minutes.
- 9 When the torte is done, the top should be cracked but the middle should still be soft and wiggly.
- 10 Cool overnight in the refrigerator to allow it to set.
- 11 Sprinkle with slivered almonds and cocoa powder before serving.

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ We may not really think of mixing up a dessert as making an herbal preparation, but herbalism can actually be that simple. Our food can be some of the best medicine if we consciously choose our ingredients and which foods we ingest.
- ◆ You might read through the cacao monograph in Chapter 12 to learn a little more about how cacao affects our bodies. Making it is also an opportunity to learn about cardamom and vanilla as herbs and why they may or may not be good allies for you.
- ◆ After eating it, take time to notice how you feel in your body. What experiences does it lead to? This is how you build your herbal knowledge—one experience at a time.



Rose Honey

INGREDIENTS

Enough fresh rose petals to loosely fill an 8-ounce jar

8 ounces honey

PREPARATION

1. Chop fresh rose petals into small pieces.
- 2 Fill an 8-ounce jar (loosely packed) with fresh rose petal pieces.
- 3 Pour enough honey over the petals to fill the jar.
- 4 Stir to release any air bubbles (I like to use a wooden chopstick to stir).
- 5 Add more honey if needed to fill the jar. Cap with a lid.
- 6 Let sit on your kitchen counter for 2 weeks, stirring once or twice a day at least for the first week.
- 7 Enjoy as you would plain honey (the rose petals are edible, so no need to strain them out).

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ You can use this same method to infuse honey with any number of edible flowers, including hawthorn, lilac, monarda, or lavender (you may only want to fill your jar $\frac{1}{2}$ full with lavender flowers as they can be quite strong tasting). The honey draws constituents from the herbs while also taking on their aroma and taste, so you get herbal goodness in several ways while enjoying this treat.
- ◆ Honeys work well with aromatic and fruity herbs as the honey really takes on the smell and taste of the plants. Other herbs featured in this book that make delicious infused honeys include rose hips (remove seeds and fuzz from inside hips before infusing), hawthorn berries (strain the berries out before enjoying the honey; they have a large seed inside that is not edible), schisandra berries, and ginger root (grated). I recommend only filling the jar $\frac{1}{2}$ full with each of these herbs.
- ◆ This is definitely one of my favorite herbal treats, and honeys are a beautiful way to infuse sensual herbal experience into your daily life. You can infuse the honeys and then just have them ready to add to your tea, spread on crackers or toast, or just eat by the fingerful any time you desire a sensual treat. You can have fun with licking it from your finger as well.







ROSE



Rosa spp., R. canina, R. rugosa, R. multiflora, R. nutkana



I love roses. Their intoxicating scent is one of my absolute favorite things about life on earth. I love their delicate beauty and the softness of their petals.

Roses have been seducing humans for thousands of years, stimulating our senses in powerful ways. We cultivate them for their beauty and gift them to one another to express our love and affection.

In her book *The Sexual Herbal*, Brigitte Mars calls roses the “supreme heart opener” and shares that “the open rose is a symbol for the opening heart and vulva.”

How Do Roses Act as an Aphrodisiac in Our Bodies?

Roses calm our nerves and uplift our spirits. The aromatic quality of roses has the power to relax and restore us, easing anxiety and depression. In addition rose works as a neuro-protective, helping to protect our nerve cells from damage.¹ Two of the main constituents found in rose oil, citronellol and geraniol, interact with the AMPA receptors in our brain to help calm and protect the central nervous system.² The flavonoids found in roses interact with the GABA receptors in our brain to help relieve anxiety.³

A rose petal or rose hip infusion can help tone and regulate both the feminine and masculine reproductive systems. For women in particular, it can help strengthen our uteruses, regulate our menstrual cycles, and help relieve cramps.⁴ Infusions also may help regulate hormones during menopause.⁵

Rose hips are a heart and circulatory system tonic, with powerful, risk-reducing antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects.⁶ Rose hips are also nourishing, with high vitamin and mineral content. They are especially high in vitamin C. Fresh rose hips contain about eight times more vitamin C than oranges (per 100 grams), and rose hips made into syrup or jam are equivalent to oranges in vitamin C content.⁷

Roses are also nourishing, soothing, and healing for our skin, both taken internally and applied externally.⁸ Rosebuds, blossoms, and hips are moisturizing for irritated, sun-damaged, or aging skin, and rose water is an astringent skin toner with a beautiful scent and a wonderful addition to lotions, creams, and body oils.⁹ Rose oils are nourishing for breast tissue and can help minimize stretch marks and wrinkles. Rose petal vinegar can be used as a douche, an after-bath splash, or a facial rinse. A rose petal facial or genital steam is both softening and moisturizing.

Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: *aromatic, emotionally uplifting, nervine, neuroprotective, nutritive, reproductive system tonic, restorative, soothing and healing for skin*

HIPS: *heart and circulatory system tonic, hormone regulator, nutritive*

OTHER ACTIONS: *analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, astringent*

ENERGETICS: *cooling, drying* **TASTES:** *sweet, sour*

NOTABLE APHRODISIAC CONSTITUENTS: *volatile oils, flavonoids, citronellol and geraniol / hips: vitamin C*

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: *Rose is a nourishing herb; both petals and hips are safe to consume as you would any other healthy food.*

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: *Avoid using roses that have been sprayed with pesticides, including those from florist shops.*

Cheap rose essential oils are likely diluted or adulterated. It takes a huge quantity of roses to make a single ounce of essential oil, and it can cost hundreds of dollars an ounce. Rose Otto, which is rose essential oil diluted in good quality jojoba oil, can be a reasonably priced, high quality alternative.

A Bit about Rose Plants

There are over 150 species of roses around the world. When searching for roses to use in your recipes, be sure the ones you choose are fragrant. That makes all the difference! Rugosa rose is a beautiful wild rose with a glorious scent. This species, native to east Asia, has made its way around the world, so you may well be able to find some not far from your own doorstep.



As with all roses, be mindful of the thorns when you go to harvest the petals. Thorns are how rose bushes wisely protect their precious bee-attracting flowers, just as our clear boundaries help us protect our own precious bodies.

Leave some flowers for the bees and when you come back to harvest in the fall or winter you will find the rose bush full with luscious rose hips, the fruit of the rose plant.

How to Use Rose

PARTS USED: *Petals, Fruits (hips)*

MAKE ROSE DRINKS: *Rose petal tea or infusion, fermented rose petal soda, rose juleps (rose petals steeped in cold water with lemon and honey), rose-petal infused tequila. Food-quality rose water can be added to smoothies or hot chocolate.*

Use rose water to enhance lotions and creams.

Use candied rose petals to decorate cakes.

Infuse rose petals in honey or vinegar.

Make a rose petal tincture.

Make a rose petal facial or genital steam.

Make a rose syrup.

Add dried rose petals to a potpourri mix.

Sprinkle rose petals on the bed or in the bedroom to create a beautiful, sacred, romantic space.



Participant Experiences

This month experimenting with roses was one of our most potent months. Most all of us got out and harvested rose petals, and several of us tended rose bushes in our yards. Being able to see and touch the growing plant and then make aphrodisiac preparations from the petals we harvested had us really falling in love with roses. Joe and Cassie played with rose drinks, infusing petals into tequila, brandy, and rum. Sarah and Artemis drank rose petal tea daily.

Sarah used rose petal powder in her body-care blends, enjoying a rose and oat powder body rub and rose honey skin masks. Lisa, Rachel, and Gabrielle all really enjoyed rose petal massage oil, and Christina noticed that rose petals in her bath made her feel “really special, like a goddess or queen.”

Roses filled up our senses, bringing softness, gentleness, and ease and also igniting a sense of joy and play. The roses brought us into openhearted, loving connection with others. A rose oil massage offered loving comfort for Rachel even through the pain and grief she was feeling around ending her multiyear partnership. For Christina, roses brought unresolved grief to the surface for healing, allowing her to be more available for connection.





Ceremonial Cacao

Prepare this cacao drink for use with intention in a ceremony or ritual.

INGREDIENTS

3½ tablespoons ceremonial-grade cacao

Honey, cinnamon, and cayenne, to taste (optional)

PREPARATION

- 1 Shave the cacao into small pieces with a knife or blender.
- 2 Bring 1 cup of water to near boiling (do not overheat because it will cause the oils in the cacao to separate).
- 3 Put the cacao in a blender and pour hot water over the cacao. Blend until fully melted and integrated.
- 4 Add honey, cinnamon, and/or cayenne to taste.
- 5 Pour it into your favorite mug and drink slowly, savoring each mouthful.





TWO



CREATING
ENVIRONMENTS
WHERE
LOVE AND EROS
FLOURISH

Golden Oat Infusion

INGREDIENTS

1 ounce oatstraw (or a combination of oatstraw and oat tops)

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ Nourishing herbal infusions (strong herbal teas) are made by combining one ounce of herbs with one quart of boiling water and letting it steep for at least four hours.
- ◆ These kinds of infusions for daily nourishment should only be made with nourishing herbs like those mentioned earlier. It may make sense to prepare tonic herbs (like hawthorn) in this way for a specific period of time. Many herbs have medicinal qualities that are too strong to be infused or at least are not meant for daily consumption.
- ◆ A nice rhythm to establish is making your herbal infusions before you go to bed, letting them steep overnight, and drinking them throughout the following day. Or making them at breakfast time and drinking them at dinner.

PREPARATION

- 1 Put the oatstraw (and tops) into a quart jar.
- 2 Boil 1 quart of water, and pour it over the oats to fill the jar and cap with a lid.
- 3 Let steep for at least 4 hours and not more than 12 hours.
- 4 Strain, reserving the liquid and composting the oats.
- 5 Drink iced, warmed, or at room temperature, depending on your preference (I like mine iced!).





Autumn Blush Cordial

INGREDIENTS

1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
3 crushed cardamom pods
5 cherries (can be fresh or frozen, sweet or tart)
2 teaspoons cacao nibs
2 tablespoons dried rose petals
1 vanilla bean, cut in half lengthwise
1 cinnamon stick
Zest from one lemon
1 sweet apple, coarsely chopped
⅓ cup pomegranate seeds (optional)
½ cup hawthorn berries (fresh or dried)
2 tablespoons dried hibiscus petals
½ cup honey (or to taste)
Approximately 4 cups brandy

PREPARATION

- 1** Place all the spices and fruit in a quart-sized jar. This cordial is very amenable to substitutions, so enjoy experimenting.
- 2** Add the honey and then fill the jar with brandy.
- 3** Stir and be sure all the ingredients are completely covered with liquid.
- 4** Infuse this for 4 weeks on your kitchen counter, stirring or shaking daily for at least the first week.
- 5** Strain and enjoy in small, regular quantities (a nightly ounce for a month is nice).

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ Cordials are sweetened alcohol extracts often made with brandy, but other base alcohols can be used instead to balance flavors. Cordials are generally made from fresh ingredients, while elixirs are made from dried, but the line between the two has become blurred over time.
- ◆ Both the honey and alcohol are extracting constituents from the herbs and other ingredients through the process of infusing this cordial. You get the benefits of these constituents when you drink the cordial. Plus, it tastes divine.







HAWTHORN



Crataegus monogyna, C. laevigata, Crataegus spp.



Hawthorn, with its tiny, abundant white flowers and deep red berries, is a tree that is dear to my heart. Hawthorn flowers have a sort of musky smell that reminds me of sex, and to me, they feel both soothing and playful. The berries are a source of deep nourishment, especially for our hearts. When walking among hawthorn trees, I feel playful love, care, and protection.

Back where I used to live in Carnation, Washington, I would harvest hawthorn flowers and berries in a wetland area. There was a beautiful grandmother tree there, and in the early summer I loved to slip into the cool hiding place beneath her branches and listen to the hum of bees collecting pollen from all those beautiful, tiny, white flowers. I would return in the late summer to gather berries from the same location.

How Does Hawthorn Work in Our Bodies?

Hawthorn is all about heart health. Rosemary Gladstar calls it the supreme cardiovascular tonic.³ When used consistently over time, hawthorn berries (and particularly the flavonoids within them) nourish, strengthen, and tone the heart muscle and its blood vessels.⁴ Quercetin, one of hawthorn's main flavonoids, has been shown to suppress abnormal heart rhythms.⁵ When used as a tonic, hawthorn also improves our circulation by dilating our arteries and veins and clearing blockages so our blood flows more freely.⁶

When you go to pick the hawthorn flowers and berries, you will notice that this plant offers an incredible abundance of both, but that it also has some serious thorns protecting them. Just as these thorns protect its flowers and berries, hawthorn has a way of helping us on an emotional level, protecting our heart while helping it to open so we can feel safe entering into relationships.⁷

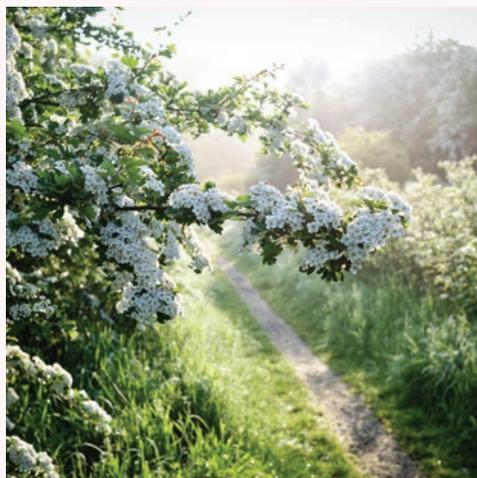
This heart protection also happens on a physical level. Luteolin, a flavonoid abundant in hawthorn, has been shown to be a smooth muscle relaxant and entire scientific papers have been written about its heart-protective properties.⁸ Hawthorn contains another powerful flavonoid, vitexin, which also has been shown to protect the heart.⁹

I also find hawthorn to be soothing for my nervous system and emotionally uplifting. Brigitte Mars, in her book *The Sexual Herbal*, calls hawthorn a relaxing nervine that can help relieve depression, anxiety, and insomnia, helping us to reestablish serenity.¹⁰

A Bit about Hawthorn Plants

Hawthorn is a tree in the rose family that is native to the temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere in Europe, Asia, and North America.

There are over 280 species of hawthorn, which can all be used similarly.



Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: *cardiotonic, cardioprotective, emotionally uplifting, nervine, vasodilator*

OTHER ACTIONS: *antioxidant, astringent, digestant, diuretic*

BERRIES: *antioxidant, anti-inflammatory*

ENERGETICS: *slightly cooling, neutral*

TASTES: *sour*

NOTABLE APHRODISIAC CONSTITUENTS: *flavonoids including quercetin, luteolin, vitexin*

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: Hawthorn is a tonic herb and should be used in medium doses over a specific period of time. (A medium dose could look like a dropperful of tincture or a cup of tea several times a day or a nightly ounce of hawthorn cordial.)

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: If taking heart medication, consult with a doctor, and do not use if you have diastolic congestive heart failure. Large doses of hawthorn leaf and flower can cause stomach upset.



How to Use Hawthorn

PARTS USED: leaves, flowers, and berries

To get the tonic effects of hawthorn, you will want ways to make it part of your daily diet for a specific period of time. Some delicious ways to do so:

Make a berry honey to spread on your morning toast. **(recipe on page 14)**

Add a handful of dried hawthorn berries when you make soup stock.

Make a lovely iced tea from a nourishing infusion with hawthorn flowers and/or berries to drink on a hot day. **(follow general infusion instructions on page 37)**

Make a flower- or berry-fermented soda, which is equally delightful. **(recipe on page 292)**

Make a berry cordial—one of my personal favorites! **(recipe on page 39)**

Participant Experiences

We found hawthorn to be a delicious, gentle tonic that is deeply grounding and healing. Whether drinking hawthorn infusions, taking dropperfuls of tincture, or sipping Autumn Blush Cordial, we noticed this herb helping to wash away past hurts and heartaches and helping us build emotional resilience. Participants used words like steady heart presence, self-compassion, forgiveness, soothing, softening rough edges, centering, heartwarming, libido charging, passionate, openhearted, courageous, empathic, and playful. Artemis said, “Hawthorn is a warm hug.”



Evoked Perfume

Karin Rose

INGREDIENTS

¼ teaspoon vanilla-infused vodka or vanilla extract

2 drops vetiver (*Vetiveria zizanioides*) essential oil

1 drop ylang-ylang complete (*Cananga odorata*) essential oil

1 drop bergamot (*Citrus bergamia*) FCF essential oil

1 teaspoon Everclear (at least 95% alcohol—this is needed for ylang-ylang proper dilution of 0.8%)

SUPPLIES

10-milliliter glass spray bottle

Tiny funnel

PREPARATION

- 1 Measure each ingredient into a tiny glass or ceramic bowl.
- 2 Use the funnel to pour your blend into your 10-milliliter glass spray bottle.
- 3 Gently roll the bottle between your palms while setting an intention.
- 4 Let it sit (upright) for a week to harmonize.
- 5 Shake the bottle gently before use.
- 6 Spritz the mixture on your hair and body, as desired.

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ Herbal perfume making and aromatherapy requires some learning and skill. Essential oils are wonderful for scent but are made from huge quantities of plant material. It is important to explore safety precautions for using essential oils in proper dilution to be used on your skin. This recipe has been carefully formulated with safety in mind.
- ◆ If you want to play with formulating your own perfumes, there are some online resources at Mountain Rose Herbs and Aromatics International. A great source for safety considerations is Robert Tisserand and Rodney Young's book *Essential Oil Safety* second edition (this is a better and more in-depth version).

Herbal Incense



INGREDIENTS

Damiana Mana Incense

- 1 tablespoon damiana leaf powder
- 1 tablespoon schisandra berry powder
- 1 teaspoon marshmallow root powder

Tulsi Rose Incense

- 1 tablespoon rose petal powder
- 1 tablespoon tulsi leaf powder
- 1 teaspoon marshmallow root powder

Kava Santo Incense

- 1 tablespoon kava root powder
- 1 tablespoon palo santo powder
- 1 teaspoon marshmallow root powder

PREPARATION

- 1** Stir the powders together until they are completely combined.
- 2** Slowly add approximately 1 tablespoon of water to the mix, 5 to 10 drops at a time.
- 3** After each addition of water, use the back of a spoon to mash the powder and water together. At first the mixture will look crumbly, and eventually those crumbles will begin to form a dough. You're looking for a fairly dry dough, just wet enough that it holds together without crumbling apart but definitely not runny.
- 4** Once the mixture can hold together, pinch off a small piece and form it into a cone. I've found that taller, skinnier cones burn best.
- 5** Set the cones on a flat surface and allow them to dry for about 5 to 7 days. If your cones are not burning well, give them a few more days to dry. You can also dry your cones in a dehydrator or on low heat in an oven.
- 6** To burn a cone, first place it on a fire-safe surface. Light the tip and allow it to burn slightly until the tip burns red and it is smoking freely.



Hydrosol Mist Air Fresheners

INGREDIENTS

Heart's Breath

Rose hydrosol and hawthorn flower hydrosol (equal parts of both)

Surrender

Tulsi hydrosol and lavender hydrosol (equal parts of both)

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ For directions on making your own hydrosols, see the recipe for Sweet Spot Facial and Yoni Mist on page 99. Purchased hydrosols are often more fragrant than those made at home and are probably preferable as air fresheners.





THREE



FALLING
IN LOVE
WITH
YOUR BODY

Seda Blanca Bath

INGREDIENTS

1 cup rolled oats



PREPARATION

- 1** Fill a muslin bag with the oats.
- 2** Draw a bath (or step into a shower), taking the bag of oats into the water with you.
- 3** As you soak, squeeze the bag and enjoy the silky smooth, milky texture that the oats add to the water. You can also rub the bag along your skin to feel this silkiness even more directly.

BATH NOTES

- ◆ Breathe deeply, enjoying the softness of this bathing experience. The silkiness of the oats on your skin can be a way to revel in the pleasurable memories, and sinking into the hot milky water can help soothe places where you are feeling tenderness or pain and bring you into places in your body where you have been shut down. Close your eyes and relax, allowing the oats to work their magic, calming and nourishing you and your body. Allow yourself to feel whatever emotions are emerging.
- ◆ Learning to hold myself while fully feeling my emotions has been one of the most empowering skills I have learned. We tend to think that if we let ourselves feel our sadness or fear, our anger or hopelessness, that we will never find our way back to joy, happiness, hope, and faith. In reality, when fully honored and felt, intense emotions often pass fairly quickly, and as we move through them, we find a new sense of freedom and ease and heightened feelings of hope and joy. A soothing Seda Blanca Bath can help with this holding, feeling, and moving through emotions. As we do so, our lives may begin to shift in substantial and often unexpected ways.
- ◆ Perhaps you already have ways of nourishing yourself when you need to move through difficult things or revel in pleasurable feelings. Whatever your methods are, I encourage you to practice them regularly in the days and months to come as you continue on your journey of embodiment and sexual empowerment.

AshwaMacaMocha Shake

John Gallagher

INGREDIENTS

Root Blend

Yield: Enough powder for 7 shakes

¾ ounce ashwagandha root powder (approximately 4 tablespoons)

¾ ounce roasted dandelion root powder (or Dandy Blend) (approximately 3 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon)

¾ ounce beetroot powder (approximately 3 tablespoons)

1 ounce maca root powder (approximately 4 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon)

1 ounce cacao powder (approximately 9 tablespoons)

Shake

8 ounces crushed ice

4 ounces of your favorite creamy beverage (milk, coconut milk, etc.)

1 banana

3 tablespoons (or one 3-ounce scoop) Root Blend

PREPARATION

Root Blend

1 Put the powdered ingredients in a mason jar with a lid and shake it really well. This is your mix for the week.

Shake

1 Blend shake ingredients with 8 ounces of water in a blender or in a mason jar with a hand blender.

2 Pour the shake into your favorite glass, and enjoy!

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ The “mocha” in this recipe is created by adding cacao powder with roasted dandelion root.
- ◆ Roasted dandelion root is available through Mountain Rose Herbs. You can also use Dandy Blend, which is a caffeine-free herbal coffee substitute that is widely available.
- ◆ Beetroot powder has a myriad of health benefits and colors the shake a velvety red. For a zero-sugar option, Mercola makes fermented beetroot powder.







MACA



Lepidium meyenii, syn. L. peruvianum



If you are lucky enough to get it fresh, maca can be eaten much like sweet potatoes. It has a butterscotch flavor. Maca root is more available to most of us dried and powdered. This powder makes a delightful addition to smoothies and herbal treats like Maca Butter Barz (page 304).

How Does Maca Work in Our Bodies?

Maca has been called a superfood. It is packed with beneficial nutrients, including essential fatty acids (omega-3 and omega-5), vitamins B1, B2, B12, C, and E, calcium, iodine, and iron. So it is a wonderful nourisher for our bodies, helping to increase strength and stamina.

Because of its nutrient profile, maca has a wide range of positive effects on sexual function, sperm production, female reproductive function, memory, depression and anxiety, and energy, as well as reducing benign prostate enlargement, osteoporosis, aging, and metabolic syndrome.¹ Maca acts as a hormone balancer and adaptogen, which means it can help our bodies adapt to stress, helping to normalize our bodies' endocrine and metabolic processes via positive effects on our hypothalamic-pituitary axis, which leads to positive effects on our adrenals, thyroid, and pancreas.²

Sexually speaking, maca may increase our bodies' production of estrogen, testosterone, and progesterone, thus enhancing reproductive health.³ It can help support women's bodies during menopause, addressing symptoms like hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings, and vaginal dryness.⁴

Maca also enhances libido and improves fertility in both sexes.⁵ A combination of maca with Chinese chive seed provides positive effects on male sexual function.⁶ It also increases the quality and motility of sperm.⁷ Maca has a significant effect on performance and perception of general and sexual well-being in adult males with erectile dysfunction.⁸

In the grand time scale of herbal usage, maca has only recently found its way to the “modern world” and thus is just beginning to have molecular research to support all the experiential claims of this powerful plant. The current research has discovered a group of bioactive compounds found only within maca, called macamides.⁹ Studies show that macamides have neuroprotective effects and cannabimimetic actions, meaning they act similarly to *Cannabis* in the body.¹⁰ One of maca’s most notable impacts on our biochemistry is its ability to break down and thus release anandamide in the body. Anandamide (also known as “the bliss molecule”) is an endocannabinoid made in the body.¹¹ The breakdown of anandamide has been shown to boost mood and decrease fear, releasing feel-good qualities into the body. Macamides may also act on the central nervous system by regulating the release of other neurotransmitters.¹²

Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: *adaptogen, emotionally uplifting, hormone balancing, improves fertility, nutritive, restorative*

ENERGETICS: *warming, moistening*

TASTES: *sweet*

NOTABLE APHRODISIAC CONSTITUENTS: *essential fatty acids (omega-3 and omega-5), vitamins B1, B2, B12, C, and E, calcium, iodine, iron, macamides¹³*

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: *Maca is a tonic herb and should be taken in medium doses on a regular basis for a specific period of time. (A medium dose could look like 5–20 grams dried root daily or a dropperful of tincture 3 times daily.)*

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: *High doses may cause insomnia.*

Also, use this herb with a high level of conscious choice. It has been used traditionally among the Andean people for over 1,000 years, but there have not been enough clinical trials to scientifically support all the health claims currently attributed to it. There is a possibility that the health benefits of maca have been exaggerated to increase sales.

Another issue to be aware of is that Peruvians are struggling to meet the global demand, and maca being cultivated in other areas for mass production may include the use of fertilizers and pesticides, which may affect the phytochemistry and composition of the plant. So please be especially careful in checking your sources if you choose to experiment with maca. Make sure it is not being grown with fertilizers and pesticides and that it is being grown in a sustainable way.

As you feel into the benefits of adding this herb into your diet, consider carefully if it is one you want to include on an ongoing basis. For sustainability reasons, it is always preferable to call upon a dooryard herb, one that grows in your own bioregion, for ongoing use. However, you may choose to call on an exotic herb for a time if the health benefits are significant. I would like to encourage you to do your research and make an informed choice.

A Bit about Maca

Maca is a turniplike plant that grows at high altitudes (12,500-14,400 feet). It is grown in the Andes Mountains in Peru and Bolivia and also in Brazil. Different varieties have roots of various sizes, shapes, colors, and sweetness.



How to Use Maca

PARTS USED: roots

To get the tonic effects of maca, you will want to take it regularly for an extended period of time. You can take it in capsule or tincture form or add the root powder to smoothies or other foods.

Maca root is cooked, baked, fermented as a drink, and made into porridge.



Participant Experiences

Those of us who experimented with maca found it to be grounding while also giving a steady energy boost. Rebecca was hoping maca would help with her menopausal symptoms but did not find the hormonal changes to be positive. The smell made her queasy, and maca threw off her digestion. Other friends have reported quite the opposite, swearing by maca to balance hormones and help with hot flashes and night sweats. I am currently taking a daily dose of maca and am enjoying its grounding effect. I find my hot flashes are fairly mild.

Robert remembered taking it in capsule form during a period of time when he was training hard for rowing. He found that it “raised his base energy so he didn’t crash so much after hard work.” Similarly, Cassie found that maca was very supportive for her through a stressful period at work. It gave her an energy boost and also heightened her libido.

Both Joe and Sarah noted that maca helped them to feel more centered and promoted a stronger sense of self. Joe said he felt “rooted and empowered” and “enjoyed a sense of grounded depth in [his] sexuality.”

Five Springs Tea

INGREDIENTS

1 ounce schisandra berries

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ In general, when you want to extract constituents from harder plant material like dried berries, roots, or seeds, I would recommend making a decoction (simmering the plant material in boiling water for at least 20 minutes), but I find these schisandra berries infuse the water quite well without boiling. You can use the same measurements and make a decoction for a stronger tea.

PREPARATION

- 1 Put the berries in a quart jar.
- 2 Fill the jar with 1 quart of cool water.
- 3 Infuse in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours (more time gives a stronger flavor).
- 4 Strain and enjoy!



Love's Touch Massage Oil



INGREDIENTS

1 cup finely chopped fresh
(or ½ cup dried) rose petals

1 cup almond oil

5 to 10 drops of Rose Otto
(optional, for added scent)

PREPARATION

We will be making this oil in a slow cooker. You will need a pot or jar that will fit inside the slow cooker without touching the sides. I like to make mine using the top of my double boiler. It fits perfectly into my slow cooker without touching the sides or bottom.

- 1** Put the rose petals and oil in the top of a double boiler or in a jar. If using dried roses, cover with a lid. If using fresh rose petals, leave uncovered or cover with cheesecloth secured with a rubber band.
- 2** Place a small folded cloth or towel on the bottom of your slow cooker.
- 3** Place the pot or jar with the oil on top of the towel.
- 4** Put enough water in the slow cooker to reach ¼ way up the side of the pot or jar.
- 5** Set the slow cooker to warm and leave the slow cooker lid off.
- 6** Allow the oil to infuse on warm for 48 hours, refilling water as needed. (Be sure to fill water up before going to bed and then first thing in the morning.)
- 7** Using a fine mesh strainer, strain the petals from the oil, reserving the oil and composting the petals.
- 8** Store the oil in an easy-pour jar, and use the oil within 3 months.



HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ Herbal oils are tricky to make because they can easily become rancid if too much water gets into the oil or if it gets too hot. To prevent your oil from becoming rancid, do the following:
 - Make sure your hands and all your implements are perfectly dry. (Water can cause rancidity.)
 - Infuse oils for only a few hours or days.
 - During and after infusing, cover your oil with cheesecloth or paper towel instead of a tight lid to allow excess water to evaporate.
 - Use slow, gentle heat. Heat helps to extract plant constituents into the oil, but high heat will cause your oil to go rancid.
- ◆ Finely chopping your plant material will increase the surface area and help create a stronger infusion.
- ◆ When making any kind of infusion (water, oil, vinegar, alcohol, etc.), it is important to keep all of the plant material completely covered with liquid to prevent mold.
- ◆ Without the Rose Otto, this makes a delicately scented oil. The amount of scent will depend on the fragrance of your rose petals. Good quality rose essential oil (that has not been adulterated) can cost hundreds of dollars per ounce. I suggest using Rose Otto as an alternative. It is good quality rose essential oil diluted in jojoba. Please feel free to do your research and choose your own way of adding scent to this oil.

Slippery When Wet

This slippery herbal lube is great for genital massage.

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup aloe vera gel
- 2 teaspoons dried fenugreek seeds
- 2 teaspoons dried, cut, and sifted marshmallow root
- 2 teaspoons dried, cut, and sifted kava root (optional)

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ In this recipe you are infusing the demulcent and other herbal qualities into the aloe gel by allowing the plants to rest in the aloe overnight.
- ◆ Please use high quality, pure aloe gel. Some varieties of aloe prove too sticky for lube.

PREPARATION

- 1 Put the aloe gel into an 8-ounce mason jar.
- 2 Stir in fenugreek, marshmallow, and kava.
- 3 Cover and allow to sit overnight.
- 4 Strain and enjoy!



Aphrodite's Kiss

Rosemary Gladstar

This luscious herbal lube can also be used as a nourishing body oil.

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup cocoa butter
- ½ cup coconut oil
- 1 cup almond oil
- ¼ ounce dried rose petals (⅔ cup)
- ¼ ounce dried hawthorn flowers and leaves (½ cup)
- 10 cardamom pods
- Vitamin E oil (about 25 drops)

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ Herbal oils work well as a base for many body-care products like lotions and body butters. In this recipe the oil is heated and only infused for one hour. If you want to pull more constituents from the plants into the oil, you can increase the infusion time.
- ◆ While petroleum-based oils are not recommended for genital use, these natural oils can work well for many bodies.

PREPARATION

- 1 Warm the oils in the top of a double boiler until they are thoroughly melted.
- 2 Add the herbs to the melted oil mixture. Let them macerate in the oil over very low heat for about one hour.
- 3 Strain the oil while it is still warm.
- 4 Stir in the vitamin E oil.
- 5 Pour into a small jar, and refrigerate until solid.
- 6 Remove the jar from the refrigerator, and store at room temperature for later use.





Simple Sugar Scrub

INGREDIENTS

½ cup rose-infused almond oil
(or plain almond oil if you don't
have any infused with roses)

¼ cup sesame oil for skincare
(not culinary type)

1½ cups granulated sugar

PREPARATION

- 1 Combine ingredients by stirring them together.
- 2 Store in a wide-mouth jar.
- 3 To use, simply use your hands or a washcloth to rub the scrub onto your skin. Rinse with warm water.

Kimberly's Love Your Body Lotion

INGREDIENTS

¾ ounce beeswax

⅓ cup coconut oil

¼ cup Balm of Gilead almond oil
(cottonwood bud-infused oil)

¼ cup rose-infused almond oil

¼ cup calendula-infused
grapeseed oil

⅓ cup chamomile hydrosol

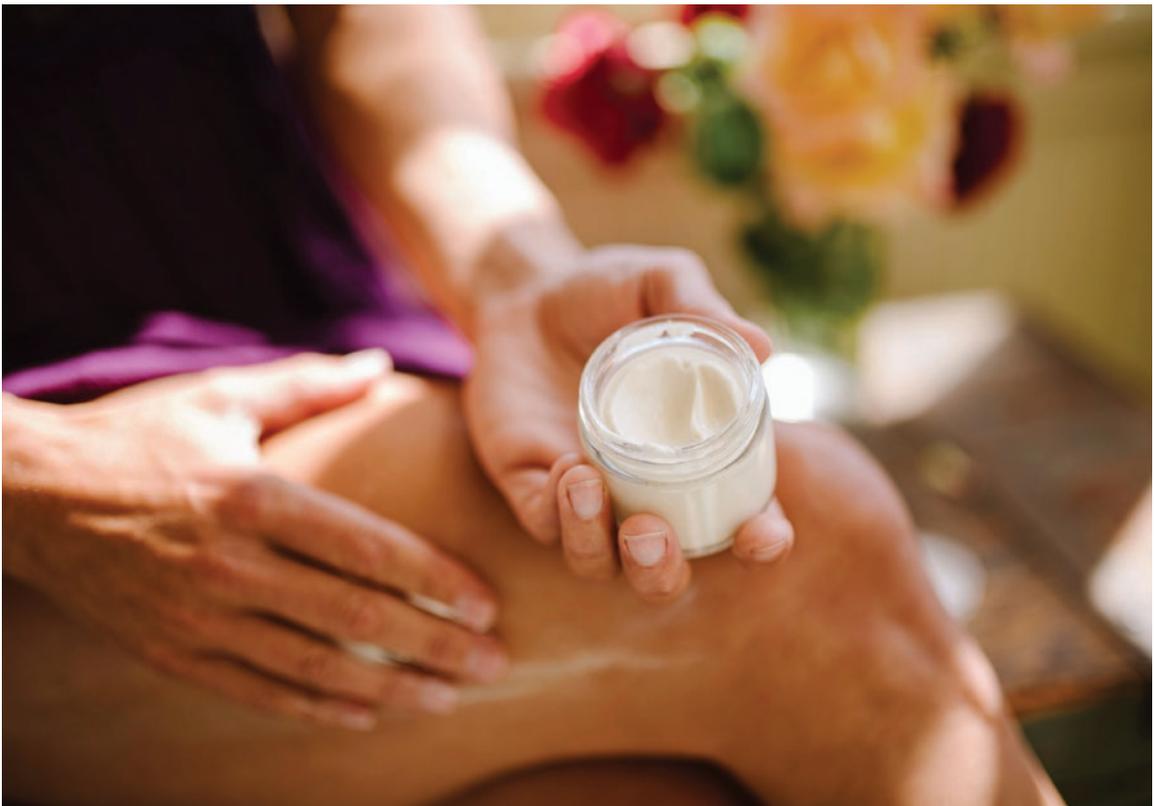
⅓ cup rose hydrosol

⅓ cup aloe gel

- 1 Melt the beeswax in the top of a double boiler. Add the coconut oil and stir until melted.
- 2 Add the infused oils and stir until everything is liquified. Remove from heat immediately.
- 3 Pour the mixture into a blender and allow it to cool while you combine the remaining ingredients in a measuring cup with a pour spout.
- 4 This is the tricky part of lotion making—combining the oil and water:
 - a. Allow the oils to cool to just a bit above room temperature.
 - b. Turn the blender on, and bring it up to high speed.
 - c. Pour in the liquids while the blender is spinning.
 - d. As soon as the blender “chokes,” turn it off.
 - e. Use a spatula to gently stir any remaining water into the oils.
 - f. Blend again on low for about a minute to smooth out the mixture.
- 5 Pour the mixture into lotion-storage jars

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ You can buy infused herbal oils for this recipe (Etsy can be a good source) or make them yourself. If you make them yourself, remember that it is important to follow the tips about preventing oils from going rancid in the Love's Touch Massage Oil recipe (page 74).
- ◆ For me, making this lotion is a year-long project that begins with harvesting the cottonwood buds in January or February. I fill a mason jar halfway with cottonwood buds, then pour oil over the buds to fill the jar. Then I stir and cover the jar with paper towel, using a rubber band to secure it (this allows any water to evaporate out). I stir daily for at least one week, and then allow the buds to stay in the oil until early December, when I make this lotion as a holiday present. Then, I strain out the buds, use the oil in my lotion recipe, and put the now resin-coated jars into the cabinet for next year's batch. (Cleaning them is almost impossible.) If you don't want to wait a whole year for your lotion, you can strain the oil after it sits at least six weeks or use one of the heated methods for quick results.
- ◆ Cottonwood oil is an exception to not letting oils infuse for a long period of time. Cottonwood is a natural preservative, and I have had success letting it infuse for months.
- ◆ I gather rose petals in the spring and calendula in the summer. I infuse these oils outside in the summer sun for three days or use the technique described in the Love's Touch Massage Oil recipe (page 74).





FOUR



THE

JOY

OF

PAMPERING



HERBAL SPA
PREPARATIONS





Luscious Locks



INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon coconut oil (melted)
- 1 tablespoon avocado
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 drops of your favorite essential oil (optional)

PREPARATION

- 1 Mix the ingredients together in a small bowl.
- 2 Work the mixture into your hair using your hands.
- 3 If your hair is long, put it up with a barrette to keep oil off your clothes.
- 4 Allow the mixture to remain in your hair for at least an hour.
- 5 Rinse your hair and let it dry.

Mineral Rinse



INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup rolled oats

PREPARATION

- 1 Put the oats in a mesh bag and submerge the bag in 4 cups of water.
- 2 Squeeze the bag with your hands to release the milky softness into the water.
- 3 Remove the bag and compost the oats. (Rinsing the bag immediately will make for easier clean up.)
- 4 Pour oat water into your already wet hair in the shower or over the sink, and work the liquid in with your hands.
- 5 Let the oat water rest in your hair for 5 minutes and then rinse it clean.





Miracle Grains *Rosemary Gladstar*



INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups white clay
- 1 cup finely ground oats
- ¼ cup finely ground almonds
- ⅛ cup finely ground dried lavender flowers
- ⅛ cup dried poppy seeds
- ⅛ cup finely ground dried rose petals

PREPARATION

- 1 Combine all the ingredients. Store them in a closed-top container.
- 2 To use, mix 1 to 2 teaspoons of the cleansing grains with a small amount of water to make a paste.
- 3 Gently massage the paste onto your face, and rest with it on until the clay dries.
- 4 Rinse it off with warm water.

Rose Honey Mask



INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup dried rose petals (1 tablespoon rose petal powder)
- 2 tablespoons honey

PREPARATION

- 1 Use a coffee grinder to grind rose petals into a fine powder.
- 2 Add honey to a small pot and heat gently over low heat.
- 3 Add powdered rose to the warm honey and stir together.
- 4 Remove from heat and transfer the mixture to a small dish.
- 5 Use your fingers to apply the mixture to your face. Leave it on for 10-20 minutes.
- 6 To remove the mask, gently wipe your face with a warm washcloth or combine this treatment with the Facial de Fleur (on the next page) and steam the honey into your skin. Use a washcloth to remove any excess honey after the steam.



Facial de Fleur

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons dried chamomile flowers
- 1 tablespoon dried lavender flowers
- 3 tablespoons dried rose petals
- 2 tablespoons dried fennel seeds
- 6 whole fresh or dried calendula flowers

PREPARATION

- 1 Place herbs/flowers in a large bowl and pour 3 cups of boiling water over top.
- 2 When the steam is a comfortable temperature, place your face over the bowl and create a tent around your head and neck with a bath towel to keep the steam in. Stay under the towel for 3 to 15 minutes, depending on your comfort level.



Sweet Spot Facial and Yoni Mist

Rose, chamomile, or calendula hydrosols make a lovely, nourishing mist.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup of dried flowers or petals, or 2 cups fresh

PREPARATION

If creating your own hydrosol, do the following:

- 1** Place a shallow glass bowl upside down in the center of a large soup pot, and place another slightly deeper bowl on top, right-side up. (There should be enough room to place the soup pot lid upside down so the lid handle hangs in the center of the top bowl.)
- 2** Evenly distribute the fresh or dried herbs around the bowls stacked in the center of the pot. If any of the flowers fall into the top bowl, just pick them out and place them evenly around.
- 3** Pour 2 to 3 cups of water over the herbs, being careful not to get any water in the top bowl. The water should just cover the herbs.
- 4** Place your lid upside down over the pot so the lid handle is hanging down toward the center of the top bowl (ideally there is space between the lid handle and the basin of the top bowl). Bring your burner to medium-high heat, and turn down to low immediately when the water begins to simmer. Aim for a steady and very gentle simmer, just enough to get the water evaporating steadily toward the lid and dripping down into the bowl.
- 5** Just as the water begins to simmer, place enough ice cubes in the upside-down lid to almost cover the surface. This will help the steam condense and drop into your top bowl. As the ice cubes melt because of the heat, remove the water with a turkey baster or by carefully lifting the lid to the sink, dumping it out, and placing it back on the pot for the next load of ice cubes. Do this until the bowl is full and/or the water in the pot is almost gone.
- 6** Remove the top bowl from the pot when it is full or the water is almost completely evaporated from the bottom of the pot, and set it aside to cool.
- 7** Pour into a spray bottle for misting.

Love Your Body Lotion

This makes a great face cream.



Basic Balm

INGREDIENTS

- ½ ounce beeswax
- ¼ cup jojoba oil
- 5 drops vitamin E oil

PREPARATION

- 1 Set out your lip balm tubes or jars, and remove lids.
- 2 Melt the beeswax in the top of a double boiler (and cacao butter for Chocolate Kiss, below).
- 3 Add oil(s) and stir until liquified.
- 4 Remove the mixture from the heat.
- 5 Stir in the vitamin E oil (and essential oil and cacao powder for Chocolate Kiss, below).
- 6 Pour the mixture into lip balm tubes or small jars and allow it to cool and harden.
- 7 Store the balm in a cool place to prevent melting.

Chocolate Kiss Lip Balm

INGREDIENTS

- 0.3 ounces beeswax
- 0.2 ounces cacao butter
- ¼ cup rose-infused sweet almond oil
- 1 teaspoon cacao powder
- 4 to 10 drops Rose Otto for scent (10% rose in jojoba oil)
- 10 drops vitamin E oil

PREPARATION

Step 1: *Making rose-infused almond oil:*

Use the recipe for Love's Touch Massage Oil (page 74) or:

- 1 Loosely fill a mason jar with fresh, finely chopped rose petals and cover them with enough almond oil to fill the jar. Stir, making sure the rose petals are completely covered with oil.
- 2 Place a paper towel over the top of the jar with a rubber band to secure it, and let it sit in the sun for 3 days. Bring it inside at night and stir daily.
- 3 Strain through a clean cheesecloth, reserving the oil and composting the petals.

Step 2: *Follow the preparation instructions for Basic Balm.*

Hot Lips Lip Balm

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup schisandra and ginger-infused jojoba oil
- ½ ounce beeswax
- 5 to 10 drops vitamin E oil
- 5 to 10 drops sweet orange (*Citrus sinensis*) essential oil



PREPARATION

Step 1: *Making the infused oil:*

You will make this oil in a slow cooker. You will need a pot or jar that will fit inside the slow cooker without touching the sides. I like to make mine using the top of my double boiler. It fits perfectly into my slow cooker without touching the sides or bottom.

- 1** Put ¼ cup dried schisandra berries and ¾ cup jojoba oil in the top of a double boiler. Cover with a lid.
- 2** Place a small folded cloth or towel on the bottom of your slow cooker.
- 3** Place the double-boiler pan with the oil on top of the towel so that it is not in contact with the bottom or sides of the slow cooker.
- 4** Put enough water in the slow cooker to reach ¼ way up the side of the pan.
- 5** Set the slow cooker to warm and leave the lid off.
- 6** Allow the oil to infuse on warm for 24 hours, refilling the slow cooker with water as needed. (Be sure to fill the water up before going to bed.)
- 7** Add ¼ cup freshly grated ginger to the oil, and allow to infuse for another 12 hours.
- 8** Strain the herbs from the oil, reserving the oil and composting the herbs.

Step 2: *Follow the preparation instructions for Basic Balm.*



Divinity Soak



INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons cacao nibs
- 2 tablespoons dried tulsi leaves
- 10 cardamom pods, lightly crushed
- 1 tablespoon powdered ginger root
- 2 tablespoons rose buds or petals
- 2 tablespoons hawthorn flowers
- 1 cup Epsom salts

PREPARATION

- 1 Mix the ingredients together.
- 2 Put the mixture into a muslin bag and take it into the bath with you, letting the herbs infuse into the water through the bag. The bag is important because it prevents the cacao nibs from staining the bottom of your tub.



Rose Glow Body Scrub

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup powdered oats
- ½ cup powdered rose petals

PREPARATION

- 1** Using a clean coffee grinder, mini blender, or a small food processor, coarsely grind/chop the oats and rose petals separately. (The roses will take fewer pulses before they are broken down.)
- 2** Grind the ingredients finer if you wish to use this mix for your face, or leave them a little coarser for a full-body scrub.
- 3** Mix the powders together.
- 4** Keep the powder mixture stored in an airtight container for easy sink or shower use.
- 5** To apply, get your body or face slightly moist, and sprinkle the scrub over your wet skin. Rub the scrub into your skin in circular motions or as preferred. Rinse off with warm water or a warm washcloth for a silky and glowing result.



Tulsi Rose Body Butter



INGREDIENTS

¾ cup carrier oil (jojoba, almond, apricot kernel, etc.)

¼ cup fresh, chopped tulsi leaves (or ⅛ cup dried)

½ cup fresh, chopped rose petals (or ¼ cup dried)

100 grams shea butter

100 grams cacao butter

5 drops lavender essential oil (*Lavandula angustifolia*) or Rose Otto (optional, for added scent)

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ Any of the methods described for making rose herbal oil infusions are effective for most any oils. Feel free to use the one you like best—slow cooker, double boiler, or a jar in the sun.



PREPARATION

To make the infused oil, you can use the slow cooker method described in the Love's Touch Massage Oil recipe (page 74) or use a double boiler on the stove. If using a double boiler, place the carrier oil and tulsi leaves in the top of a double boiler. Heat the ingredients until they are fairly warm to the touch. Turn off the heat and let it stand. Every couple of hours, reheat the oil and then let it stand. Continue this for 24 to 48 hours (heat it before you go to bed and then again first thing in the morning). Be sure to heat the oil slowly and avoid letting the temperature get overly hot.

- 1 Strain the rose petals and tulsi leaves from the warm oil using a fine mesh strainer or cheesecloth. Compost the plant material. You will need ½ cup of oil for this recipe. Extra oil can be used as a bath or body oil or saved for another recipe.
- 2 Place the shea and cacao butters in a double boiler, and heat until melted.
- 3 Remove it from the heat, and add ½ cup of the infused tulsi oil and lavender essential oil. Stir well.
- 4 Refrigerate until the mixture begins to harden and looks opaque.
- 5 Whip the mixture vigorously using a cake mixer or immersion wand. (You may have to let it warm a bit if it became too hard in the refrigerator.) It should be light and fluffy when done.
- 6 Transfer the mixture to jars. Store in a cool place (for up to one year). If it gets too warm, the mixture will decrease in volume but will still be fine to use.
- 7 Spread the body butter on warm skin, preferably just out of the shower or bath.



Pampered Petals Yoni Steam

Yoni steams have a long history of use. They are nourishing for the exterior vulva lips that the steam can reach. Please be careful to let the steam cool enough so that you do not burn these sensitive tissues!

INGREDIENTS

Flowers can be fresh or dried.

½ cup chamomile flowers

½ cup rose petals

6 cups water

PREPARATION

- 1** Boil water, remove it from the heat, and pour it into a bowl.
- 2** Add chamomile flowers and rose petals.
- 3** Squat over the bowl to steam your yoni, or sit on a stool with a hole in it and a blanket covering your bottom half and the stool to keep the steam inside.







Pampered Sole



INGREDIENTS

All these herbs can be fresh or dried.

½ cup rose petals

½ cup lavender flowers

½ cup tulsi leaves

½ cup chamomile flowers

PREPARATION

- 1** Boil 8 to 12 cups of water.
- 2** Place the herbs into a foot tub, and pour boiling water over top.
- 3** Add cool water until it is just the right temperature for your feet, and enjoy soaking for as long as you like.
- 4** Follow the foot bath with a scrub with a pumice stone and then Love Your Body Lotion (page 86).

Tender Titillation Tea

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon dried rose petals
1 tablespoon dried oat tops
1 tablespoon dried damiana leaves
2 tablespoons dried hawthorn flowers
Honey, to taste

PREPARATION

- 1** Boil 1½ cups of water, then place the herbs in a cup and pour the just-boiled water over them.
- 2** Cover and let the herbs steep for 15 minutes. Strain.
- 3** Add honey to taste. I definitely recommend adding some. This tea is delicious when sweetened!

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ This is a wonderful blend to make in larger batches and store in a jar. (You can do this with any of the dried tea blends in the book—just use the ratio in the recipe to put together a large batch of the mixed herbs.) It can be made by the pot to share with friends.
- ◆ Though it seems like a lot of herbs for one cup of tea, I find the ratio of 5 tablespoons of herbs to 1½ cups of water makes a really delightful blend.









OATS



Avena sativa



My daily Golden Oat Infusion (page 37) has always felt like a sweet, calming gift for my nervous system and a nourishing source of vitamins and minerals (especially calcium) for my whole body. This book project led me to discover that oats have been called a modern-day love potion and to realize the aphrodisiac effects of oats. At one point, I found myself giving a talk on aphrodisiac herbs and suddenly realized that perhaps that daily quart of infusion is part of what led to me giving such a talk!

How Do Oats Work in Our Bodies?

Oats have amazing relaxing, soothing, and calming properties. They work as a nervous system tonic by coating and protecting our nerve endings and helping repair damage to the myelin sheath that covers nerve fibers.¹ This helps reduce stress and irritability so we receive more pleasure from touch.

Oats are also incredibly nourishing and restorative. They are packed with vitamins and minerals and are especially rich in magnesium and calcium.² They also can help stabilize our blood sugar levels and nourish our hormonal systems, which helps decrease mood swings.³ Because they are high in silica, they are also nourishing for our skin, bones, hair, and nails.⁴

Oats also have a unique set of antioxidants known as avenanthramides. These compounds have been shown to have a myriad of powerful protective and nourishing qualities, including suppressing the release of histamine; restoring the skin's natural barrier; reducing inflammation; protecting DNA of skin cells against environmental insults, including UV radiation; and protecting the cardiovascular and neurological systems. Some have even called oats an "elixir of youth" because of all the protective and nourishing qualities of the avenanthramides.⁵

Sexually speaking, oats are nourishing for our endocrine system,⁶ the collection of glands that produce hormones that regulate metabolism, growth and development, tissue function, sexual function, reproduction, sleep, and mood. They are a tonic for our ovaries and uterus and nourish our reproductive organs to restore and heal them or to provide optimum nourishment for them if they are already healthy.⁷ The demulcent or lubricating aspect of oats also helps promote vaginal lubrication.⁸

When used regularly, oats also nourish and tonify our hearts and blood vessels.⁹ They improve blood flow, which can help with erectile dysfunction.¹⁰ Oats also liberate testosterone and improve sperm motility.¹¹

A Bit about Oat Plants

There is simple beauty in a field of oat plants—their golden color, their delicate stems bent with the weight of dangling oat tops.

Oats are generally grown in temperate areas and can thrive in most any well-drained soil.

Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: *cardiotonic, demulcent, endocrine system tonic, energy building, nervine, nutritive, restorative*

OTHER ACTIONS: *diuretic, antispasmodic*

ENERGETICS: *warming, moistening*

TASTES: *sweet*

CONSTITUENTS: *avenanthramides (a unique set of antioxidants), high in vitamins and minerals like calcium, magnesium, silica, potassium, B and E vitamins*

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: *Oats are a nourishing herb and can be consumed as you would any healthy food. I recommend 1 quart of Golden Oat Infusion daily. Oat top tincture can be used as needed throughout the day to soothe nerves and calm anxiety.*

How to Use Oats

PARTS USED: Oatstraw and oat tops

Daily Golden Oat Infusion (page 37)—for maximum nourishing and tonic effects

Oatstraw or oat top tea (1 tablespoon of herb in 1 cup of boiled water, steeped for 20 minutes)—for settling and soothing your nerves in order to relax

Soothe Tincture (page 203)—20 to 125 drops per day—nourishing and relaxing for nervous system

Seda Blanca Bath (page 61)—soothing and skin nourishing

Oatstraw bath or sitz bath—to relax and soften tissues (add as much as a gallon of infusion to your bath water)

Oatstraw foot bath—to soothe and pamper your feet

Mineral Rinse (page 94)—to nourish your hair and scalp

Add oats to facial scrubs for gentle cleansing.

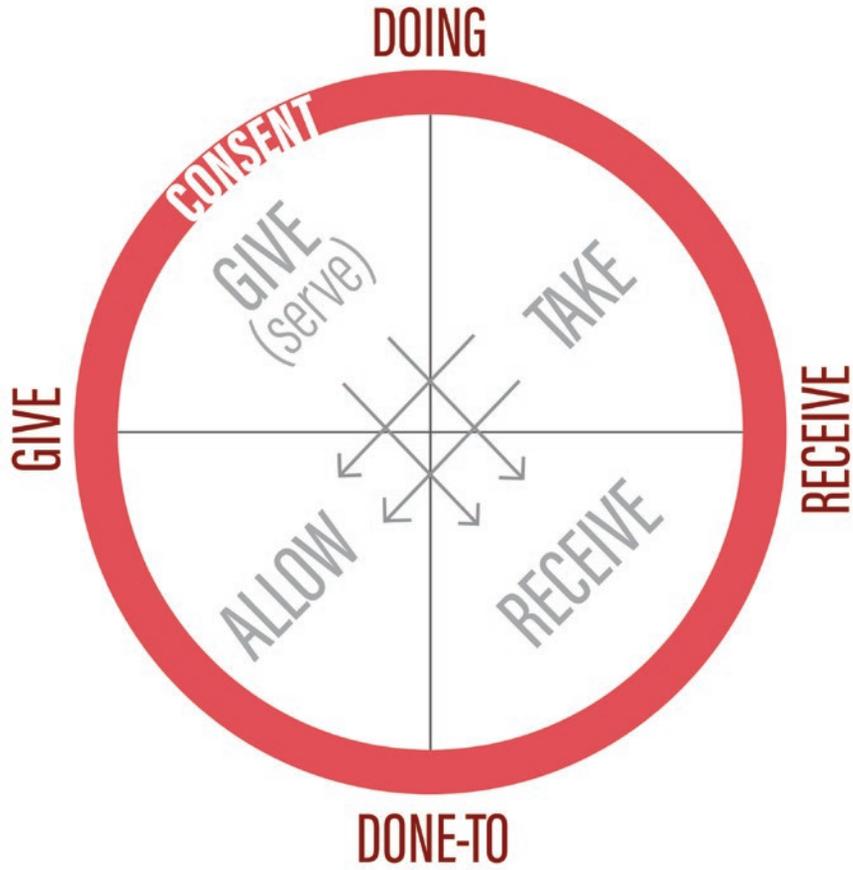


Participant Experiences

We found that Golden Oat Infusions brought a soothing, nurturing, grounding, and restorative energy to our lives, a sense of calm resilience. Artemis found that Golden Oat Infusions really grounded her in self-love. She felt “a sense of calm, steady flexibility beneath a feeling of alive and surging passion.” She also noticed an increase in vaginal lubrication. Cassie and I also echoed the effect of increased vaginal lubrication.

For Joe, the Golden Oat Infusions led to his most profound healing experience over the course of the project. He’d been experiencing ejaculations that were so strong they were painful, but the oats really smoothed them out, making them more fluid and pain free. This shift allowed him to really sink in and enjoy sexual connection much more.

Another way we really enjoyed engaging with oats was as a Seda Blanca Bath. Michelle and Robert really enjoyed shared Seda Blanca Baths, squeezing the milky oat bags onto each other’s skin and massaging each other with them. Lisa enjoyed a luxurious self-pleasuring Seda Blanca Bath.



The plants gift us with their flowers, leaves, and roots for nourishment and healing. Caring for the plants that we gather is part of honoring them for the gifts they give. As you bring the plants into your life, please be in this kind of reciprocal relationship with them, caring for them and honoring them even as you accept their gifts.





FIVE



THE

DANCE

OF

RELATIONSHIP

Relating Meditation Exercise

A wonderful couple who are friends of mine shared with me something they call a relating meditation. I think it is a beautiful tool for learning to stay connected with yourself while relating with another and for practicing once you've learned it. This is my own version of their work.

- 1 Find a partner to practice with, and decide who will speak first.
- 2 Sit facing one another with your eyes closed, and breathe deeply, focusing on your breath. Feel it moving in and out of your body. Take 10 deep breaths this way, tuning in to yourself.
- 3 After your 10th breath, open your eyes and look into the eyes of your partner. Take five more deep breaths, just being present with one another and breathing.
- 4 After the fifth breath, the person speaking first says, "Sitting here looking at you, I'm noticing _____." Fill in the blank with a body sensation (e.g., a tingling in your toes, a warmth in your belly, a tightness in your shoulder).
- 5 The other person speaks, saying, "Sitting here looking at you, I'm noticing _____." Then they fill the blank with a sensation they are noticing in their own body.
- 6 Go back and forth like this several times. Notice how it feels to be present with another while staying tuned in to your own body sensations enough to identify them and speak them.

SECOND ROUND:

Relating While Being Present with Yourself and Present in Space

- 1 Take turns again with one person saying, "Sitting here looking at you, I'm noticing _____." This time, fill in the blank with a body sensation and one thing you are noticing in your environment (e.g., a slight breeze on your left cheek, the sunlight streaming in through a window, the beauty of a sculpture behind you).

THIRD ROUND:

Making Requests

- 1 This is a round for practicing making requests and receiving an authentic response. You need not fulfill the requests that come up during the exercise. Again, take turns in this round, repeating this series as many times as you like.
- 2 You say, "Sitting here looking at you, I'm noticing _____." Fill in the blank with a body sensation and a noticing from the environment, and then add a request that bubbles up from this present moment. (This request can be anything. "Smile with me. Let me rub your shoulder. Come run around the room with me . . ." Allow yourself to be enthusiastic, even childlike, in your request.)
- 3 Allow your partner to feel your enthusiasm for the idea, truly trusting them to take care of themselves when they answer.
- 4 Your partner, after listening to the cues from their body (as we learned in Chapter 3), will then answer with a yes or a no.
- 5 Whichever answer they give, say thank you. Their no is as precious as their yes since you truly only want to do the thing with someone who is a full yes. Their no can actually help you trust their yes's much more fully as you learn to trust that this is someone who will take care of themselves.

There is a lot going on in this last round. It's an opportunity to practice being fully present in the moment and allowing a simple request to bubble up from the energy generated between the two of you. It is an opportunity to practice speaking what is alive for you in the moment without attachment to it happening. It is an opportunity to practice feeling into and speaking your authentic yes and your authentic no and to have either answer greeted with enthusiasm and respect. It is an opportunity to practice receiving your partner's yes or no with respect and enthusiasm. At its heart, this is about clear boundaries. It is about being clear about your own boundaries (feeling and speaking your authentic yes or no) and about honoring and respecting the boundaries of others. This is essential skill building for truly healthy relating.

This relating meditation is a simple but powerful practice that can help transform some of our less healthy, more habitual ways of relating. Please do call on the grounding powers of the herbs as you dive into this practice. An AshwaMacaMocha Shake (page 64) will serve you well. As you practice it regularly, notice what starts to change in your relationships. Bring expression to your observations—noting them in your journal or by dancing or drawing or singing them.

Cherry Kiss Julep

Hanna Nicole



INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup diced rhubarb
- ½ cup tart cherries (frozen or fresh)
- 2 cups coconut water
- ⅓ cup honey
- ¼ cup powdered kava root
- Pinch of nutmeg
- 2 egg whites
- Juice of one large lemon, or ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1 thin lemon slice for garnish (optional)

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ Kava drinks are best consumed with intention at a time when you are ready to drop into your erotic energy and certainly not just before getting in a car to drive. Kava can slow your reaction time too much for that.

PREPARATION

- 1** Place rhubarb, cherries, 1 cup of the coconut water, and honey into a small soup pot on low to medium heat for a couple of minutes, until the fruit begins to bubble.
- 2** Turn heat to low and simmer for 20 minutes (if it begins to stick to the bottom of the pan, add a tablespoon of water at a time until it loosens again).
- 3** While that is cooking, place the powdered kava inside a muslin bag.
- 4** Pour the rest of the coconut water into a bowl, and place the bag of kava into the water.
- 5** Massage the kava bag with your hand for 10 minutes, until the coconut water is milky and infused.
- 6** Pour the infused coconut water into a small jar, and place it in the fridge for now.
- 7** When the fruit is done cooking down, remove it from the heat, and strain the fruit syrup into another small jar. (Compost the fruit.) Place the fruit syrup into the refrigerator until it is cool.
- 8** While the fruit syrup is cooling, set out a large mason jar and fill it with ice cubes.
- 9** Separate eggs, saving the whites. Add a pinch of nutmeg to the egg whites.
- 10** Whisk the whites until stiff, and set aside.
- 11** Pour the lemon juice, chilled syrup, and kava coconut water over the ice.
- 12** Shake vigorously.
- 13** Pour the mixture out evenly between two small glasses.
- 14** Using a spoon, scoop the egg whites evenly between the two glasses to create a nice, even ½-inch layer over the drink.
- 15** If you want to add a touch more presentation, place a thin slice of lemon on the glass rim.
- 16** Enjoy your reveling!



Sweet Restoration Tea

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons dried hawthorn berries
- 1 tablespoon dried tulsi leaves
- ½ teaspoon honey

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ This recipe is a combination of a decoction and an infusion. Decoctions are made by simmering plant material in water for a period of time (usually at least 20 minutes) and infusions are made by letting plant material steep in just-boiled water for a period of time.
- ◆ Decoctions are used for harder plant material like dried berries, roots, and bark. Infusions are used more often for delicate plant material like leaves or flowers.

PREPARATION

- 1 Put the hawthorn berries and 1½ cups of water into a saucepan and cover with a lid.
- 2 Bring the water to boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer.
- 3 Simmer for 20 minutes.
- 4 Put the tulsi in a teacup, and pour the berries and water over top.
- 5 Steep for 5 minutes.
- 6 Strain.
- 7 Stir in honey and enjoy!



Grounding and Moving Tea

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon dried eleuthero root
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger root
- 1 teaspoon dried schisandra berries

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ This recipe is another example of a decoction—simmering hard plant material in water for 20 minutes to extract constituents into the water.

PREPARATION

- 1 Place the ingredients and 2 cups water in a small saucepan.
- 2 Bring the water to boil.
- 3 Turn the heat to low and simmer for 20 minutes.
- 4 Strain and drink slowly, letting the eleuthero ground you while the ginger and schisandra get your energy moving so you can release it.
- 5 Run or dance—move your body—to release the energy. Allow yourself to release with sound as well.



Kava Coconut Creamer

Hanna Nicole

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup powdered kava root
- 1 can full-fat coconut milk

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ This creamer makes a great addition to Warm Nights Chai (page 171). You can let the chai simmer as you knead the kava into the coconut milk. You can also add it to a tea of your choice.

PREPARATION

- 1 Place ¼ cup of kava powder into a muslin bag.
- 2 Place the bag in a large bowl along with 1 can of coconut milk plus ½ can of water.
- 3 Knead the bag for 20 minutes or more, kneading your intention into the milk as it turns cloudy with kava goodness.
- 4 Compost the kava powder and clean the bag.
- 5 Pour yourself a cup of chai and stir in 1 to 2 tablespoons of the kava creamer.



Damiana Chocolate Love Liqueur

Diana DeLuca

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ounce dried damiana leaves
- 2 cups vodka or brandy
- 1 cup honey
- Dash of vanilla extract
- Rose water, to taste
- ½ cup chocolate syrup (you can use the Chocolate Body Drizzle recipe on page 157)
- 2-3 drops almond extract

HERBAL TIPS

- ♦ The alcohol and water each extract different constituents from the plant material, so in this recipe you are getting the benefits of both.

PREPARATION

- 1** Soak the damiana leaves in the vodka or brandy for 5 days in a jar on your kitchen counter.
- 2** Strain, reserving the liquid in a bottle and the leaves in a separate jar.
- 3** Soak the alcohol-drenched leaves in 1½ cups of water for 3 days.
- 4** Strain and reserve the liquid. (Compost the leaves.)
- 5** Gently warm the water extract over low heat, and dissolve the honey in it.
- 6** Remove the pan from the heat, then add the alcohol extract and stir well.
- 7** Pour the liquid into a clean bottle, and add a dash of vanilla and a touch of rose water for flavor.
- 8** Let it mellow for one month or longer; it gets smoother with age.
- 9** To each cup of damiana liqueur, add ½ cup of chocolate syrup, 2 to 3 drops of almond extract, and a touch more rose water.







DAMIANA



Turnera diffusa, syn. T. aphrodisiaca



I fell in love with damiana the first time I drank a cup of Tender Titillation Tea (page 110). Each time I have engaged with damiana, it has quickly relaxed my mind and brought me into arousal and sensation. I call on damiana when I am with a partner I love and trust and want to surrender into a place of deep fulfillment.

How Does Damiana Work in Our Bodies?

Damiana can help bring more oxygen to the genital area,¹ help strengthen our reproductive systems,² and help regulate the pituitary gland and therefore our hormones, including increasing testosterone.³ When used over time as a tonic, it can help restore and improve sexual vitality and fitness.⁴

Damiana is deeply restorative and energizing, partly due to its high phosphorous content, which can lead to better physical endurance and orgasmic ability.⁵ As part of various formulas, damiana has demonstrated its ability to enhance female sexual function in human studies.⁶ In her book *Down There*, Susun Weed said, “a cup of damiana leaf infusion or teaspoon of tincture improves her interest and his staying power.”⁷

Damiana is wonderful for our nervous systems. It is relaxing, can help restore exhausted nerves, and relieve depression.⁸ It has demonstrated anxiety reducing and antidepressant effects and an ability to positively modulate behavior.⁹ Damiana is a useful aid for people who have a reduced libido due to depression, anxiety, aging, or reduced thyroid

function.¹⁰ Brigitte Mars suggests damiana to treat performance anxiety in adults and self-consciousness about puberty in teens.¹¹

Several flavonoids have been studied specifically within damiana, namely acacetin, acacetin 7-methyl ether, and vetulin. These compounds have shown very promising research about being MAO inhibitors.¹² MAO inhibitors prevent the breakdown of serotonin and dopamine in the brain, thus enhancing the feel-good effects from these neurochemicals within the body. Another bioactive compound found in damiana, apigenin, is a mild sedative and has been found to greatly reduce anxiety and relieve pain.¹³ By enhancing mood and decreasing stress and pain, these compounds found in damiana contribute to its powerful effects.

A Bit about Damiana Plants

Damiana is a small aromatic shrub with beautiful yellow flowers. It loves wild, dry, sunny places and is especially fond of rocky hillsides. Native to the northwest desert region of Mexico, it also grows in Texas, Southern California, and Central America.



Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: antidepressant, aromatic, energizing, hormone balancing, nervine, restorative

OTHER ACTIONS: astringent, diuretic, emmenagogue (stimulates menstrual flow)

ENERGETICS: warm, dry **TASTES:** bitter, pungent

NOTABLE APHRODISIAC CONSTITUENTS: apigenin, flavonoids, volatile oils

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: Damiana is a medicinal-level herb and should be consumed occasionally for a specific purpose. (This could look like an infusion added to a bath or a liqueur or tea before making love.) For strengthening and anti-anxiety effects try 15 drops of tincture three times per day or a cup or two of tea (2 teaspoons of leaves per cup of water steeped for 20 minutes) per day for a limited period of time.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: Avoid taking damiana during pregnancy or nursing, if you have anemia, a urinary tract infection, or hypertension.

Use with caution if you are diabetic as it can drop your blood sugar level.

Long-term use may interfere with the body's assimilation of iron.

Large doses can be laxative and may cause insomnia and headaches.

How to Use Damiana

PARTS USED: Leaves

For tonic or healing effects of damiana, take a regular, consistent dose over a period of several weeks. (See dosage suggestions provided earlier.) Listen to your body to know if you are at a place in your sexual journey where this tonic or medicinal dose would truly be helpful for you.

A simple cup of damiana tea can have a mild euphoric effect, which can be stimulating for intimacy. If you choose to try damiana as a tea, know that it is bitter and is tastier when mixed with other herbs. I love it with oat tops, hawthorn, rose petals, and a little honey.

The leaves can also be smoked or used as incense to achieve a mild euphoric effect.

Damiana liqueur is a traditional herbal preparation where the leaves are steeped in rum and honey with spices like vanilla, galangal, cinnamon, and pimento berries for two weeks.



Participant Experiences

Damiana had pronounced, immediate effects for us. It brought us into slightly altered state experiences that had an embodied, primal quality to them, definitely moving us out of our normal thinking state. Sarah noticed that it slowed down her thinking and speech and slightly blurred her vision. Lisa described a sort of floating experience that led to great lovemaking. We definitely felt increased sexual energy, which was wonderful when we were with a loving partner and induced longing for touch when we were not. Christina noticed a profound connection with nature when she could be outside but found that damiana increased her mind chatter when she took it just before trying to sleep.



SIX



STOKING

YOUR

FIRE

FOR

SEXUAL

FULFILLMENT

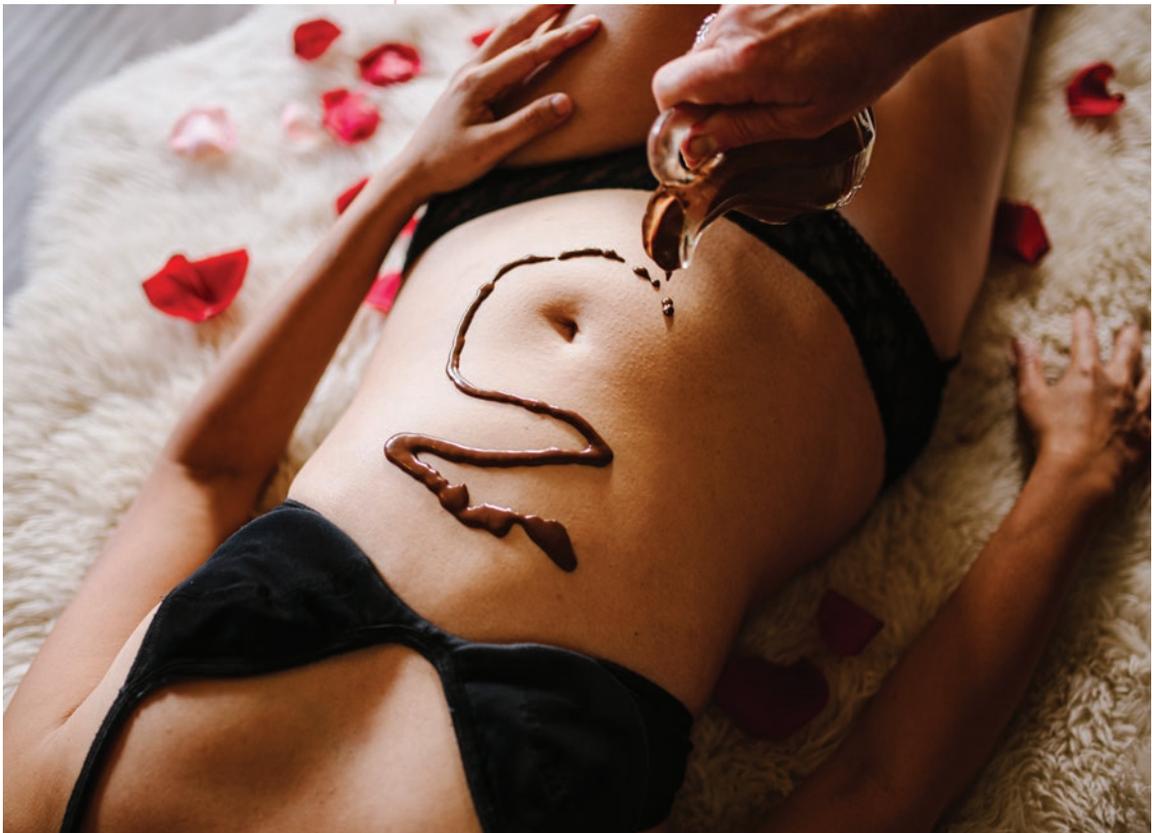
Chocolate Body Drizzle

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup water
- ½ cup cocoa powder
- ⅓ cup honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt
- ¼ cup full-fat coconut milk

PREPARATION

- 1** Combine the ingredients except the coconut milk in a saucepan.
- 2** Bring the mixture to a boil and simmer, whisking constantly for 5 minutes.
- 3** Remove the saucepan from the heat.
- 4** Stir in the coconut milk.
- 5** Store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.



Love's Nectar

This is a beautiful rose syrup that is lovely for body drizzling as well.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups fresh (1 cup dried)
rose petals
1 cup honey

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ This recipe combines a honey and water infusion to get the benefits of both in a tasty, sexy treat.
- ◆ Mixing a few tablespoons of this syrup with fizzy water makes a refreshing, delicious beverage.
- ◆ You can also drizzle this syrup over other tasty desserts like the Eros Cream or the Maple Oat Squares in Chapter 12.

PREPARATION

- 1 Prepare a Rose Honey (page 14).
- 2 Bring 1 cup of water to a boil in a saucepan. Remove it from the heat.
- 3 Add 1 cup fresh or ½ cup dried rose petals to the water, then cover and steep for 1 hour.
- 4 Strain, reserving the water and composting the rose petals.
- 5 Strain the petals from the honey (or leave them in if you like to have petals in your syrup).
- 6 Stir the rose honey into the warm rose-infused water.
- 7 Store the syrup in a jar with a lid in the refrigerator for up to one month.



Warm Caress Massage Oil Recipe

Rosalee de la Forêt

INGREDIENTS

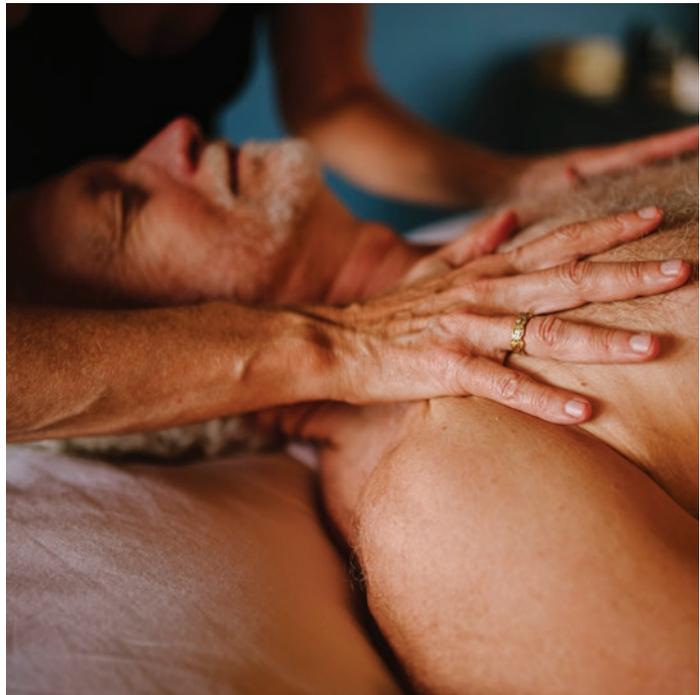
¼ cup grated or finely minced fresh ginger (30 grams)

½ cup jojoba or almond oil

10 to 15 drops lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) essential oil

PREPARATION

- 1** Add the freshly grated ginger to a small jar. Pour the oil over the ginger and stir to combine. Let this sit for 12 to 24 hours.
- 2** Strain the ginger from the oil, reserving the oil and composting the ginger.
- 3** Add the lavender essential oil and stir.
- 4** The water in the fresh ginger will cause this mixture to eventually spoil, so for best results, store the massage oil in the fridge and use within 1 to 2 weeks.



Some Like It Hot

A stimulating bath salt blend.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup dead sea salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup Epsom salts
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup baking soda
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup ginger powder
- $\frac{1}{8}$ cup dried peppermint leaves

PREPARATION

- 1 Mix ingredients together.
- 2 Put 1 cup into a mesh bag and add the bag to the bath.



OTHER HERBS FOR KEEPING YOUR FIRE STOKED

Ashwagandha: Robert found this herb raised his overall energy level, helping him feel stronger and last longer during sex.

Cacao: James found that daily consumption of cacao led to him feeling more available, expansive, and aroused, and his sexual experiences “had a more connected and authentic feel . . . [and his] orgasms were more embodied, pleasurable . . . longer and more deeply fulfilling.”

Schisandra berries: Rachel found that eating a few schisandra berries each day helped her

feel stronger and more energetic, which led to her feeling more open to connection. Christina found the effects of schisandra berry consumption to be even more pronounced. She said, “despite having a month of being unexpectedly slammed at work, a few days around ovulation, I felt like I want sex NOW even though I also felt tired and exhausted. It was unexpected to have some energy for self-pleasure in the midst of living so much in my masculine and being tired from working so hard.”

Fenugreek: Lisa found that the warming herbs in Warm Nights Chai (page 171) helped heat things up while also increasing her nipple sensitivity.



Ashwagandha



Cacao



Schisandra berries



Fenugreek

Warm Nights Chai

INGREDIENTS

1 heaping teaspoon fenugreek seeds
1 cinnamon stick
1 heaping teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
¼ whole nutmeg, chopped
1 teaspoon cardamom pods (crushed)
¼ teaspoon whole cloves
¼ teaspoon black peppercorns
2 whole star anise pods
1 teaspoon whole allspice
½ teaspoon whole fennel
½ teaspoon whole coriander
4 tongues (slices) astragalus, or 1 tablespoon cut and sifted astragalus
1 tablespoon dried burdock root
1 tablespoon dried dandelion root
Cream (or coconut milk), to taste
Honey, to taste
Rose water, to taste (optional)

PREPARATION

- 1 Combine all the herbs and spices in a saucepan with 4 cups of water.
- 2 Bring the mixture to a boil, and reduce the heat to a simmer.
- 3 Allow it to simmer for at least 20 minutes.
- 4 Strain and pour the chai into cups. (Compost the herbs and spices.)
- 5 Add cream (or Kava Coconut Creamer, page 154), honey, and/or rose water to taste.



HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ This recipe is another example of a decoction—simmering harder plant material in water for a period of time to extract constituents. I enjoy simmering this chai for even longer than 20 minutes, sometimes for a full hour, and I often let the herbs rest in the water after it is done simmering for several hours before finally straining it to drink.





GINGER



Zingiber officinale



Mmmmm. Can you smell it? I've got ginger tea simmering on the stove. Just the smell warms me up. I keep a ginger chai brewing on the stove all winter long. Ginger is a wonderful aphrodisiac ally during the cooler months. It can help generate internal body heat that allows us to relax and open even as the snow falls outside. Drinking my tea, I feel a fire glowing in my belly and energy coursing through my veins. When I'm warmed up like this, I feel open and ready for intimacy!

As it warms us, ginger can stimulate our ambition, our personal power, and our sexual centers.

How Does Ginger Work in Our Bodies?

Ginger works as a circulatory system tonic. It dilates our blood vessels and increases circulation.¹ This increased circulation is what warms our bodies. Shogaols, one of several types of polyphenols in ginger, have been shown to protect and regulate the cardiovascular system and decrease blood pressure.²

Ginger helps to remove atherosclerotic plaque from blood vessels throughout the body,³ which in turn brings more blood flow and energy to the pelvic region and invigorates our reproductive system. Rosemary Gladstar names it as a primary herb for the reproductive system.⁴ As regular use helps remove plaque from penile blood vessels, ginger can help treat low libido and low sperm quality and motility.⁵ Ginger may also improve female fertility.⁶

Ginger is also a wonderful remedy for painful menstrual cramping and delayed menstruation as it can help release blockages in the pelvic region and get the blood flowing.⁷ It is also a helpful remedy to reduce heavy menstrual bleeding.⁸ Ginger is a common and well-studied remedy for nausea and morning sickness.⁹

Ginger has broad anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects that help to prevent and treat the degenerative diseases of aging, such as dementia, metabolic syndrome, and cardiovascular disease.¹⁰

Ginger is a very effective anti-inflammatory for the brain and helps us form new neurological connections.¹¹ These new connections may open us up to deeper connection to ourselves, our desires, and our partners.

A Bit about Ginger Plants

The ginger root we buy at the store is actually a rhizome, technically a part of the plant stem that grows horizontally just underground. Culinary ginger plants grow two to four feet tall and have long narrow leaves, and the flowers are cream or yellowish with purple lips that grow in a conelike formation. There are also ornamental varieties (1,300 different species) of ginger with much showier flowers. Ginger has a long record of use in Southeast Asia and grows best where it is hot and humid and the soil is rich with nutrients.



Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: *aromatic, cardiotonic, circulatory stimulant*

OTHER ACTIONS: *analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, antioxidant, antispasmodic, carminative, diffusive, stimulating diaphoretic, rubefacient (skin irritant), stimulating expectorant, vermifuge (destroys parasitic worms)*

ENERGETICS: *warming, drying* **TASTES:** *pungent*

NOTABLE APHRODISIAC CONSTITUENTS: *many powerful polyphenols including gingerols and shogaols, volatile oil*

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: *Ginger is a strong herb, so you need only use a small amount to notice its effects (e.g., about 1 tablespoon grated ginger to flavor a dish for four).*

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: *Ginger is very warming and drying, so avoid large doses if you have acne or eczema.*

Discontinue use if you get heartburn.

It is important to consult your doctor about your use of ginger if you are taking blood-thinning medication.

How to Use Ginger

PARTS USED: *rhizome*

Ginger is a wonderful herb to include in your cooking—adding it to everything from stir-fries to soups to certain baked goods.

Ginger tea is a warming treat, and it is also a primary ingredient in chai blends and is wonderful in other tea blends as well. Because of the ways it works with our circulatory system, it helps deliver the benefits of other tea herbs through our bodies. You will get the most benefit from ginger tea by preparing it as a decoction—simmering it for 20 minutes—rather than simply steeping it in hot water.

Ginger honey and syrup are delicious, warming treats.

Powdered ginger can be added to a foot bath to warm up our feet or mixed with salts for a warming bath salt blend.

Ginger can also be infused in oils to be used for a warming massage.

Participant Experiences

We experimented with ginger in the winter and really appreciated its warming and enlivening qualities, which kept us more relaxed and open during this cold time of year. Christina noticed it helped create a “warm, steady hearth fire of erotic energy rather than a burst of heat that quickly burns out.” Both Christina and Artemis reflected a sense of heightened personal power, increased ambition, and willingness to take action. Ginger can get too hot. Sarah was just starting a new relationship and found the heat of ginger to be too much when combined with the new-relationship heat. Artemis is also in a time where her sexual energy is high, and she described ginger as “ridiculously warming.” Christina also noted the need to moderate her intake and balance it with more cooling herbs.



SEVEN



CHANNELING
EROTIC ENERGY

INTO

VITALITY

AND

CREATIVITY

Mineral Soak

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Epsom salts
- 1 cup magnesium flakes
- ½ cup French green clay
- ¼ cup baking soda

PREPARATION

- 1 Measure ingredients directly into the bath. (Mixing and storing does not work for this blend.)
- 2 Relax into your bath, and enjoy your soak.



Day Bright Tea

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon dried nettle leaves
- 1 ½ teaspoons dried ginkgo leaves
- 1 teaspoon dried peppermint leaves
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon chips
- 1 ½ teaspoons fresh grated ginger

PREPARATION

- 1** Mix the herbs together in a pint jar.
- 2** Fill the jar with boiling water, cover, and steep for at least 45 minutes.
- 3** Strain and enjoy. (Compost the herbs.)







ĀSHWAGANDHĀ



Withania somnifera



Ashwagandha is a powerful root medicine that both energizes us and increases our stamina, heightening sexual interest and performance. This root is calming, grounding, and deeply rejuvenating. *Ashwagandha* is a Sanskrit word that loosely translates as “the smell of a horse,” perhaps referring to the distinct smell of the root, but also alluding to its ability to bestow horse-like strength and endurance.

How Does Ashwagandha Work in Our Bodies?

Ashwagandha nourishes our whole body and promotes an overall sense of well-being. As an adaptogen, it regulates endocrine processes that help us handle stress more easily. It also enhances our immune system and promotes longevity.¹

Rosemary Gladstar calls ashwagandha a “classic reproductive system tonic,” explaining that it “helps restore sexual chi or energy.”² By decreasing oxidative stress and regulating hormone levels, it can improve sperm count and semen quality for men.³ For women, it can increase lubrication and improve orgasms.⁴ Its blood-thinning properties can help with impotence.⁵ It can also help relieve muscle pain and cloudy thinking associated with perimenopause.⁶

Ashwagandha is also a powerful herb for our nervous systems. It contains alkaloids and steroidal lactones known as withanolides that nourish and relax our nerves,⁷ helping to relieve anxiety and nervous exhaustion. Triethylene glycol (TEG) is a component in ashwagandha that has been shown to induce sleep and enhance the quality of sleep.⁸ Khalsa and

Tierra say that, in their experience, ashwagandha is particularly good at helping reestablish healthy sleep patterns in people with chronic sleep issues.⁹

Ashwagandha also affects our brain, heart, and circulatory system. It is neuroprotective and can increase the availability of dopamine in the brain.¹⁰ One study showed the powerful ability of withanolides to reconstruct neural connections.¹¹ It also improves cardiovascular function, increasing the size of the heart and improving blood sugar fuel to the heart.¹² Finally, its ability to protect against pulmonary hypertension and relax our blood vessels helps promote an overall feeling of well-being.¹³

A Bit about Ashwagandha Plants

Ashwagandha is a tropical plant native to Africa, India, and Asia. This perennial shrub in the nightshade family actually thrives in arid conditions and in poor quality, alkaline soils. It grows to about three feet tall and produces small, yellow-green, star-shaped flowers and a berry that grows within a papery calyx. The stem and leaves are covered in silver-gray hairs. Though the leaves and berries are sometimes used, people mainly cultivate it for the roots.



Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: cardioprotective, adaptogen, energizing, hormone balancing, nervine, neuroprotective, restorative, reproductive system tonic

OTHER ACTIONS: anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antispasmodic, astringent, diuretic, immunomodulator

ENERGETICS: warming, moistening

TASTES: sweet, bitter

NOTABLE APHRODISIAC CONSTITUENTS: 35 alkaloids, steroidal lactones (withanolides), amino acids, iron, triethylene glycol (TEG)

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: Ashwagandha is a tonic herb and so should be taken regularly, in medium dosages, for a specific period of time. A basic tonic dose is 3 to 6 grams of powdered root per day. For more acute situations, use a medicinal dose of up to 15 grams per day.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: *Seek professional advice if you are pregnant.*

Do not take this with barbiturates.

People with nightshade sensitivities may not tolerate it.

Do not use this if you have an upper respiratory infection or lots of mucus congestion.

How to Use Ashwagandha

PARTS USED: *root*

USE POWDER IN: *AshwaMacaMocha Shake (page 64) or Dream Cream (page 234), Date Treats (page 236) or other energy balls*

Mix with honey and fruit concentrate and spread on toast.

Tincture or capsules



Participant Experiences

As a group, we benefited from the deep nourishment offered by ashwagandha. Artemis found it to be calming, helping her to be less reactive to stimulus, fear, and anxiety. Christina was taking the tincture twice a day and found she slept better and felt more grounded. She had more energy for work and enjoyed the regular herbal support in her life. Robert had the strongest reaction of all of us. He noticed a marked energy boost and increased staying power during sex.



EIGHT



RELAXING

INTO

YOUR

BODY



Soothe Tincture

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup fresh milky oat tops
- 1 cup 100-proof vodka

PREPARATION

- 1 Put the oat tops in a ½-pint jar, loosely packed.
- 2 Pour vodka over the herbs to fill the jar.
- 3 Stir and cover. Make sure the alcohol fully covers the oat tops.
- 4 Let sit on your kitchen counter for 6 weeks, stirring daily for the first week.
- 5 Strain, reserving the liquid and composting the herbs.
- 6 Take by the dropperful.

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ Tinctures are a great way to access the medicinal qualities of plants because alcohol will naturally extract the more medicinal plant constituents. 100-proof vodka is 50 percent alcohol and 50 percent water, which makes an excellent tincture.
- ◆ Other alcohols like brandy or tequila have a lower percentage of alcohol but can still be used to extract plant constituents. These are more often used when making tasty drinks like cordials, bitters, or liqueurs.
- ◆ Herbal tinctures are most potent when made with alcohol, but if you need to avoid alcohol, you can make a glycerin tincture or drink an oat top tea as a relaxing alternative.
- ◆ Milky oat tincture is one of my favorites for relaxation, but fresh milky oats may be hard to come by. You can also easily purchase a pre-prepared tincture. If you would like to practice making a tincture, but do not have access to oat tops, you can make a soothing tincture with 1 cup finely chopped tulsi leaves instead. Use the same method described for the Soothe Tincture. (If using dried tulsi leaves, use only ½ cup.)
- ◆ Making just a cup of tincture is a great idea when starting out. Small amounts are best. Then you can try the tincture and see how it works for you. If you love it, you can make a bigger batch next time. Over time, you will come to know which herbal preparations you use and want to make every year, and you can plan your harvesting accordingly.

Sweet Heart Tea

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons dried hawthorn flowers

Honey, to taste

PREPARATION

- 1 Place the hawthorn flowers in a teacup.
- 2 Boil water and pour over the flowers to fill the cup.
- 3 Cover, and steep for 15 minutes.
- 4 Strain, composting the flowers.
- 5 Add honey to taste.



Sensations Massage Oil

Inspired by Rob Montgomery via jim mcdonald

INGREDIENTS

½ cup kava root powder

1 cup almond oil

Essential oils for scent (optional)

PREPARATION

- 1** Place kava root and almond oil in a pan or jar that fits inside your slow cooker without touching the sides. (I like to use the top pan of my double boiler.) Cover it with a lid.
- 2** Place a folded dish towel on the bottom of your slow cooker.
- 3** Place the pan with the oil on top of the towel so that it is not touching the sides or bottom of the slow cooker.
- 4** Put enough water in the slow cooker to reach ¼ way up the side of the pan.
- 5** Set the slow cooker to warm, and leave the lid off.
- 6** Allow the oil to infuse on warm for 5 days, stirring once or twice per day, and refilling water as needed.
- 7** Strain, reserving liquid and composting herbs.
- 8** Optional: Add essential oils for scent. I like 3 drops vetiver, 2 drops bergamot, and 1 drop ylang-ylang for this oil.
- 9** Store in a squeeze-top jar for easy use during massage.



Kava Cordial

INGREDIENTS

½ ounce dried, cut, and sifted kava root

¼ cup dried rose petals

1 tablespoon dried hibiscus flowers

4 cardamom pods, crushed

3 tablespoons honey

1 ½ cups pitted sweet cherries (or enough to fill jar)

Brandy to cover ingredients in pint jar

HERBAL TIPS

- ♦ Any time you are infusing herbs into liquid, make sure the liquid fully covers the herbs and other ingredients after you stir them. This will keep your preparation from growing mold. The ingredients may float more to the top for the first few days and then sink lower after a week of stirring.
- ♦ Kava drinks are best consumed with intention at a time when you are ready to drop into your erotic energy and certainly not just before getting in a car to drive. Kava can slow your reaction time too much for that.

PREPARATION

- 1 Place all the ingredients in a pint jar.
- 2 Pour the brandy over the herbs to fill the jar.
- 3 Stir and cover.
- 4 Let it sit on your kitchen counter for 2 to 4 weeks (to taste), stirring daily for the first week.
- 5 Strain, reserving the liquid. (Compost the herbs.)
- 6 Sip straight or add a splash of seltzer water.







KAVA



Piper methysticum



Kava is a beautiful ally for sexual surrender. Taking it into our bodies is both deeply relaxing and can lead to feelings of euphoria. Approach kava with profound respect. It is a powerful plant ally to be enjoyed with intention and care. Take it into your body and allow it to help you revel and connect.

How Does Kava Work in Our Bodies?

Kava's scientific name translates to "intoxicating pepper," which gives a hint about its effect on our bodies. In my experience, kava's effects are marked and immediate. When chewed it increases the saliva in your mouth and has both a tingling and numbing effect on your tongue. This experience is temporary and normal. I also notice kava's relaxing and euphoric effects within minutes.

Kava is both a relaxing nervine and muscle relaxant, so it helps calm our nervous system and relax any tightness in our muscles at the same time. The kavalactones in kava work on the GABA receptors in our brains to reduce or inhibit anxiety.¹ The specific kavalactone, desmethoxyyangonin, increases dopamine levels in the body,² and kavain helps to keep feel-good neurotransmitter serotonin in the body for longer periods of time.³

Kava can be great for relieving stress and pain that has settled into our muscles.⁴ In small doses, kava can relax our muscles and reduce pain without blocking central nerve signals so our minds remain bright and active and our muscles fully functional.⁵

Herbalist jim mcdonald points out that large doses can “still the mind and make the limbs a bit wobbly.”⁶

Kava is being explored as a treatment for generalized anxiety disorder.⁷ It also reduces the anxious depression sometimes seen with menopause and can also be helpful with the anxiety that is associated with PMS, so it can help women who find that anxiety negatively affects their libido.⁸

Kava’s combined actions of relaxation and euphoria have made it a favorite drink ingredient for social occasions. It also can help relieve tension and prepare the way for conflict resolution and deeper levels of connection.⁹ Rosemary Gladstar says, “There can be no hate in the heart when one has kava.”¹⁰

It is also noteworthy that kava’s spicy, stimulating qualities increase circulation, warming us and bringing more blood flow to our whole body, including our genitals.

A Bit about Kava Plants

Kava is native to the Pacific Islands and has been used ceremonially there for thousands of years. It likes to grow in tropical areas with lots of humidity and rainfall. Kava is a small shrub or tree with dark green, heart-shaped leaves. It is cultivated for its roots, which are best harvested when the plant is four to five years old.



Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: *euphoric, muscle relaxant, nervine*

OTHER ACTIONS: *analgesic, anesthetic, antispasmodic, diuretic, sialagogue (stimulates secretion of saliva)*

ENERGETICS: *warming, drying*

TASTES: *acrid, bitter, pungent*

CONSTITUENTS: *kavalactones*

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: *Kava has been used traditionally for ceremonies and special gatherings. It is a powerful herb, best consumed consciously and occasionally in small amounts (e.g., a dropperful of tincture or as an addition to a cup of tea).*

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: *High dosages can impair coordination, so don't take kava and then drive or engage in other activities that require quick reflexes.*

Use only the root as a compound found in the stem and leaves can cause liver damage. Also, seek out a noble variety of kava and buy from a source that properly handles the plant from harvest through the final product (to be sure stems and leaves are not included).

Do not use if you have any type of liver disease or if you are taking Parkinson's disease medications.

Do not use kava during pregnancy or when breastfeeding. Do not give it to young children.

Do not mix kava with alcohol, sedatives, tranquilizers, or antidepressants or with pharmaceutical anxiolytics (e.g., benzodiazepines).

Large amounts of kava may cause dry, peeling skin that will clear up when kava consumption is stopped.

Kava is best taken occasionally rather than as a daily supplement.

How to Use Kava

PARTS USED: root

Add to drinks like tea, punch, or fermented soda. To add it, squeeze kava root in a mesh bag to release the constituents into water and add the water to your drink of choice. Kava was traditionally used in fermented form and I found that adding it to my fermented sodas yields good results.

*Kava root massage oil (**Sensations Massage Oil, page 224**) is both warming and muscle relaxing.*

Add decoction or milky kava root water to your bath for muscle relaxing.

Kava tincture has immediate relaxing effects and can be used to induce restful sleep.



Participant Experiences

As a group, we really connected with the powerful potency of this herb, and agreed it is best used on occasion and with intention. I'll often make a batch of kava chai for John and me when we need to resolve something in our relationship and want to be sure we are connected on a heart level. During the Aphrodisiac Circle year, I ordered some fresh kava root from Hawaii and combined it with ceremonial cacao for a beautiful birthday ritual that included heart-connected conversation, sensual dance, and snuggling.

Both Sarah and Christina noted the tingling in their mouths with the use of kava as being erotic and creating a desire for kissing or oral sex. Sarah also noticed increased sensitivity around her breasts, clit, and vagina. For me, kava chai before sex has led to increased sensation deep within my yoni during penetration.



Cosmic Surrender Bath

INGREDIENTS

1 ounce dried damiana leaves

1 cup kava root powder

PREPARATION

- 1 Place damiana leaves in a quart jar.
- 2 Pour water over the leaves to fill the jar.
- 3 Let the leaves steep for at least 4 hours.
- 4 Strain into a large bowl, reserving the liquid and composting the damiana leaves.
- 5 Put the kava powder in a muslin bag.
- 6 Put the bag with the kava into the damiana infusion and knead the bag for 20 minutes or more to release the kava goodness into the infusion.
- 7 Pour the infusion into your bath, and enjoy relaxing into it.

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ Our skin is the largest of our organs, and a bath like this one allows us to take in the effects of the herbs through the full extent of our skin. As you will experience, the result can be quite potent.
- ◆ Please use this bath with respect and care, entering into it with intention and when you have plenty of time to enjoy the effects and are not in need of swift reaction times.





NINE



DEEP
NOURISHMENT

Soft Landing Tea

INGREDIENTS

1 heaping teaspoon
chamomile flowers

2 heaping tablespoons licorice
root, cut and sifted, or 8 slices
licorice root

1 tablespoon dried rose
petals or buds

3 cardamom pods, crushed

1 tablespoon dried oat tops

PREPARATION

- 1** Mix the herbs together in a quart jar or teapot.
- 2** Pour 3 cups of boiling water over the herbs.
- 3** Cover, and steep for at least 15 minutes.
- 4** Strain, relax, and enjoy!



Dream Cream

This adaptogen smoothie is a great way to integrate roots like ashwagandha and eleuthero into your life.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 banana (or ½ banana and ½ avocado)
- 1 cup almond milk
- ½ cup plain dairy or vegan yogurt
- ¼ cup sunflower seed butter (or your favorite nut butter)
- ¼ cup coconut cream (the solid part inside a can of coconut milk)
- 1 tablespoon ashwagandha powder
- 1 tablespoon eleuthero powder
- 1 ½ teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 date (or 5 drops liquid monk fruit for less sugar)
- Large pinch of salt

PREPARATION

- 1 Place all the ingredients into a blender (add a few ice cubes, if desired).
- 2 Blend until smooth.
- 3 Pour the smoothie into glasses. Use a spatula to get the residual liquid from the sides of the blender—there are lots of good herbs in there!
- 4 Drink immediately.

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ This recipe contains the goodness from several powerfully nourishing roots. If you can harvest the roots yourself, it is best to do so in the fall after the leaves and flowers have died back. At this time of year, the plant has returned its energy to the roots and so they are packed with nourishment.
- ◆ Dried roots are storehouses of plant nourishment and medicine. Drinking and eating powdered roots are a good way to get this nourishment into our bodies.



Date Treats

Rosalee de la Forêt



INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ cups pitted and chopped dates
- 2 tablespoons cacao powder
- ⅓ cup eleuthero powder
- ⅓ cup ashwagandha powder
- ⅔ cup grated coconut (plus extra for rolling)
- ¼ cup tahini
- ¼ cup almond butter
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon organic orange extract
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ginger powder
- ¾ cup melted coconut oil
- Pinch of salt

PREPARATION

- 1** Soak pitted dates in 2 cups of hot water for 30 minutes.
- 2** Strain dates well. (The water can be reserved for cooking sweet rice or oatmeal.)
- 3** Place the dates and the rest of the ingredients into a food processor. Blend until it forms a consistent paste.
- 4** Chill the mixture in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.
- 5** Roll the paste into teaspoon-sized balls and roll in coconut. Store in the refrigerator and eat within one week.



Berry Decadence Syrup

Rebecca Altman

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup maple or agave syrup
- ¼ vanilla bean or ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ cup blackberries (fresh or frozen)
- ¼ cup dried tulsi (or ½ cup fresh)

PREPARATION

- 1 Place syrup, vanilla (if using vanilla bean), and blackberries in a saucepan.
- 2 Cover the saucepan with a lid, and bring the syrup to a simmer for 15 minutes.
- 3 Add the tulsi, and replace the lid on the pot.
- 4 Simmer for another 15 minutes.
- 5 Remove the saucepan from the heat, strain, add vanilla extract (if using extract), and stir.
- 6 Enjoy over ice cream or another dessert, as a flavoring in soda water, in tea, or as a body drizzle.
- 7 Store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.



Bitter Cream Tea

INGREDIENTS

1 ounce fenugreek seeds
Honey and cream to taste

PREPARATION

- 1 Place fenugreek seeds and 2 cups of water in a saucepan and cover.
- 2 Bring the water to a boil.
- 3 Turn the heat down and simmer (covered) for 20 minutes.
- 4 Strain, reserving the liquid and composting the seeds.
- 5 Pour the liquid into a cup.
- 6 Add honey and cream to taste.







ELEUTHERO*



Eleutherococcus senticosus



Eleuthero increases the amount of chi in our bodies, increasing both our energy and stamina. This herb is deeply restorative when we are recovering from physical illness or struggling on an emotional level. It also provides a steady stream of energy to keep our internal fire burning bright through challenge and change.

How Does Eleuthero Work in Our Bodies?

Eleuthero is an excellent adaptogen. Adaptogens are herbs that assist with overall healthy organ and system functioning. This leads to greater physical resilience. Ginseng family plants are particularly potent in this regard because they contain a high number of active constituents that are all working together. Eleuthero has seven eleutherosides that help reduce stress and stress-related anxiety and depression.¹

Eleuthero works in several ways to increase our energy and stamina. Syringin, a constituent in eleuthero, triggers the release of acetylcholine, which supports our energy level and helps us maintain a healthy metabolism.² When used as a regular nutritive tonic over time, eleuthero strengthens our immune system, protects and nourishes our nervous system, relieves fatigue, and supports our adrenal glands.³ In particular, eleuthero relieves fatigue (sometimes called adrenal exhaustion) from any sort of chronic stress or ailment.⁴

Ruth Trickey recommends it as a general tonic for women who are overworked or “burning the candle at both ends.”⁵ Although eleuthero is an energy booster, it is also a nervine

that, when used over time, can help with insomnia, improve the quality of our sleep, and prevent us from waking in the night.⁶

Eleuthero is also great for our hearts, relaxing our arteries, lowering high blood pressure, reducing heart enlargement, and decreasing heart disease.⁷ Syringin, one of the main eleutherosides, protects our heart cells from pressure and regulates healthy regeneration of cardiovascular cells, helping to both protect and heal our hearts.⁸

A Bit about Eleuthero Plants

Eleuthero, a ginseng family plant, is a large, relatively fast-growing shrub that is easily cultivated and can be sustainably harvested. Though not in the *Panax* genus like Panax and American ginseng, eleuthero has similar (though milder) properties and effects to these other overharvested ginsengs.

Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: *adaptogen, endocrine system tonic, energy building, ergogenic, nervine, neuroprotective, restorative*

ENERGETICS: *warming, dry* **TASTES:** *acid, bitter, slightly sweet*

NOTABLE APHRODISIAC CONSTITUENTS: *Seven primary eleutherosides, including syringin, vitamins, and minerals (including calcium, iron, zinc, and vitamin C)*

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: *Eleuthero is a tonic herb and should be taken in a medium dosage on a regular basis for a specific period of time. A basic tonic dose would be one to nine grams of powdered root per day or a dropperful of tincture three times per day.*

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: *High doses can cause overstimulation in sensitive people (insomnia, jitters, rapid heartbeat, or headache). Lower the dose or discontinue use if you experience these symptoms.*

*Don't mix with digoxin. (Though studies suggest that the incompatibility with this drug may be due to adulteration of eleuthero with *P. sepium*, it is best to err on the side of caution. Also, know your source and be sure you are getting pure eleuthero.)*

How to Use Eleuthero

PARTS USED: root, root bark, and sometimes leaves

Eleuthero is wonderful when used as a tonic during times of stress or change. Here are some ways to integrate eleuthero into your diet as a tonic:

*Make and keep a batch of **Date Treats (page 236)** in the refrigerator and eat a couple a day.*

Mix eleuthero powder with honey and fruit concentrate and spread on toast.

Add eleuthero root to a tonic soup or tea blend.

*Add eleuthero powder to a smoothie—**Dream Cream (page 234)***

Take a daily dose of tincture.



Participant Experiences

During this month I gave participants a choice to experiment with ginseng or eleuthero. We experimented as winter was turning to spring, and in general did feel like these plants gave us an energy boost and helped us stay healthier through this time. For me, the energy boost from eleuthero in my body felt aligned with the bursting spring energy. I also call on eleuthero as summer turns to fall or if I am going through a particularly stressful time or feel like I need an energy boost.

Two participants were already taking eleuthero as part of a regular tonic blend, one to help regulate her hormones during menopause and one as adrenal support.

Christina reported the most profound effects with this herb, saying, “The energy of eleuthero feels sunny and growth promoting, like the energy of springtime that makes the plants emerge from their winter stillness. It seemed to give me more energy to fuel the healing processes I am engaged in. I felt more energy after only a few days on the eleuthero capsules. I started wanting a more sensual experience of the herb itself, so I started emptying the capsules and mixing the herb into nut butter as a simple variation on the energy balls recipe. I think I got even more energy from eating the herb this way—still a feeling of inner vitality to counteract past feelings of fragility that required armoring to protect myself. This definitely helped me feel more open to pleasure in my daily life and to connecting with others.”



TEN



NAVIGATING
TIMES
OF
CHALLENGE
AND STRESS

Damiana Bitters

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons dried damiana leaves
4 teaspoons fresh rosemary leaves
5 dried figs
Vodka or brandy to fill a pint jar
(about 2 cups)

HERBAL TIPS

- ♦ Be sure the alcohol completely covers the herbs and figs in order to prevent mold.

PREPARATION

- 1 Place the figs and herbs in a pint jar.
- 2 Fill the jar with vodka or brandy.
- 3 Stir well and cover with a lid.
- 4 Allow the herbs to infuse into the alcohol in a jar on your counter for 2 to 4 weeks, stirring daily for the first week.
- 5 Strain when the flavors have infused to your liking, reserving the liquid and composting the herbs.
- 6 Add the bitters to fizzy water or a mixed drink recipe or simply sip it straight.
- 7 Store the bitters in a dark bottle or dark location, and use within a year.





De-Stress
Elixir

De-stress Elixir

INGREDIENTS

½ pint fresh (or ¼ pint dried)
tulsi leaves

½ pint fresh milky oat tops

1 pint 100-proof vodka

Honey, to taste

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ While dried plant material is often preferable when making herbal oils, fresh plant material is almost always preferable for tincture making. The water content in fresh plants will not cause a tincture to spoil (as is the danger with oils) and alcohol is very effective at extracting constituents from fresh plants. This is particularly important with milky oat tincture. You will get a much less desirable result (not milky at all) if using dried oat tops.
- ◆ You can also make this elixir by buying pre-made milky oat and tulsi tinctures and mixing them together with the honey.

PREPARATION

- 1 Prepare two separate tinctures with the tulsi and the oat tops as directed in the Soothe Tincture Recipe (page 203).
- 2 Mix the tinctures together in equal parts.
- 3 Add honey to taste (try 2 teaspoons per ounce of tincture).
- 4 Take by the dropperful as needed for stress.







TULSI



Ocimum sanctum, O. gratissimum



Mmmmm. I have fallen in love with the scent and flavor of tulsi. For me, it is soul soothing and sensually stimulating. Being enveloped in this scent when bathing with the Divinity Soak bath salt blend (page 102) is a truly divine experience, and the taste of tulsi in creations like Berry Decadence Syrup (page 238) is truly mouthwatering.

How Does Tulsi Work in Our Bodies?

Tulsi can help bring you into the present moment and expand your perspective. As a central nervous system stimulant, tulsi can help sharpen your awareness and promote clear thinking.¹ In her e-mail newsletter, Rebecca Altman of Kings Road Apothecary said it “opens us up: opens our senses to experience more deeply, opens our eyes to see things more clearly, opens our minds to understand more, and opens our hearts to help us connect more deeply to the world around us.”

In *Adaptogens*, David Winston and Steven Maimes say tulsi “nourishes a person’s growth to perfect health and promotes long life”.² As an adaptogen, tulsi has a positive effect on the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which helps us handle life stress with less anxiety and depression.³ To receive these benefits, tulsi needs to be taken as a regular daily tonic for two months or more. Over time, tulsi helps us build resilience, and it is safe to take as a daily tonic for extended periods, and so can be a good ally to see us through stressful life events.

Tulsi also helps strengthen our immune systems and has been shown to be a COX-2 inhibitor, which makes it useful for inflammatory conditions. It can help prevent and address upper respiratory viruses like colds and influenza.⁴ Tulsi has also been used effectively to help treat sores from herpes virus outbreaks.⁵ Its high eugenol content makes it pain relieving as well.⁶ It specifically helps with neuropathic pain by its antioxidant and neuro-protective actions.⁷

Tulsi is wonderful for our heart health. It slightly thins our blood, helping our circulation, and helps regulate both our blood sugar and cholesterol levels.⁸ It prevents the negative effects of stress on the cardiovascular system.⁹ In addition, the ursolic acid found in tulsi protects both our liver and heart cells.¹⁰

Tulsi has also been found to support our oral and digestive health. Tulsi tea's warming, pungent qualities can improve digestion, helping to relieve bloating, gas, and nausea.¹¹ Regular use of tulsi prevents stress-induced gastric ulcers and improves the mucous membranes and natural protective secretions of the gut.¹² When consistently used as a mouthwash, the extract can help reduce bacteria and plaque, and prevent bleeding gums.¹³

Within our brains, tulsi increases feel-good neurotransmitters,¹⁴ and the rosmarinic acid within tulsi protects our neurons while also helping to relieve depression.¹⁵ K. P. Khalsa said that tulsi "opens the heart and mind, encourages devotion and supports the energy of attachment."¹⁶

Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: *adaptogen, antidepressant, aromatic, cardi tonic, nerve, neuroprotective*

OTHER ACTIONS: *analgesic, antibacterial, antioxidant, antiviral, digestive, expectorant, antioxidant, immunomodulator*

ENERGETICS: *warming, drying* **TASTES:** *pungent, sweet*

NOTABLE APHRODISIAC CONSTITUENTS: *essential oils like rosmarinic and eugenol, ursolic acid, flavonoids*

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: *Tulsi is a tonic herb so should be taken in medium-level dosages on a regular basis over a period of time. (A medium dose could look like several dropperfuls of tincture or a cup or two of tea throughout the day.)*

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: *Tulsi has antifertility effects that make it inadvisable for couples trying to conceive and for pregnant women.*

Tulsi can help control blood sugar levels, so insulin intake may need to be adjusted for those with diabetes.

A Bit about Tulsi Plants

Tulsi or holy basil is a mint family plant in the same genus as culinary basil. The two plants are of different species, however, and are not used in the same ways. Some of the other names for this plant include “Elixir of Life,” “Queen of Herbs,” and “Mother Nature’s Medicine.” In Sanskrit, the word *tulsi* means “beyond compare.” It is one of the most sacred and powerful herbs in the Ayurvedic tradition of India.¹⁷



How to Use Tulsi

PARTS USED: leaves, flowers

TULSI TEA: Steep 1 teaspoon of fresh (or ½ teaspoon of dry) tulsi leaves in 2 cups of boiled water for 5 to 10 minutes. It is also a wonderful addition to tea blends as in **Aphrodi-Tea (page 5)**.

Tulsi’s flavor makes it a wonderful addition to syrups and drinks like juleps or mojitos.

Tulsi’s scent and relaxing qualities also make it a wonderful air freshener and bath salt.

Tulsi tincture is a simple way to get the tonic benefits of this herb, but taking it this way, you miss out on the divine smell and taste.

Participant Experiences

Those of us who experimented with tulsi found it to be a gentle, calming herb with an intoxicating scent. Michelle drank a cup of tulsi rose tea each morning (delivered in the hands of her lover) and she describes the feeling it gave her as “powerful well-being.” Artemis drank it as a tea, added it to her Golden Oat Infusion, and took it in tincture form. She noticed it connecting her to her feminine/yin essence, and helping her heart feel restful and light. Tulsi helped carry me through the illness and death of my mother. Besides drinking tulsi rose tea, I have found bath blends and air fresheners with tulsi to be profoundly relaxing.



ELEVEN



HEALING





FENUGREEK



Trigonella foenum-graecum



I fell in love with fenugreek when I added the dried seeds to my herbal chai blend (Warm Nights Chai, page 187). Fenugreek added a heavenly maple syrup smell and a new depth of richness to the tea. Drinking it, I felt I was wrapped in cozy comfort. This is an herb that gently awakens our senses and encourages deep connection and snuggling.

How Do Fenugreek Seeds Work in Our Bodies?

When taken regularly over time, fenugreek is a nourishing and rejuvenating whole-body tonic.² Fenugreek warms and nourishes our digestive tract, lungs, kidneys, reproductive organs, glands, and immune system.³ The seeds are high in iron, vitamins A, B1, and C, phosphates, fiber, and protein. They can help regulate our blood sugar levels and improve insulin sensitivity if we can consume as much as 15 grams per day.⁴

In addition, fenugreek seeds are calming and restorative for our nervous systems and nourishing for our hearts. Their effects on our nervous system are due to their ability to regulate sugar and lipid levels in our blood, their antioxidant qualities, and their modulating effects on our immune system. These effects can help prevent neurodegenerative diseases and depression.⁵ Isovitexin, a flavonoid polyphenol compound in the seeds, both protects and strengthens our hearts.⁶

Some of the aphrodisiac actions attributed to fenugreek include sweetening the breath, increasing the libido, and improving sexual functioning. For women, fenugreek can help to normalize the menstrual cycle, stabilize our emotions, soothe our nerves, and restore

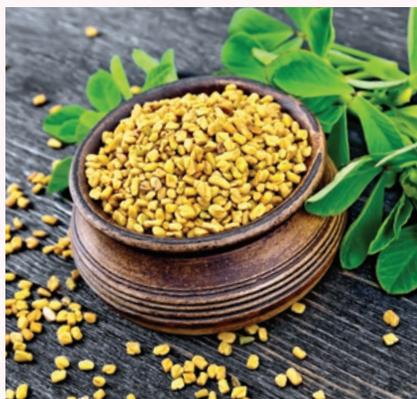
energy.⁷ In addition, they can increase breast size and enhance female fertility.⁸ Fenugreek is also great for hormonal balancing during menopause, especially helping to inhibit the excess activity of testosterone and treat vasomotor symptoms and hot flashes.⁹ They are effective for improving sexual functioning for postmenopausal women. Their high mucilage content makes them soothing for all our mucous membranes,¹⁰ and can also help with vaginal dryness.¹¹

Fenugreek seed is a uterine stimulant, so it should be avoided during pregnancy until you are ready to give birth, and then it can help bring on contractions.¹² The seeds also are rich in minerals, and drinking fenugreek tea before nursing can help with plentiful milk production.¹³ So this is an herb to turn to before and after, but not during, pregnancy.

For men, fenugreek seed is a general male reproductive system tonic.¹⁴ When taken in medicinal doses, it can improve sperm count and sperm motility, improve mental alertness and mood, and help with erectile dysfunction, premature ejaculation, impotence, and overall performance.¹⁵

A Bit about Fenugreek Plants

Fenugreek is native to the Mediterranean coast and is a commonly used seasoning in Egypt, India, and the Middle East. It is related to red clover and looks somewhat like it. It grows to about two feet tall and has the small, round, green leaves of a plant in the pea family. Fenugreek seeds are light brown and deeply furrowed into two unequal pieces.



Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: *aromatic, cardioprotective, demulcent, energizing, ease menstrual pain, hormone balancing, nutritive, reproductive system tonic, restorative*

OTHER ACTIONS: *antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, digestive tonic, expectorant, galactagogue (stimulates lactation), immunomodulatory, uterine stimulant*

ENERGETICS: *warming, moistening*

TASTES: *bitter*

CONSTITUENTS: *flavonoid polyphenol compounds such as rhaponticin and isovitexin, iron, phosphates, fiber, and protein*

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: Fenugreek is a tonic herb and should be taken regularly in medium dosages for a specific period of time. A tonic dose could look like 1 to 2 capsules or a dropperful of tincture 3 times daily or a daily cup of tea (1 tablespoon of seeds in 1 pint of water steeped for 10 minutes).

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: Avoid taking fenugreek during pregnancy as it is a uterine stimulant. It can affect blood sugar levels.

How to Use Fenugreek

PARTS USED: seed and fresh leaves

To access the tonic effects of this herb, it is important to integrate it into your life on a regular basis over an extended period of time (try one month)

Fenugreek Tea: 1 tablespoon seeds in 1 cup of hot water steeped for 10 minutes. You can strain the seeds or eat them as you drink. Add cream and honey to taste.

Add seeds to soups, stews, or stir-fries.

Add fresh leaves to dishes as a garnish near the end of the cooking time.

Add ground seeds as an ingredient in baked treats like **Golden Sunrise Cake (page 296)** and **Bitter Maple Oat Squares (page 306)**.

Many who have consumed fenugreek know about the sweet maple smell that comes from this plant. One study notes the major compound responsible for this is 2,5-dimethylpyrazine.¹⁶ The smell and sometimes bitter taste can be modified by adding mint leaves to any fenugreek preparation.¹⁷

Participant Experiences

Participants who connected with this herb found that they felt an increased desire for snuggling. Several of the women reported increased breast and overall body sensitivity. For one, this led to vulnerable, sensual lovemaking. Sarah was drinking it as a strong tea with cream and honey and wrote, "I like the tingling taste and it relaxes my mind similar to damiana. I feel all warm and sensitive in my breasts and skin."



TWELVE



SHARING
DELICIOUS
DELICACIES



Hawthorn Flower Soda



INGREDIENTS

3 cups hawthorn flowers (Use fresh flowers if possible. You can include some leaves as well)

1 cup granulated sugar

1/8 teaspoon champagne yeast



PREPARATION

- 1** Bring 5 cups of water to a boil in a saucepan, then remove it from the heat.
- 2** Dissolve the sugar in the hot water.
- 3** Add hawthorn flowers to the water. Stir, then cover and let it steep for 4 hours.
- 4** Strain the liquid into a half-gallon jar, and add enough water to fill the jar. Compost the flowers.
- 5** When the mixture is at room temperature, add 1/8 teaspoon champagne yeast, and stir well.
- 6** Cover the jar with cheesecloth or a dish towel.
- 7** Leave the jar on the counter for 2 days, stirring daily.
- 8** Pour the liquid into clean plastic soda bottles with screw-on lids or clean glass swing-top bottles.
- 9** Store bottles at room temperature for 1 to 3 days. (Warning: if the pressure builds too much, glass bottles can explode—I like to put mine in a cooler so they are out of direct sunlight and are also in a contained space. Plastic bottles will become firm as pressure builds and can act as tester bottles in this way. You can also release the top from a swing-top bottle daily to check for fizz.)
- 10** When the soda is fizzy, transfer the bottle(s) to the refrigerator.
- 11** Drink the soda within 2 weeks. (Fermentation will continue, though slower, when the sodas are chilled. To prevent exploding bottles, do not forget your soda in the back of the fridge!)

Rose Petal Wine

Emily Han

INGREDIENTS

2 cups fresh rose petals
(or 1 cup dried)

¼ cup Cognac or Cognac-
style brandy

1 bottle (3 ¼ cups) dry white wine

¼ cup mild honey

PREPARATION

- 1** If using fresh rose petals, pat them with a clean, dry towel to remove any moisture.
- 2** Put petals in a quart jar, and pour the Cognac and wine over top of them.
- 3** Cover the jar tightly, and give it a good shake to combine.
- 4** Refrigerate the jar for 1 week.
- 5** Strain the mixture through a fine mesh strainer, and discard the solids.
- 6** Put the strained wine and honey in a clean jar. Cover the jar tightly, and give it a good shake.
- 7** Age the strained wine for at least one more week before serving. Serve chilled.



Sweetheart Shrub



INGREDIENTS

1 cup fresh rose petals
(or ½ cup dried)

1 cup fresh hawthorn flowers
(or ½ cup dried)

1 cup fresh or frozen strawberries

½ cup honey

About 1½ cups white wine vinegar

PREPARATION

- 1** Put flowers into a pint jar.
- 2** Add ½ cup honey to the jar.
- 3** Pour vinegar over the flowers to fill the jar and stir.
- 4** Cap with a plastic lid (vinegar will corrode a metal canning jar lid and destroy the drink).
- 5** Let this infuse on the counter for a week, stirring daily.
- 6** Strain, reserving the liquid and composting the flowers.
- 7** Add 1 cup of chopped strawberries to the infused vinegar and allow the mixture to infuse on the counter for another week, stirring daily.
- 8** Strain, reserving the liquid and composting the strawberries.
- 9** To serve, add 1 to 2 tablespoons of shrub to 8 ounces of water or sparkling water.
- 10** Store the shrub in the refrigerator for up to 6 months.



Love Drunk Drinking Chocolate

This is a super thick drinking chocolate. You can adjust the thickness according to your taste by adding more or less water or adding half-and-half instead of cream.

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons coconut oil

3 ounces dark chocolate
(your favorite chocolate bar,
70% or higher)

½ cup heavy whipping cream,
coconut cream, or nondairy creamer

Pinch of salt

Pinch of cinnamon or cayenne
(optional)

PREPARATION

- 1** In a heavy-bottomed saucepan, melt the coconut oil and chocolate on low heat, whisking periodically until it is well combined and smooth.
- 2** Add ¼ cup of water, ½ cup of creamer, and a pinch of salt.
- 3** Stir the mixture until combined and even. If at any point the chocolate is sticking to the bottom of the pan, remove the pan from the heat immediately and keep whisking.
- 4** For some added flavor or spice, try adding a pinch of cinnamon or cayenne.





Coconut Rose Bark

Hanna Nicole



INGREDIENTS

- Coconut oil to grease the pan
- 1 cup melted cacao butter (roughly 1½ cups unmelted)
- ½ cup maple syrup
- 1 cup cashew butter (roughly 2 cups raw cashews, blended till smooth)
- 1 teaspoon ground cardamom
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons cacao nibs
- 3 tablespoons dried rose petals, lightly crushed
- 3 tablespoons coconut flakes

PREPARATION

- 1 Grease an 8 x 8-inch or 8 x 9-inch baking dish with a little coconut oil, then press a piece of parchment paper down onto the oil to hold it in place.
- 2 Melt cacao butter using a double boiler or low heat on the stovetop. Remove the double boiler from the heat.
- 3 Add maple syrup, cashew butter, cardamom, and salt to the cacao butter and whisk together.
- 4 Add cacao nibs, rose petals, and coconut flakes. Stir to evenly distribute them through the mix.
- 5 Pour the mixture into the parchment-lined baking dish, and spread it evenly across the bottom. You can vary the thickness of your bark by pouring in just the amount you would like, using a larger pan or multiple pans for a thinner bark.
- 6 Transfer the dish into the freezer for 40 minutes, until hardened.
- 7 Cut the bark with a knife or break into pieces for serving.



Golden Sunrise Cake

Hanna Nicole

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons fenugreek seeds
(grind 1 tablespoon into powder in
a coffee grinder)

1 to 2 tablespoons of tahini
(enough to grease the inside of the
cake pan well)

1 cup coconut sugar

Juice from half a lemon (straining
seeds out) (2 tablespoons)

Zest of one lemon

¼ teaspoon almond extract

¼ teaspoon vanilla extract

3 cups almond flour

1 tablespoon turmeric powder

1 ½ teaspoons baking powder

¼ teaspoon salt (or a touch more)

½ cup coconut oil (melted)

½ cup butter (melted)

¼ cup pistachios, chopped

PREPARATION

1 Boil ¾ cup of water, and then place 2 tablespoons of the fenugreek seeds in a bowl and pour the boiling water over top. Let the seeds soak for 10 minutes.

2 While the seeds are soaking, grease a 9-inch cake pan, or a parchment-lined springform pan with tahini.

3 Once the fenugreek has finished soaking, strain the water into a bowl, and compost seeds.

4 Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

5 Add coconut sugar, lemon juice and zest, almond extract, and vanilla extract to the boiled fenugreek water, then whisk until completely dissolved, and set aside.

6 If you haven't already, place the final tablespoon of fenugreek seeds in a coffee grinder and blend until powdery.

7 Mix almond flour, turmeric, baking powder, fenugreek powder, and salt in a bowl until well blended. Use a fork to press out any clumps.

8 Create a hole in the center of the dry ingredients and pour in your melted butter and oil. Mix well.

9 Once oil and dry ingredients are completely combined, slowly add the water mixture, ¼ cup at a time, and whisk until the consistency resembles yogurt (loose but not runny).

10 Pour the batter into your tahini-greased cake pan, and sprinkle with pistachios.

11 Bake for 30 to 35 minutes until the top is browned and a toothpick poked into the center comes out clean. (Pulling out the cake as soon as it's done and then letting it cool will give you a moist texture that is ideal for this recipe.)

12 Allow the cake to cool almost entirely, and serve with chilled whipped cream or drizzle with honey for added sweetness.



Dusty Rose Petal Truffles

Rosalee de la Forêt

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces dark chocolate
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon nutmeg
¾ cup full-fat coconut milk
powdered cacao and powdered roses
for rolling

PREPARATION

- 1** Begin by chopping or pounding the chocolate into pea-sized pieces.
- 2** Place pieces into a medium-sized bowl along with the vanilla, powdered cinnamon, and nutmeg.
- 3** Warm the coconut milk slowly until it just starts to simmer.
- 4** Pour this immediately into the bowl with the chocolate.
- 5** Let this mixture stand for one minute, and stir with a whisk until the chocolate is melted and has a smooth consistency. (Note: Most of the time this process works great. If the chocolate does not melt fully, place the mixture in a double boiler and heat slowly until melted.)
- 6** Cool the truffle sauce to a semi-hard consistency in the fridge or freezer and check it frequently. It needs to be soft enough to form into balls, yet hard enough to roll without falling apart.
- 7** Scoop the mixture into bite-sized pieces and roll it into balls.
- 8** Roll the balls in powdered cacao or rose petals.



Chocolate-Covered Strawberries

INGREDIENTS

24 strawberries (approximately)

1 cup cacao butter

5 drops liquid monk fruit or
¼ cup honey

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

½ cup cacao powder

2 teaspoons coconut oil

Cacao nibs and/or coarse sea salt
for sprinkling (optional)



PREPARATION

1 Place the strawberries in the freezer while you complete the next couple of steps.

2 Melt the cacao butter slowly in a double boiler.

3 When melted completely, add the monk fruit or honey and vanilla, and whisk until evenly combined.

4 Pour 2-3 tablespoons of this mixture out into a small pot, and set aside for later.

5 Add the cacao powder and coconut oil to the double boiler, remove it from the heat, and stir until melted and combined.

6 Let the mixture cool in the double boiler, off the heat for 5 to 10 minutes so the cacao can thicken.

7 Pull the strawberries from the freezer and dip them one at a time into the melted chocolate.

8 Place the dipped strawberries neatly on a flat surface (plate or board) and return them to the freezer. If you like a thin layer of chocolate on your berries, then one dip should be fine. If you like the chocolate layer to be nice and thick, repeat this process a couple of times, making sure to freeze your berries for about 10 minutes between dipping so the previous chocolate layer is nice and hard before adding the next.

8 When you have finished layering with dark chocolate and you have returned the berries to the freezer for their final 10 minutes, warm the melted cacao butter that you saved from earlier on the stove, until it is just melted again.

9 When the cacao butter is melted, scoop some of the butter up using a spoon and drizzle your dark chocolate-covered strawberries with diagonal lines.

10 Sprinkle with cacao nibs and/or salt, or enjoy as they are.

Eros Cream

Hanna Nicole

INGREDIENTS

2 cans full-fat coconut milk
½ cup honey (or ½ cup rose honey)
¼ cup rose water
Pinch of salt
10 drops liquid (or ¼ teaspoon powdered) monk fruit (optional)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 teaspoons orange extract
1 small handful of fresh or dried rose petals
¼ cup chocolate sauce (see recipe for Chocolate Body Drizzle, page 173)

PREPARATION

- 1** First, if you are using an ice cream machine, make sure you have frozen the inner basket for at least 24 hours (ideally 2 days) beforehand.
- 2** In a medium-sized bowl, empty both cans of coconut milk and stir gently until evenly combined.
- 3** Combine honey and rose water in a saucepan over low heat. As soon as the honey is loose and the rose water is well combined, remove from heat.
- 4** Add salt, monk fruit, vanilla extract, and orange extract to the honey mixture. Whisk until combined and set aside to cool slightly.
- 5** When the honey is cool but not stiff, add it to the coconut milk, stirring it in slowly.
- 6** Place the mixture of coconut milk and honey into the fridge for 2 hours or freezer for 40 minutes.
- 7** Get your ice cream machine ready to go. Turn it on and get it spinning before you pour your honey and coconut mixture in. When you do, pour slowly and use a spatula to get everything out of the bowl.
- 8** Let the mixture churn for 30 to 40 minutes or until your ice cream has set. Once the ice cream begins to harden, slowly drop your rose petals into the mixture (and if you would rather have your chocolate ribboned throughout the ice cream instead of on top, now is the time to add it. The chocolate should be loose but not hot. And poured in slowly).
- 9** When the ice cream is very thick and your machine is working hard to keep turning, turn it off and serve.
- 10** Store any leftover ice cream in a glass container with a secure lid and keep it in the freezer.
- 11** If you didn't opt for ribboning your chocolate drizzle throughout the ice cream, serving it warm and on top is a great addition.



Schisandra Mocha Truffles

Hanna Nicole

INGREDIENTS

¼ cup dried schisandra berries

8 ounces plain dark chocolate
(60 to 70%)

1 single-serving packet
of instant coffee
(caffeinated or decaf)

⅔ cup full-fat coconut milk
(13.5 ounces)

½ teaspoon cinnamon

Pinch of salt

½ cup cacao powder

8 ounces plain dark chocolate
(80 to 90%)

2 tablespoons coconut oil

Cinnamon, coarse salt, or
shaved chocolate for sprinkling
(optional)

PREPARATION

- 1** Soak the dried schisandra berries for 6 hours or overnight.
- 2** Strain well and smash the fruit with the back of a spoon to remove as many of the seeds as you have the patience to. (This is an optional step that creates a smoother center.) Place mashed berries in a strainer and press to remove as much moisture as possible. Set aside.
- 3** Chop the 8 ounces of dark (60 to 70%) chocolate into pea-sized pieces and place it in a bowl with the instant coffee.
- 4** In a heavy-bottomed pot, heat the coconut milk until it just begins to boil.
- 5** Pour coconut milk over the coffee and chocolate. Let the hot milk melt the chocolate, and when the chocolate is silky enough, whisk it all with a fork until smooth.
- 6** Mix in mashed schisandra berries, cinnamon, and salt with a fork until well combined.
- 7** Place this mixture in the fridge for 1 to 2 hours until creamy and solid.
- 8** Put the cacao powder into a bowl.
- 9** Pull your creamy chocolate mixture out of the fridge and, using a mini ice cream scoop or spoon, create a small bite-sized ball by rolling it briefly between your palms.
- 10** Roll each ball in the cacao powder until lightly dusted. Transfer these onto a parchment-covered tray or plate and put it in the freezer.
- 11** While the truffle centers are firming in the freezer, melt 8 ounces of the darker chocolate with the coconut oil in a small pot. Whisk until well combined.
- 12** When this chocolate is silky and loose, remove it from the heat, before it sticks to the bottom. Set this chocolate to the side, and let it cool on the counter for 5 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until thick but runny.



13 Pull your truffle centers from the freezer. Dip the truffle centers into the warm chocolate using 2 small spoons for a thick coating and set them back down on the parchment tray.

14 Sprinkle the top with a little cinnamon, coarse salt, or shaved chocolate for aesthetics, and transfer into the refrigerator to set.

15 These truffles will take up to 10 minutes in the refrigerator to firmly set. You can test them by lightly touching their outer shell for solidity.

16 Store the truffles in the refrigerator to prevent melting.

17 Enjoy!





Maca Butter Barz

Hanna Nicole



INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup almond flour
- ½ cup powdered maca root
- 1 cup coarsely chopped almonds
- 2 tablespoons chia seeds
- 1 heaping tablespoon cinnamon
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons coconut oil
- 1 cup almond butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ cup maple syrup

PREPARATION

- 1** Combine all the dry ingredients in a medium-sized bowl.
- 2** Melt coconut oil over low heat and pour into another small bowl with the almond butter, vanilla extract, and maple syrup.
- 3** Combine the wet and dry ingredients, and stir until well combined, with the chopped almonds and chia seeds evenly distributed in the batter.
- 4** Pour this into a parchment-lined 9 x 9-inch baking dish, and using a spatula, smooth out the edges until it is even.
- 5** Place the mixture into the fridge for 1 to 2 hours until set.
- 6** Use a clean, sharp knife to cut the bars into whatever size suits you.
- 7** Store the bars in the fridge for up to 10 days.



Maple Oat Squares

Hanna Nicole

INGREDIENTS

2 cups rolled oats
1 cup shredded coconut flakes
1 cup sesame seeds
2 cups chocolate chips (optional)
¾ teaspoon ground cardamom
1 ¼ teaspoons cinnamon
½ teaspoon salt
⅓ cup melted coconut oil
½ cup maple syrup
1 cup tahini (room temperature)
¼ cup chia seeds (blended with ½ cup water into a slurry)
½ cup canned coconut fat (just the fat)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 banana

PREPARATION

- 1 Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
- 2 In a medium-sized bowl, combine all of the dry ingredients.
- 3 Melt coconut oil over low heat, and pour it into a bowl with the other wet ingredients.
- 4 Whisk wet ingredients together until smooth, smashing the ripe banana into the mix.
- 5 Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients, and mix until all the oats are well coated.
- 6 Lightly grease a 9 x 13-inch baking dish, then press a piece of parchment down until it sticks to the bottom and sides of the dish evenly.
- 7 Pour the oat bar mixture into the baking dish, and press down evenly.
- 8 Bake the mixture for 20 to 25 minutes, until lightly browned on top.
- 9 Pull the dish out of the oven, and allow it to cool for 10 minutes.
- 10 Slice the mixture into bars and store them in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Variation: *These bars can be made into Bitter Maple Squares by substituting ¼ cup of ground fenugreek seeds and ⅛ teaspoon of powdered monk fruit (or 5 drops liquid) for the chocolate chips. This is a lovely way to incorporate fenugreek into your diet.*



Schisandra Jelly



INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup dried schisandra berries
- 1 small red apple, chopped
- ½ cup granulated sugar

PREPARATION

- 1** Place schisandra berries, chopped apple, and 1½ cups of water in a small saucepan.
- 2** Bring the water to a boil. Turn the heat down to low, and simmer for 20 minutes.
- 3** Strain the mixture through a cheesecloth or jelly bag, reserving the liquid and composting the fruit.
- 4** Add the sugar to the liquid and return it to the saucepan.
- 5** Heat the liquid until the sugar is fully dissolved, then bring it to a rolling boil. Boil for 5 minutes.
- 6** Check for set point by putting a small amount of the liquid on a spoon and putting it in the freezer for a few minutes to see if it gels. If it does not, boil the liquid for a few more minutes, and check again.
- 7** When the liquid reaches set point, place it in a jar and refrigerate until it sets.
- 8** Store the jelly in the refrigerator and serve it on Maple Oat Squares, muffins, or toast.







CACAO



Theobroma cacao



“Food of the Gods.” This is the translation for cacao’s genus name, *Theobroma*. As thick, rich, creamy chocolate, cacao becomes an absolute delight for our senses. If you are a chocolate lover like me, just the smell of chocolate can be intoxicating. The dark, creamy smoothness of melted chocolate or seeing it baked into or drizzled on treats is a feast for our eyes. And the taste, so utterly, irresistibly delicious . . .

How Does Cacao Work in Our Bodies?

When we eat chocolate, we feel energized and uplifted. This is partly due to the caffeine in cacao, especially in combination with theobromine,¹ but it also nourishes our bodies with minerals like potassium, magnesium, phosphorus, and calcium.² The synergistic effects of these and other constituents like anandamides and phenylethylamine likely contribute to its mood-elevating effects as well.³ The phenylethylamine compound is also natural in the brain, and research shows that trace amounts of it are released when we are in love and during orgasm.⁴

These compounds also act to protect the cardiovascular system, which may contribute to the heart-opening sensations some experience in the consumption of chocolate. Cacao is both heart opening and an excellent ally for physical heart health. It has been shown to protect the cardiovascular system and reduce the risk of heart disease by favorably influencing vasodilation, reducing inflammation, decreasing platelet aggregation, reducing lipid

oxidation, and reducing insulin resistance.⁵ It also can lower high blood pressure, and the theobromine in cacao dilates the coronary arteries and improves blood flow to the brain.⁶

It is both cardio- and neuroprotective, meaning it helps tone and protect our hearts and nervous systems while also providing endocrine, immunological, respiratory, reproductive, and dermatological health benefits.⁷ Cacao is a stimulating nervine, and both the caffeine and theobromine within it have neuroprotective properties, nourishing and strengthening our nerve cells.⁸

Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: cardioprotective, energizing, nervine, neuroprotective, nutritive

OTHER ACTIONS: antioxidant, inflammatory modulator

ENERGETICS: warming, moistening

TASTES: bitter

CONSTITUENTS: anandamides, calcium, caffeine, flavonoids, phenylethylamine, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, theobromine

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: Cacao is a tonic-level herb and should be consumed in medium dosages (2.5 grams of high-flavonoid cocoa powder or 10 grams of high-flavonoid dark chocolate per day). I recommend developing a taste for dark chocolate to minimize your sugar intake.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: Cacao may lead to insomnia, nervousness, or anxiousness in some people due to its stimulating effects.



A Bit about Cacao Plants

Cacao plants are native to the deep tropical regions of Central and South America, and yet chocolate is consumed in countries across the globe. When we unwrap our favorite chocolate treats, we do not often think about the cacao plant, trees that grow 20 to 30 feet tall, have glossy, bright green leaves that droop from the branches, and small pink flowers that blossom throughout the year. The trees produce fruits called cacao pods that can be up to a foot long and three inches in diameter. They can be green, red, yellow, or yellow-brown when they are ripe, depending on the variety. Inside the pods are the cacao beans (seeds) surrounded by a mucilaginous, white pulp that has a flavor that is both sweet and sour.

In order to make chocolate, the cacao pods are harvested and split open. The beans are removed from the pods and fermented. During the fermentation process, the white pulp turns into liquid and drains off, and the unique chocolate flavor develops in the beans. The beans are then dried and sorted. The nibs are removed from the seed shells and roasted. As they roast, they darken in color and their flavor deepens. The roasted nibs are ground in stone mills where friction and heat turn them to a thick liquid, which is the basis for chocolate and cocoa products. This liquid mass is pressed to extract cocoa butter and then either powdered or used to make various chocolate products.



How to Use Cacao

PARTS USED: fermented seeds

Cacao can be enjoyed in a myriad of ways. Generally chocolate treats are made with added ingredients, especially sweeteners, since it is quite bitter in 100 percent cacao form.

CACAO VS. COCOA: *The main difference between the two is that cacao butter and powder are made in processes using lower heating methods so they are more nutrient rich than cocoa butter and powder, but either type will be effective for recipes in this book:*

As an ingredient in sweet treats like candy bars, truffles, cakes, and cookies

In liquid form as a drink ingredient or as a syrup to be poured over other treats or as a body drizzle

As an ingredient in body-care products like lip balms or body butters



Participant Experiences

Cacao was the first herb we played with in the Aphrodisiac Circle, and it brought a sense of inspiration, joy, and pleasure right away. For a few participants, it was overly stimulating, and several people remarked about what a powerful herb they found it to be. Chocolate is a regular part of many of our lives, and our circle agreed that they would engage with cacao in a more conscious, respectful way going forward. Participants particularly noted feeling increased body and sensual awareness and arousal. We also felt more open hearted and comfortable in our vulnerability with greater intake of cacao.

There was a quality of indulgence and delight in our cacao experiments. We tried various cacao drinks, truffles, mousse tortes, chocolate pancakes, and body drizzles. Angela added cacao nibs to a bath salt blend. Gabrielle made a simple, private, daily ritual for herself of eating and savoring bites of a 100 percent cacao bar. Artemis made a ritual of a nightly cacao drink with cinnamon, cayenne, almond milk, and maple syrup, smelling, stirring, and slowly sipping by candlelight. We noticed a grounding quality in the earthy, exotic flavor and enjoyed the increased eroticism flowing in our lives throughout the month.



THIRTEEN



WELCOME

TO

VITAL

LIVING!





SCHISANDRA



Schisandra chinensis



Each bite of schisandra berry is a taste sensation that brings us awake and alive to the present moment. The Chinese name, *wu wei zi*, means “five-flavored fruit.” Schisandra has sweet and sour flavors in the peel and pulp, along with acrid, bitter, and salty flavors in the seeds, so each bite of berry has all five tastes! Schisandra strengthens, enlivens, and energizes us, so that we are ready to relate in powerful ways.

How Does Schisandra Work in Our Bodies?

Schisandra is a whole-body tonic that strengthens and tones our organs, is restorative, and energizing. According to a review conducted by Nowak et al.,¹ schisandra has some very unique bioactive compounds known as schisandra lignans. These compounds were shown to improve mitochondrial function, which is important for overall health because the mitochondria produce energy for the body and regulate the metabolism. Schisandrin A, one of the schisandra lignans, was shown to have powerful effects on DNA repair and other important antioxidant properties. These antioxidative properties protect cells against fatigue-induced stress. Gomisins A, another bioactive compound in schisandra, was also shown to protect cells against stress.²

These berries are great for our hearts, helping to regulate the cardiovascular system and protect the heart, lungs, and liver while also purifying the blood and helping to normalize blood pressure.³

Schisandra also has positive influences on our central and sympathetic nervous systems. Its antioxidant qualities contribute to the way it can enhance cognitive function, and improve mental clarity, concentration, coordination, and sensory perception. Schisandra can also ease depression, quiet the spirit, and calm the heart, reducing irritability and helping with insomnia, especially when combined with ashwagandha.⁴

As an adaptogen schisandra can help us withstand stress and resist disease. It helps strengthen our adrenals, fortify our immune system, and is great for endurance and stamina.⁵

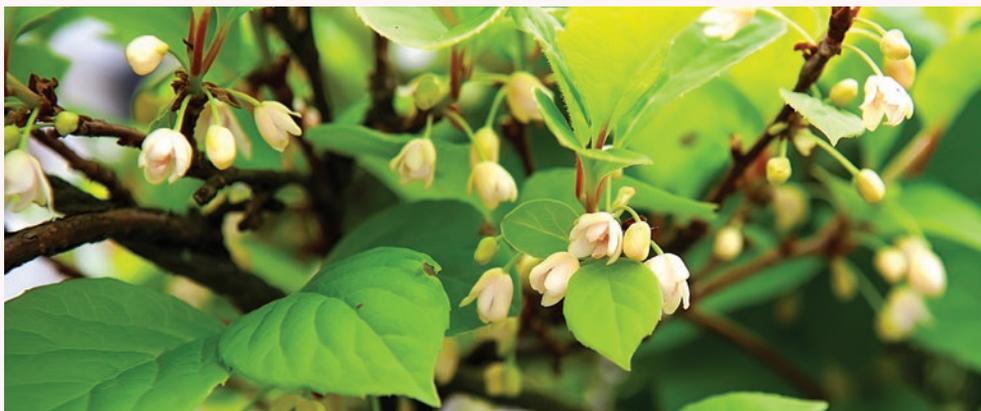
It is also known as a reproductive system tonic for both women and men.⁶ It helps nourish our sexual fluids and increases sexual stamina.⁷ It also increases sexual desire.⁸ Brigitte Mars says that schisandra can help support people in overcoming the trauma associated with sexual abuse.⁹

For women in menopause, this herb can be useful in helping control hot flashes and night sweats by helping dry up excess fluids.¹⁰ One trial shows a significant beneficial effect of schisandra on sleep disorders in peri- and postmenopausal women.¹¹

In ancient China, schisandra was known as a youth preserver and beautifier.¹² Some of the lignans in schisandra have now been shown to protect and even prevent skin aging from UV radiation and oxidation.¹³

A Bit about Schisandra Plants

Schisandra is a climbing deciduous vine with pointed oval leaves. It blooms in late spring with solitary cream to pink fragrant flowers, which are then followed by clusters of shiny red berries. It is native to northern and northeast China and the adjacent regions of Russia and Korea. It prefers rich, well-drained but moisture-retentive soil. It is a shade-loving plant.



Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: adaptogen, cardiotonic, cardioprotective, brain tonic, emotionally uplifting, endocrine system tonic, energy building, energizing, ergogenic, nervine, neuroprotective, reproductive system tonic, restorative, soothing and healing for skin

OTHER ACTIONS: antioxidant, astringent, hepatoprotective (protects liver), immune tonic

ENERGETICS: warming, drying **TASTES:** sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter

NOTABLE APHRODISIAC CONSTITUENTS: Lignans such as Schisandrin A and Gomisin A, vitamin C

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: Schisandra is a tonic herb and should be taken regularly in medium dosages for a specific period of time. A medium dose might look like ½ cup of tea or a dropperful of tincture three times daily.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: Avoid schisandra during pregnancy as it may stimulate uterine contractions.

Large doses may cause appetite loss.

Some people experience GERD or heartburn when taking schisandra; if this happens, reduce the dose, or stop taking it altogether.

Schisandra is metabolized by the liver and may interact with certain pharmaceutical drugs including tacrolimus (immunosuppressant), talinolol (beta blocker), and warfarin (blood thinner).

How to Use Schisandra

PARTS USED: Berry

For an energy boost or to awaken senses, eat the berries fresh or dried.

Brew schisandra tea, warm or iced. Play with steeping or decocting time to find the flavor intensity you like best. **(Five Springs Tea, page 89)**

Make schisandra-infused honey.

Make pastilles using powdered berries.



Participant Experiences

Overall, Aphrodisiac Circle participants reported feelings of increased vitality, strength, and courage when engaging with schisandra. When we took it regularly (either as a tincture, tea, or just eating dried berries daily) we noticed feeling a consistent flow of energy that increased our endurance and resilience and helped us feel more connected to our personal power.

Eating schisandra berries also served to bring us fully into the present moment and awaken our senses. We noticed a nourishing and cleansing feeling associated with the zing of ingesting these berries. This sense awakening quality was a wonderful precursor to sexual expression, and two participants noticed a marked increase in their sexual desire from taking schisandra regularly. Angela says this herb had the most pronounced positive effect on her libido of any of the herbs we experimented with.



APPENDIX A

APHRODISIAC CIRCLE PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS



Rebecca: She is a mother to an elementary school daughter and is in the midst of her transition through menopause. She and her husband, Simon, run a home business together complete with a small-scale farm. Rebecca is interested to see how herbs can support her in finding more time for intimacy and reinvigorating her libido.

Simon: At 40, Simon is working with Rebecca to keep their business up and running. He is dealing with high stress and overwork as a block to the kind of intimacy and sexuality he would like in his life.

James: He is a 30-year-old married, polyamorous, bisexual man. He is a healer in the process of becoming a couple and family therapist. Having “encountered a great deal of shame and fear when diving into deeper pleasure states,” he is actively engaged in his personal erotic healing work. He enjoys being embodied through contact improv and fusion dance. James is interested in learning how aphrodisiacs will expand the eroticism in his life and affect his life and relationships.

Gabrielle: She has not had an intimate partner in many years. Since her husband passed away, her relationship energy has gone toward her children, two daughters now college age. She is involved in political activism, particularly around the health of our planet, and she loves to travel. She participated in the project to reengage the sensual, sexual aspects of herself.

Sarah: At age 34, Sarah is deepening into her own sensuality and sexuality and engaging in a process with her husband around the possibility of opening their marriage. She is a body worker with a young son.

Cassie: She is a priestess to the goddess. She is 43 years old and has been married to Joe for almost 14 years. She has only been in monogamous heterosexual relationships, but she has also been attracted to women. She is working through the blocks and sexual shame that formed through her upbringing in a strict Roman Catholic household. Her intention for the year is to cultivate her sexual power. She is exploring tantra and erotic dance and developing a jade egg practice as well as exploring how herbs can support her journey.

Joe: He is a 42-year-old leadership workshop facilitator. He is a ceremonialist, professional life coach, and soul guide. Joe is a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, and through his own personal growth work, has come to deeply love sensual and sexual exploration. He is seeking to rekindle the fire in his relationship with Cassie.

Lisa: She is a 50-year-old, married, polyamorous woman in the early stages of menopause who has been taking a deep dive into exploring her sexuality. She has two teenage children and loves being a mother.

Michelle: She is menopausal and a healthy, active bisexual in a relationship with a partner who is excited to explore sensuality and sexuality with her. Michelle also nourishes her own sensuality through dance and her connection to nature. She is outside and engaged in physical activities as much as possible. She is also exploring sexuality, feminine ecophilosophy, and tantric and Taoist practices.

Robert: Robert, 65, is Michelle's partner. He is recently retired from a career in accounting and plans to dedicate some of his retired time to writing erotic adventure stories. He and Michelle love to travel and adventure together and are greatly enjoying their sensual and sexual explorations.

Rachel: She identifies as bisexual and has recently ended an eight-year intimate relationship with a woman. She is participating in the project to engage with her own relationship to her sensuality and sexuality and to move herself toward the frame of mind that would eventually allow her to enter romantic and physical relationship with others again.

Angela: She is 41 and recently married, and she and her husband are raising two children together. While she is “madly in love with and attracted to her husband,” she finds her libido does not match her desire.

Artemis: She is a 45-year-old single mother of four smallish boys. She left her marriage of 20 years because she did not have the kind of deep connection she desired with her husband. Since leaving she found tantra and contact improvisation dance and began singing and writing again. She has experienced beautiful spiritual and very sexually sacred relationships and has deepened her love and commitment to herself.

Christina: She is a 47-year-old soul purpose guide, dancer (and dance instructor), and theater manager. She is unpartnered and has no children. She is also a survivor of sexual abuse and is recovering from having been in an abusive long-term relationship that she ended in 2013. Christina is healing and seeking ways to make her life juicier.

APPENDIX B

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS



adaptogen: works in wide-ranging ways to support overall body functioning, leading to an increased ability to navigate and withstand stress

antidepressant: alleviates depression

aromatic: has a pleasant and distinctive smell

brain tonic: supports brain health

circulatory stimulant: increases circulation

cardioprotective: protects the heart and arteries

cardiotonic: strengthens and tones heart muscle and arteries

demulcent: soothes and protects mucous membranes, often mucilaginous

eases menstrual pain

emotionally uplifting

endocrine system tonic: supports endocrine system health

energizing: brings vitality and energy in the moment

energy building: increases overall energy available

ergogenic: enhances physical performance and stamina

euphoric: contributes to feelings of happiness and excitement

hormone balancing

improves fertility

muscle relaxant

nervine: supports the nervous system; calms nerves

neuroprotective: protects nerve cells from damage

nutritive: provides nourishment

reproductive system tonic: supports health of reproductive system

restorative: helps to bring back energy, vitality, and health

soothing and healing for skin

vasodilator: dilates blood vessels

APPENDIX C

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS FOR HERBS NOT FEATURED IN MONOGRAPHS



PERFUME HERBS

(These considerations were all taken into account in the Evoke Perfume formulation.)

Bergamot (*Citrus bergamia*) essential oil:

Phytotoxic if used in a dilution of more than 0.4 percent of a blend.

Vetiver (*Vetiveria zizanioides*) essential oil: Nontoxic, nonirritating. Has isoeugenol, so under 15 percent dilution is advised.

Ylang-ylang (*Cananga odorata*) essential oil:

Nontoxic, though it may cause skin irritation or be sensitizing, especially on inflamed or damaged skin. Use in low (0.8% or less) dilution when applying to skin. If overused, it may irritate skin or cause headaches or nausea.

HOT LIPS LIP BALM

Sweet orange (*Citrus sinensis*) essential oil: Nontoxic. It may cause skin irritation in dilution over one percent. Older, oxidized oils increase potential for skin irritation. It's best to buy citrus oils from organically grown fruit, as citrus trees are heavily sprayed. The citrus oils are cold pressed, and the pesticides come through the process and are found in the oils.

CHAI HERBS

(those with safety issues)

Nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*): Avoid during pregnancy.

Whole cloves (*Syzygium aromaticum*): Can be irritating in large doses.

Black peppercorns (*Piper nigrum*): Large doses may cause nausea and may increase the effects of pharmaceutical drugs in unexpected ways.

Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*): Not recommended in pregnancy for medicinal use. Caution is recommended in women with a history or risk of estrogen receptor-positive cancer.

Astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*): Make sure you buy *Astragalus membranaceus*. Avoid during acute illness. Do not use with immunosuppressive drugs.

Burdock root (*Arctium lappa*): Not for use in first trimester of pregnancy.

OTHER HERBS

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*): Not recommended during pregnancy.

Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*): Use caution when taking blood thinners. Not for use in pregnancy or lactation.

Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*): Not recommended in large doses during pregnancy.

Nettle (*Urtica dioica*): Not recommended to be eaten after plant has gone to flower/seed. Use with caution if you have a dry constitution.

Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*): Not recommended in large doses during pregnancy. May lower blood glucose.

RECOMMENDED READING



- Alchemy of Herbs: Transform Everyday Ingredients into Foods and Remedies that Heal*, by Rosalee de la Forêt. New York: Hay House, 2017.
- Ecosexuality: When Nature Inspires the Arts of Love*, by Serenagaia Anderlini-D'Onofrio and Lindsay Hagamen. Puerto Rico: 3WayKiss via CreateSpace, 2015.
- Extended Massive Orgasm: How You Can Give and Receive Intense Sexual Pleasure*, by Steve Bodansky, Ph.D., and Vera Bodansky, Ph.D. Alameda, CA: Hunter House, 2000.
- Female Ejaculation and the G-Spot: Not Your Mother's Orgasm Book*, by Deborah Sundahl. Alameda, CA: Hunter House, 2003.
- Herbal Healing for Men: Remedies and Recipes*, by Rosemary Gladstar. North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing, 2017.
- Herbal Healing for Women: Simple Home Remedies for Women of All Ages*, by Rosemary Gladstar. New York: Fireside, 1993.
- Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Compassion*, by Marshall B. Rosenberg. Del Mar, CA: Puddle Dancer Press, 1999.
- Pussy: A Reclamation*, by Regena Thomashauer. New York: Hay House, 2016.
- Vagina*, by Naomi Wolf. New York: Ecco, 2012.
- Self Compassion: Stop Beating Yourself Up and Leave Insecurity Behind*, by Kristin Neff. New York: William Morrow, 2011.
- Slow Sex: The Path to Fulfilling and Sustainable Sexuality*, by Diana Richardson. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 2011.
- Taoist Secrets of Love: Cultivating Male Sexual Energy*, by Mantak Chai and Michael Winn. Santa Fe: Aurora Press, 1984.
- The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*, by Julia Cameron. New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 1992.
- Undefended Love*, by Jett Psaris, Ph.D., and Marlena S. Lyons, Ph.D. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 2000.
- Wild Remedies: How to Forage Healing Foods and Craft Your Own Herbal Medicine*, by Rosalee de la Forêt and Emily Han. New York: Hay House, 2020.
- Women's Anatomy of Arousal: Secret Maps to Buried Pleasure*, by Sheri Winston. New York: Mango Garden Press, 2010.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



It is always best to source your herbs and supplies locally if you can. You may be able to gather herbs locally right from nature, or you can look for local herbalists, herb shops, co-ops, or organic farms. Local herbs will likely be the freshest, and buying from local folks helps support them and reduces the environmental impacts involved with shipping.

Sometimes you won't be able to find things locally, so I'll suggest some online resources as well.

Mountain Rose Herbs:

mountainroseherbs.com

Pacific Botanicals:

pacificbotanicals.com

Dandelion Botanical Company:

dandelionbotanical.com

Banyan Botanicals:

banyanbotanicals.com

Frontier Co-op:

frontiercoop.com

For quality essential oils:

Appalachian Valley Natural Products:

av-at.com

Snow Lotus:

snowlotus.org

CONTRIBUTORS



Hanna Nicole, healing foods chef, consultant, and caterer

Hanna contributed in many ways to this project. She created and helped develop many unique and wonderful recipes especially for this book. She is also the creative brain behind many of the recipe names.

Hanna also brought her budding skills as an artistic director to this project. She spent countless hours with Peter and me developing photo ideas and then worked with Jen and the models to make those photos come to life.

In her time as my assistant, Hanna fully devoted herself to the success of this project, and she and I shared tears and triumphs throughout the writing and production process. This book would not be what it is without her contributions.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Jen Lee Light, jenleelight.com

Most of the chapter opener photos and many of the recipe photos in *Aphrodisiac* are the work of Jen Lee Light.

Peter Rubens, peterpaulrubens.com

You'll find Peter's photographic work on the cover of *Aphrodisiac*, the Chapter 9 opener photo, and some select recipe photos.

7Song, 7song.com, for his beautiful photos of damiana on pages 148 and 150.

Jenny Barandich for her photo on page 123.

RECIPES

Rebecca Altman, wonderbotanica.com/about-rebecca

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Karin Rose

POETRY

Dona Nieto, www.LaTigresa.net. Excerpt from "Biosexual" from *Naked Sacred Earth Poems*, by Dona Nieto (La Tigresa) (Berkeley: Regent Press, 2010), copyright Donna Nieto 2010, used by permission of the author.

Meredith Heller

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Artemis Mandala

Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D., *Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories That Heal* (New York: Berkley, 1996).

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CONTENT

Betty Martin, bettymartin.org

Kushad Watson and **Wendy Jarvis**, for sharing their Relating Meditation.

Jon Young and **Wilderness Awareness School**, for the inspiration for the Sensory Meditation.

METRIC CONVERSION CHART



Standard Cup	Fine Powder (e.g., flour)	Grain (e.g., rice)	Granular (e.g., sugar)	Liquid Solids (e.g., butter)	Liquid (e.g., milk)
1	140 g	150 g	190 g	200 g	240 ml
$\frac{3}{4}$	105 g	113 g	143 g	150 g	180 ml
$\frac{2}{3}$	93 g	100 g	125 g	133 g	160 ml
$\frac{1}{2}$	70 g	75 g	95 g	100 g	120 ml
$\frac{1}{3}$	47 g	50 g	63 g	67 g	80 ml
$\frac{1}{4}$	35 g	38 g	48 g	50 g	60 ml
$\frac{1}{8}$	18 g	19 g	24 g	25 g	30 ml

Useful Equivalents for Cooking/Oven Temperatures

Process	Fahrenheit	Celsius	Gas Mark
Freeze Water	32° F	0° C	
Room Temperature	68° F	20° C	
Boil Water	212° F	100° C	
Bake	325° F	160° C	3
	350° F	180° C	4
	375° F	190° C	5
	400° F	200° C	6
	425° F	220° C	7
	450° F	230° C	8
Broil			Grill

Useful Equivalents for Liquid Ingredients by Volume

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp			1 ml
$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp			2 ml
1 tsp			5 ml
3 tsp	1 tbsp	$\frac{1}{2}$ fl oz	15 ml
	2 tbsp	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 fl oz
	4 tbsp	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 fl oz
	$5\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	3 fl oz
	8 tbsp	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	4 fl oz
	$10\frac{2}{3}$ tbsp	$\frac{2}{3}$ cup	5 fl oz
	12 tbsp	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	6 fl oz
	16 tbsp	1 cup	8 fl oz
	1 pt	2 cups	16 fl oz
	1 qt	4 cups	32 fl oz
		33 fl oz	1000 ml
			1 L

Useful Equivalents for Dry Ingredients by Weight

(To convert ounces to grams, multiply the number of ounces by 30.)

1 oz	$\frac{1}{16}$ lb	30 g
4 oz	$\frac{1}{4}$ lb	120 g
8 oz	$\frac{1}{2}$ lb	240 g
12 oz	$\frac{3}{4}$ lb	360 g
16 oz	1 lb	480 g

Useful Equivalents for Length

(To convert inches to centimeters, multiply the number of inches by 2.5.)

1 in		2.5 cm
6 in	$\frac{1}{2}$ ft	15 cm
12 in	1 ft	30 cm
36 in	3 ft	1 yd
40 in		100 cm
		1 m