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THE HERBALIST

AMH - Celebrating 20 Years !



Featured in this issue:

The Advertising (double) Standards Agency and You • Cacao / Chocolate – Love it or Loathe it! • Plants and Herbalism in France • Rasa Shãstra - The Ancient Science of Medical Alchemy Part II • Book Reviews

The Association of Master Herbalists and the Unified Register of Herbal Practitioners Quarterly Journal

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Applogies and correction for an error that appeared in Spring 2015 Herbalist: "Barbara Wilkinson would like us to point out that she is a trustee of the Herb Society not a museum curator, as we titled her on page 2 in the Spring edition of The Herbalist."

Photo credits: Kelly Holden – Cover photo, page 13: Kelly's cake of wonderment and Fry's chocolate spread, page 15: Bean to Bar, Kelly's Chia Chocolate Mousse, page 16: Mint Choc Chip Milkshake. Hector Velasquez – page 14: Cacao Pods Opened, page 15: Cacao Beans Shelled and Cacao Pod Beans & Nibs.

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EDITORIAL - Summer 2015

Well, here we are in August already – where have the last few months gone? Maybe it's just me, or do you feel that time has speeded up?

Down here in Sussex, the summer started off with some wonderfully warm and sunny days. In fact some days were just too hot to be out in the garden. My plants loved it though and we have an amazing harvest – our apple and plums trees are bowing under the weight of all that amazing fruit and my mulberry trees are dripping with berries – just can't pick them fast enough!

…….And then there was July (and now August) – rain, rain rain! I'm sitting here at my desk with thunder and lightning crashing around outside. Think I'll stay in today!

So……..on to exciting things happening in September! As you probably know by now, this year is the 20th Anniversary of the Association of Master Herbalists. To mark this wonderful achievement we have invited one of our favourite teachers – Dr. Christopher Hobbs – to be the keynote speaker at our annual conference, this year being held on Saturday 12th September at the Manchester Conference Centre. We're very excited that he's agreed to give two amazing lectures at the conference – more details inside. There's a lot to read in this edition – including Adam Smith's fascinating and very informative article on the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), Christine Herbert's write-up about the fantastic herbal course she attended in France earlier this year with Cathy Skipper and Sevensong, and Part 2 of Andrew Mason's article on Rasa Shāstra. And I've written an article on Cacao, with some tasty recipes to try!

I hope to see lots of you at the conference in September; in case you haven't booked yet, there's another booking form enclosed – it's free to AMH members, and the lectures are open to non-members too.

Kelly Holden

20th Anniversary Conference and AGM of the Association of Master Herbalists

Saturday 12th September 2015 at the Manchester Conference Centre



About Dr. Christopher Hobbs, L.Ac., Ph.D., A.H.G.

We invite all members of the AMH to join us to celebrate our 20th Anniversary and listen to the brilliant Dr Christopher Hobbs as he gives our 2 keynote lectures.

Morning Lecture: 10:30-12:30

"What's Bugging You? The Science and Practice of Probiotics, Prebiotics & Traditional Fermented Foods"

The human biome project is an international research team focused on discovering more about the many billions of microbes that live on and in our body. Emerging research from around the world suggests that our microflora is like another organ system--it protects us, detoxifies harmful chemicals, prevents pathogenic organisms from infecting us, produces vitamins, and interacts with our immune system, giving important cues to what is going on in our environment.

Hear world-renowned herbalist and research scientist, Dr Christopher Hobbs, Ph.D., as he discusses the health benefits of traditional fermented foods and prebiotic and probiotic supplements and cultured foods like sauerkraut and kimchi. Learn how to make your own cultured foods and how to protect your health and create higher wellness by understanding and utilizing these amazing microbes!

Review emerging science on the beneficial effects of probiotics for prevention, and for relieving disease and symptoms of bowel syndromes, diarrhoea, upper respiratory tract infections, skin disorders, mood disorders, and obesity.

Hear clinical successes from Dr Hobbs and other practitioners. Practical details of the personal and clinical uses of probiotics and traditional fermented foods, such as dose, duration, best products, etc. will be emphasized.

Afternoon Lecture: 2:00-4:00

"Chronic Inflammation is Yin Deficiency, and the Underlying Factor In All Chronic Disease."

A cross-cultural review of inflammation, from yin deficiency in traditional Chinese medicinal thinking, to the most recent discoveries in biomedicine to uncover the etiological factors of chronic inflammation.

We will review diabetes, obesity, and a number of other common diseases related to inflammatory processes. A special emphasis on herbs, traditional foods, and modern science-based food extracts that can help reduce the impact of chronic inflammation over the years, something we all deal with to one degree or another during the aging process, no one is exempt.

We will review the science, traditional use, and modern applications of turmeric, pineapple stem, green papaya peel, boswellia, hops, and other remedies and preventatives.

Dr. Christopher Hobbs is a fourth-generation, internationally renowned herbalist, licensed acupuncturist, herbal clinician, research scientist, consultant to the dietary supplement industry, expert witness, botanist, mycologist with over 35 years of experience.

The author or co-author of over 20 books, Christopher lectures on herbal medicine world-wide. He has taught at universities and medical schools such as Stanford Medical School, Yale Medical School, Bastyr University and the National School of Naturopathic Medicine. He has taught classes for the last 6 years at the University of California, Berkeley as a Ph.D. graduate student in evolutionary biology, phylogenetics, plant chemistry, and ethnobotany.
www.christopherhobbs.com

THE ADVERTISING (DOUBLE) STANDARDS AGENCY AND YOU

by Adam Smith MAMH

As a herbalist in the second decade of the 21st century, the chances are that you own and run a website as one of your primary windows on the world. However, like other practitioners of non-mainstream health disciplines, herbalists' websites are increasingly liable to receive unwelcome attention from the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). This article examines the crucial question: do herbalists in this country need to change their practises to fit the ASA mould?

Henrietta Herbalist is worried. Sorting through this morning's mail, in among the assorted bills and junk mail, she is mystified to come across a letter from the ASA. Unsurprisingly, Henrietta has barely heard of the ASA, which was set up in 1962 to oversee self-regulation of the advertising industry. Opening the official-looking letter, Henrietta takes one look at the ASA's logo and the imposing word 'authority' and assumes that she is dealing with an arm of the UK government. She immediately sets to work changing the wording on her website as per the ASA's demands: better to have an uninformative website that none at all, she reasons.

What a shame that Henrietta didn't check the register of business names on the Companies House website (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house). Entering the term 'advertising standards' into the search engine immediately reveals that the ASA (Ltd) is merely a private limited company, incorporated on the 22nd August 1962 with company number 00733214. Nothing to do with government at all, then. So what's going on?

A Significant Advancement

On 1st March, 2011, the ASA proudly announced the extension of its remit "to take action against misleading, harmful or offensive advertisements" from broadcast and print media to the Internet. The rule change was effected through the publication of a revised version of the ASA's holy book, the Committee on Advertising Practice's Non-broadcast Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing (CAP) Code, some 6 months earlier – and not through any change in the law of the land.

Three sections of the updated CAP Code are of particular interest to all things natural health: Section 3 covers 'Misleading advertising'; Section 12 is entitled 'Medicines, medical devices, health-related products and beauty products', including "herbal and homeopathic product rules"; while Section 15 relates to "Food, food supplements and associated health or nutrition claims'. Together, these three chapters spell trouble for natural health practitioners of every stripe.

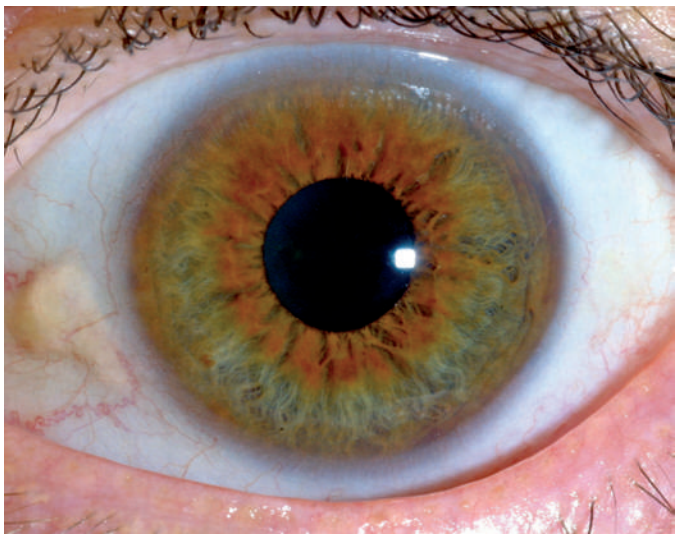
On scientific substantiation, Section 3 states: "The ASA may regard claims as misleading in the absence of adequate substantiation." We shall return to the vexed topic of who decides what determines "adequate substantiation" later. Section 12 covers the use and misuse of medicinal claims, something that any savvy natural healthcare practitioner already avoids.

Section 15 is entirely new, however, and heralds the ASA becoming the enforcer of a piece of European Union (EU) legislation called the Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation (NHCR). Section 15 is presently of most interest to supplement manufacturers and nutritional therapists, but some herbalists may become more interested when assessment of so-called 'botanical' health claims finally breaks free of an ongoing bureaucratic logjam.



With no in-house expertise of its own, the ASA is forced to rely for its investigations on external experts whose identities are shrouded in mystery, but who invariably take a pro-mainstream, anti-natural healthcare stance. Rumours swirled that the ASA regularly taps arch-skeptic Prof David Colquhoun as an 'expert'. This is just dandy, according to ASA Head of Investigations, Vena Raffles: "This is what

we do," she announced to Robert Verkerk PhD of the Alliance for Natural Health International (ANH-Intl) in August 2011. "We deal with advertising complaints in all areas from roofing to guttering... we work to standards across all areas." It took Jayney Goddard of the Complementary Medical Association (CMA) to point out the obvious: "Practitioner–patient relationships can't, unfortunately, be evaluated in the same way as roofs and guttering."



Plenty for an iridologist to study here - but iridology is one of the therapies that the ASA dismisses as scientifically unsupported.

Alternative Specialisms Attacked

Here are just two examples of how the ASA has gone after natural health modalities and practitioners.

- In November 2010, the ASA ruled that an advert run in the New Statesman magazine by campaigning charity Homoeopathy: Medicine for the 21st Century (H:MC21) should not be run again in that form. H:MC21 was alleged to have contravened the revised CAP Code's Sections 1 (Compliance) as well as the aforementioned Sections 3 and 12. In the ensuing tit-for-tat battle, the ASA consistently dismissed all scientific evidence in favour of homoeopathy in a manner more ideological than scientific. H:MC21 eventually launched a formal complaint about the ASA's investigation process – but, since the ASA is answerable to no-one but itself (there is no ombudsman overseeing it, for example), this came to nothing.

- So infuriated was hormone specialist Alyssa Burns-Hill PhD over her treatment by the ASA over her core diagnostic technique that she produced a video entitled 'ASA The Truth: Alyssa Spills All' (http://asa-the-truth.org.uk/). In the blue corner: peer-reviewed articles on the use and benefits of salivary hormone testing, published in reputable scientific journals, and accreditation by the UK's Care Quality Commission for Genova Diagnostics, the laboratory that performs the tests. In the red corner: a single complaint against Alyssa and a lone article in the Wall Street Journal questioning salivary hormone testing, written by a non-medically qualified journalist. Guess which corner the ASA declared the winner?

We are also aware of reports that individual herbalists are now being targeted by the ASA. Sarah Burt (www.sarahburtnd.co.uk), a naturopath and herbalist based in Dorset, UK, found an email from the ASA in her inbox one morning. As well as demanding that Sarah remove from her website any links to her YouTube videos, "The ASA requested removal of any online case histories or testimonials from the clinic I work out of – basically my successes!" Sarah explains. "I was also told not to make reference to medical conditions, possible treatments and specific herbs. In my case, they asked me to provide scientific data substantiating the curative properties of slippery elm."

These demands appeared to come from an official organisation, even an arm of government, according to Sarah: "The ASA claimed the government and courts recognised the ASA to be, in their words, the 'established means' of regulating the CAP Code/non-broadcast adverts, sales promotions and direct marketing communications in the UK. "The general impression I received from the ASA was comply or be shamed, with the added possibility of legal action". Not surprisingly, Sarah complied with the ASA's demands "basically 100%" – with the ASA making her life easier by writing her new website copy for her. "These suggested changes were extensive," she says, "Removing and in most cases diluting the information I'd given. I was thanked for my cooperation and told my case would appear on their website, but no details would be given except to say I had complied with their suggestions."

Various therapies offered and diagnostic techniques used at his clinic also drew the ASA's attention to the website of an AMH Council Member. For now, things have gone quiet after a comprehensive response was submitted to the ASA that questioned the basis of its concerns.

Approving Self-censoring Activities

As a private limited company, the ASA's edicts only carry legal weight when backed by legislation like

the NHCR or the EU and UK legislation governing medicinal claims. All the ASA itself can do is post details of its negative adjudications online and work with official bodies like Trading Standards and the UK medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), when appropriate. Even the 'legal backstop' between the ASA and Trading Standards is entirely untested and seemingly unworkable (http://freedom4health.com/march-2015-b-newsletter/ – scroll down to the article entitled 'The odd couple').

Since the ASA is funded by a levy on advertising spend, UK natural health practitioners face the bizarre situation of their websites being considered as advertising by a 'regulator' they didn't ask for and whom they don't fund. A 'regulator', moreover, with no statutory powers and which only became involved when its partner company, the Committee on Advertising Practice, rewrote its own rules to cover the online sphere.

It is tempting to see the ASA's mission creep into the lives of UK practitioners as an attempt to plug a gap left by existing legislation, which has very little to say on how practitioners describe themselves and their modalities. After all, why legislate when you can scare people into self-censorship? The late author Terry Pratchett had a phrase for this kind of thing: "headology", defined as "the principle that what people believe is what is real".



Available Solutions Assessed

Always bear in mind that practitioners must ensure they follow the law – all else is ASA headology. The options for practitioners targeted by the ASA are as follows:

1. Comply with the ASA's demands as and when they arrive.
2. Proactively rewrite your website to ensure that it ticks the boxes of legality, most pertinently to avoid making medicinal claims. These contravene the EU medicines code that is enshrined in the UK's Human Medicines Regulations 2012. A key document here is the MHRA's 'Guidance Note 8: A Guide To What Is A Medicinal Product' [http://www.mhra.gov.uk/home/groups/is-lic/documents/publication/con007544.pdf], which should be read and understood by all UK practitioners. However, further clarity is required from the MHRA on the legalities around practitioner–public communications. (Trading Standards enforces two laws, The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 and The Business Protection from Misleading Marketing Regulations 2008).
3. Civil disobedience! The ASA is a paper tiger that often shrivels when directly confronted. Every time a practitioner meekly submits to ASA headology, it winds the gag around the mouths of all practitioners that little bit tighter – and, of course, reduces the overall voice of UK natural healthcare. The organisation Freedom4Health (www.freedom4health.com) has been set up specifically to advocate for practitioners on this issue, and they'd love to hear from you if you or anyone you know has received a letter from the ASA.

Admirably Strong Adversaries

To end this piece on a high note, let's look at two women who have taken on and beaten the ASA at its own game.

- Sometimes, the ASA's arrogance and hubris backfires. London-based homoeopath and H:MC21 trustee Jennifer Hautman saw her website hits, retweets and Facebook shares explode after a run-in with the ASA, thereby boosting her online profile. New and returning clients followed. Ms Hautman has written a 7-point guide to using the ASA's attention against it: https://sites.google.com/a/hautmanhomeopathy.com/www/advertising-standards/how-to-boost-your-business

- Nutrition blogger and journalist Zoë Harcombe penned a blistering piece entitled 'The ASA and trolls working together to censor progressive thinking' after the ASA insisted she take down a video questioning the calorie theory and conventional weight loss advice. She refused, and the video remains available online.

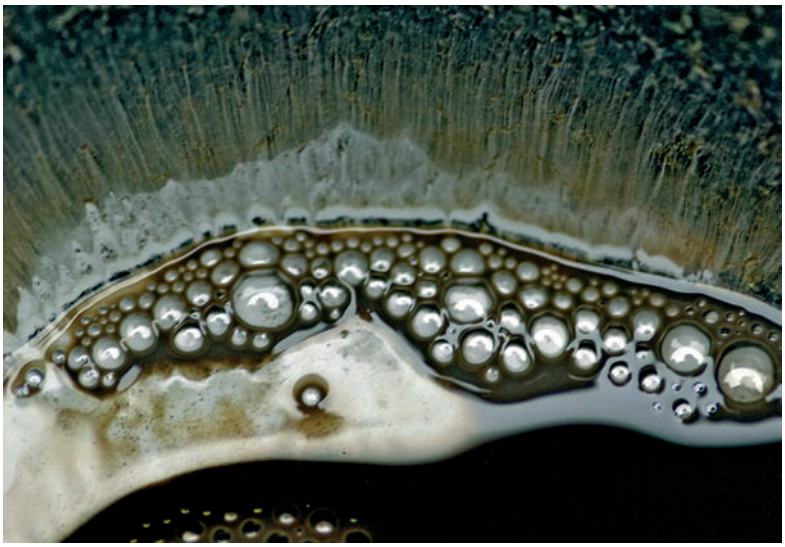
We hope this article is a useful primer on the bullying tactics being used by the ASA to silence UK natural healthcare practitioners. The AMH will always offer help and support to any of its members targeted by the ASA, so please get in touch with us if you receive an ASA letter or email.

Contact details can be found at the front of this journal, and Adam can be reached directly at feedle1@inbox.com.

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RASA SHÃSTRA
The Ancient Science of Medical Alchemy Part.II

by Andrew Mason



Parada (Mercury) being processed with triphala decoction

Rules for the making of alchemical compounds

It would be impossible to relate the complexities of this science in a few short paragraphs, so therefore we will concentrate on one or two key processes, in order to give the reader some grounding in the basic principles of Indian Alchemy.

a. Shodhana Purification/Perfection

All materials must first undergo some level of purification, helping to remove any toxic component. This does not mean all substances are toxic, but complex compounds have various effects both good and bad upon living systems. Through painstaking analysis and experimentation the ancients were able to deduce how to best prepare each material for assimilation whilst retaining the bulk of its effective components. Cleverly, alchemical processing manages to discard those parts which produced detrimental effects whilst potentising its remainder.

Firstly all materials are scrupulously cleaned in salt water (usually rock salt dissolved in warm water). The selected material was then reduced to a fine powder by the use of an iron pestle and mortar and sieved through a fine cloth to remove any obvious contaminants. As many of these materials were hard to powder, this first stage of the operation was

often the most laborious. Careful attention had to be maintained throughout this initial stage as unwanted debris / contamination would be virtually impossible to remove later during processing.



Shodhana of Maanikya (Rubies), ground in an iron mortar

In the case of plant/herbal materials the initial purification requires they are soaked in various materials such as mustard seed oil, cows' urine or saline water for a number of days prior to being boiled in milk, lime water or cows' urine. The resultant material is then dried and finely powdered or fired in ghee (clarified Butter). In some cases a bhasma can be prepared from purified materials by combining it with sodium borate and calcining it, eventually rendering a fine grey/white ash.

b. Cakrika[1]



Rajata (Silver) is first ground with lemon juice before being formed into flat discs called cakrika

The next stage prior to calcination (high temperature heating) was to reduce the selected material to a fine powder that can be moulded into small flat pills called cakrika. Most often a small amount of powdered material was mixed with a liquid medium and stirred into a sticky paste; this pliable mass was then formed into individual cakrika. Commonly these liquid mediums were: cow's milk, the gel of Aloe vera, cow's urine or lime juice. To ensure even-heating in a crucible the surface area of the cakrika needed to be maximised, this meant placing cakrika carefully into flat bottom crucibles allowing the heat to fully penetrate and facilitate the release of contaminants both as physical particles and as toxic gases.

Upon drying Rajata cakrika are placed into an earthen crucible and sealed with cloth strips coated with mud before being heated in a puta (earthen pit).

After fully drying, cakrika were sealed into ceramic crucibles called a sharaava. These effectively were two lids bound together by thin strips of cloth coated with clay, chalk, iron oxide and milk. In Sri Lanka this practice of sealing usually involves the use of termite cement, harvested from abandoned termite-castles. This highly macerated and compacted dirt is particularly effective when powdered with a little milk and applied to cloth wound tightly about sharaava. When dry it forms an effective barrier with which to minimise the loss of carbon in the form of CO_2. Pure carbon is usually found to constitute some portion of bhasma and is believed to be one its great secrets. It's thought this highly refined form of carbon effectively acts as a free radical scavenger in the body, scooping up and bonding with freely circulating toxins / disruptors, marking them for elimination by the body.

c. Puta[2]



Dried cow dung cakes are a highly efficient fuel producing temperatures in the range of 750-900°c

Once the seal of the sharaava has dried, it's heated in a puta to high temperatures. The puta is quite simply an earthen pit dug and filled with dried cow dung cakes then ignited; the cow it seems has an integral part to play in the whole alchemical process, providing many resources for the purification of rasa medicines. Each puta was dug to specific dimensions dependent upon the nature of the material inside the crucible. First a base of cow dung was placed into the puta, then the crucible/s were carefully positioned

atop this heap. A secondary and greater amount of cow dung was then placed atop the crucible/s and finally ignited.

More than one crucible was permitted to be heated at any one time; however the contents of each should be in accordance with the overall heat requirements[3]. The whole process of heating is usually over in about 3-4 hours; however the contents of the puta are not retrieved until the following day allowing a gentle cooling-off period for approximately 24 hours. On the whole most puta attain temperatures somewhere in the range of 800-1000˚c. Variations however can be caused by moisture in the surrounding earth, insufficiently dried sharaava / cow dung cakes and stacking of cow dung in the puta (i.e. spaces between cakes trap more air, better insulating the puta). In countries like Indian drying cow dung is not a great problem so they're a practical solution for heating applications. One secondary consideration to their use is that the resultant ash formed by exhausted material forms a natural carbon filter over the nested crucibles, helping to absorb any escaping toxic gas from the heated materials.

d. Step and Repeat



Rajavarta cakrika (lapis lazuli) being reground with a decoction of bhringaraj (Eclipta alba)

The next day the crucible/s were retrieved and opened, cakrika are then removed and carefully ground in a mortar to a fine powder. Sometimes one puta can radically alter the look of materials; other times the change can be a long and tedious process. Every material is unique and each had a recommended method (i.e. amounts of puta to completing its transformation). The whole process of removing cakrika, re-grinding and re-making cakrika could be as little as 4-5 times in total and as great as 100-1000 times in total. Note: After reading the above outline of preparation procedures you can appreciate many of the more complex and heat resistant materials can take literally years to produce.



Preparation of Lapis Lazuli triturated with sulphur and lime juice before being formed into cakrika.

There were a number of qualitative guidelines in place to help determine manufacturing consistencies; these were always advised to be adhered to. To disregard these signs was to tempt fate and possibly poison the patient with semi-toxic material. One of the general rules in Rasa Shãstra is improperly prepared materials actually become more toxic than in its unprocessed state. Rasa Shãstra uses the concept of amrita/nectar and visha[4] to describe at some length how native materials were thought to be in a state of contamination (impurity) to a high degree and how after cleansing through (shodhana) and nectarisation through calcination the material was forced to mobilise its toxic content for ejection.



Completed bhasma should be fine, light and free from lustre

Adding 'mobility' to poison facilitated its removal but subsequently made absorption more likely in the event of insufficient processing. In an effort to eliminate this problem a set of qualitative guidelines were introduced to alert the alchemist to possible inconsistencies or irregularities. These signs included the study of a material's colour, taste, smell, tactile qualities, lightness, shine and reactions to moisture and temperature.

e. Bhasma

After multiple calcinations had been completed the end result was a fine bhasma. This highly prized product could then be directly administered (in some cases) but more commonly combined with additional bhasma, herbs and decoctions to complete an array of traditional formula. Bhasma was usually light grey, off-white or pale red in colour. It's an extremely fine and light material when handled, feeling smooth to the touch and filling the fingertips with a powder that's difficult to dust-off. These minute particles are quickly absorbed in the digestive tract, able even to pass through the membrane of individual cells.

Finished bhasma has attracted some interest by Indian researchers in recent years prompting the testing of this highly refined material. Most of this testing was interested to see what level of assimilation was possible, looking at high resolution images of the material both before and after significant levels of processing. This research subsequently spawned the term Nano-Veda and prompted a number of institutes to conduct various tests on diverse materials such as sulphur, copper pyrite, iron and conch shells. Many of these reports are still available on the internet - see: http://www.researchgate.net/institution/Banaras_Hindu_University/department/Department_of_Rasa_Shastra

f. Anupana

Anupana most aptly translates to 'vehicle' or 'carrier' and is used to describe substance taken in unison with a medicine that has directive properties. Anupana is actually an art form in its own right but here we will briefly discuss its merits.

The main function of an anupana is to guide a particular formulation to the root of the disease. Like a marksman, anupana helps ensure the therapeutic charge of the medicine actually reaches the target, not straying or losing potency along the way. Each anupana has its own specific action or quality, some are heating, others cooling and each having an affinity with a particular bodily system, organ or constitution. When medicine and anupana enter the body, synergistically their potency is increased exponentially, making them better able to target specific regions with greater effects than either could give individually. Choosing a suitable anupana was crucial in obtaining an improved medicinal performance. In the cure of any disease both remedy and anupana have their parts to play and both are essential if the full curative effect of the medicine is to be realised. Favoured anupana in Rasa Shãstra include: the gel of Aloe vera, non-salted butter, ghee[5] cow's milk, raw bee honey[6], triphala decoction, lime juice, jaggery[7], cow's urine and warm water. Each has its merits and each selected in accordance with the condition being treated. In Rasa Shãstra, honey is a very common anupana along with that of milk or jaggery.

Honey is slightly heating in nature, yet easy to digest. Honey has a cleaning / scraping energetic helping to dislodge and break-up phlegm. Any medicine combined with honey tends to be therapeutically enhanced and bio-assimilatable.

Ghee is another favoured anupana, both warming and nourishing to the digestive system. Ghee helps to sooth mucus membranes and acts as a lubricant in the digestive tract. Any medicine combined with ghee better aids assimilation by encouraging the body's digestive fire (called agni) to recognise its therapeutic value and digest it accordingly.
Interestingly, both Āyurveda and Unani[8] have maintained a strong tradition of anupana whereas other Asian systems such as Classical Chinese Medicine and Kampo have placed less emphasis on this adjunct to the healing process. This is not to lessen their contribution to the healing arts; it just seems this particular technique has been somewhat railroaded over the last few generations. There are those using these systems that still employ anupana to some degree, but generally it's given less emphasis in their modern teaching schools.

g. Application: Benefits of Rasa Shãstra

Generally speaking, rasas are not for common complaints like cough, colds, and sore throats, as there are many herbal formulations that act with great efficiency and are much more widely available. Rasa formulations tend to be most effective for chronic degenerative ailments like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, IBS, arthritis and cancer etc. These types of medicines are historically famed for their regenerative effects and improved functionality of impaired body systems. The following lists some of the most common benefits of using Rasa Shasta medicine and partly explains why a good number of Āyurveda pharmacies in India hold a good stock of these remedies.

- Minute dosage required.
- Short treatment periods, usually no more than two weeks.
- Indefinite shelf life*.

- Potency increases with age.
- Neutral in taste.
- Easy to administer.
- Easily combined with other ingredients.
- Fast acting; (effects sometimes apparent within hours of administering).
- Easily transportable.
- Unaffected by temperature and humidity if correctly stored[9]

* Purely Ratna[10], mineral and metal formulations. These ingredients if mixed with herbal components have a shelf life of about 18 months.

h. Usage

India, China, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Nepal and even Japan have far fewer restrictions in the use of herbo-mineral-metal preparations; indeed some have become so precious their very composition remains a highly guarded state secret. Many practitioners of traditional medicines living in these countries will often have some experience in their prescription, anupana (where applicable) and correct dosage / treatment protocols. Unfortunately, traditional usage and effectiveness don't automatically make these types of medicine acceptable or available to western herbalists; to date the process of Rasa Shāstra validation in Europe and America still awaits official sanctioning, with many if not most remaining highly sceptical of their benefits.

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Footnotes

1. Cakrika = disc or flattened rounded pill.
2. Puta means to envelope or to contain, if used in combination with *paka* it means to cook.
3. One common misconception is that larger puta produce higher temperatures. This is not to be the case, having made a number of thermal tests it maybe more accurate to say, larger puta retain more of their heat.
4. Visha = poison, the opposite of nectar.
5. Butter is usually allowed to ferment prior to heating.
6. Honey should not be heated, once cooked honey becomes as visha (poison). Commercial honey is mostly blended or heated to allow better homogenisation. Local sources where bees can forage on a variety of plants is considered better for medicinal purposes.
7. Date palm sugar or raw cane sugar, also called rapidura.
8. Greco-Arabic medicine, Unani means Greek.
9. Glass bottles (amber coloured).
10. Ratna means gemstones.

About the author:

Having completed his Āyurvedic training in 2005 Andrew now focuses his energies on the study of rasa medicines and their effects. His book titled Rasa Shāstra - The Hidden Art of Medical Alchemy (2014) is published by Singing Dragon.

For more information about this Rasa Shāstra please contact Andrew on: info@neterapublishing.com or visit his website at: www.neterapublishing.com

HERBWATCH
by Christine Herbert

Effect of Ginger (Zingiber officinale) on Heavy Menstrual Bleeding

Ninety-two young women who experienced heavy menstrual bleeding (HMB)and met the inclusion criteria were recruited in this study. Participants were evaluated for six consecutive menstrual cycles. They were then randomly allocated to two study groups to receive either ginger or placebo capsules. The decrease of blood loss in ginger-receiving group was significantly more remarkable than that of participants receiving placebo. Minimum number of participants reported adverse effects. Ginger may be considered as an effective therapeutic option for HMB.
Phytother Res. 2014 Oct 8.

Effect of Ginger (Zingiber officinale) on migraines
Ginger, either alone or in combination, has lately been investigated in clinical trials as a treatment for a number of painful conditions, ranging from migraine headaches to osteoarthritis and dysmenorrhoea. In a double blind, randomised clinical trial, 100 patients who suffered acute migraines without aura were randomly allocated to receive either ginger powder (250 mg) or sumatriptan (50 mg). Trial participants

were instructed to take just a single dose upon headache onset. In this study, 70% of sumatriptan-treated and 64% of ginger-treated patients showed favourable relief (≥ 90% decrease in headache severity) at 2 hours following treatment. Side effects from sumatriptan included dizziness, sedation, vertigo and heartburn. The only reported clinical adverse effect of ginger was dyspepsia. Side effect rates were 20% for sumatriptan versus 4% for ginger. Eighty-eight percent of sumatriptan users and 72% of ginger recipients were inclined to continue their randomly assigned treatment for the abortion of migraine attacks.

Maghbooli M, Golipour F, Moghimi Esfandabadi A et al. Phytother Res 2014; 28(3): 412-415
Thanks to Mediherb emonitor March 2015

Effect of standardized aqueous extract of Withania somnifera on tests of cognitive and psychomotor performance in healthy human participants.

In this prospective, double-blind, multi-dose, placebo-controlled, crossover study, 20 healthy male participants were randomized to receive 250 mg two capsules twice daily of an encapsulated dried aqueous extract of roots and leaves of Withania somnifera or a



matching placebo for a period of 14 days. Significant improvements were observed in reaction times with simple reaction, choice discrimination, digit symbol substitution, digit vigilance, and card sorting tests with Withania somnifera extract compared to placebo. These results suggest that Withania somnifera extract can improve cognitive and psychomotor performance and may, therefore, be a valuable adjunct in the treatment of diseases associated with cognitive impairment.

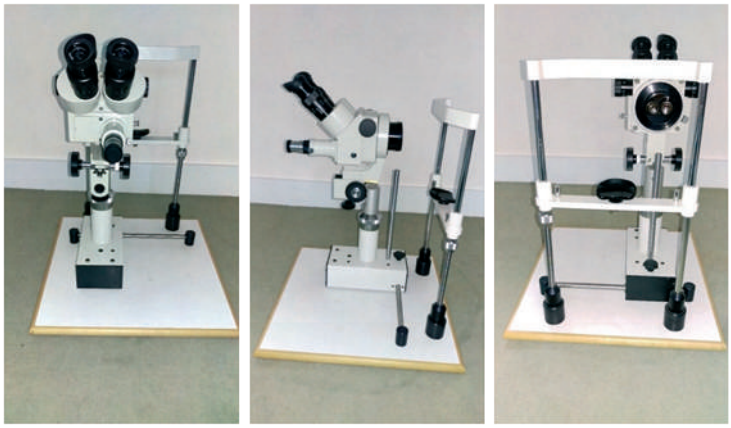
Pharmacognosy Res. 2014 Jan;6(1):12-8.

Garlic supplements are thought to reduce blood pressure (BP). A meta-analysis to investigate garlic's effect on BP inncluded seventeen trials and showed that garlic supplements are superior to controls (placebo in most trails) in reducing BP, especially in hypertensive patients. J Clin Hypertens (Greenwich). 2015 Jan 5. Thanks to Galens Watch http://www.galenswatch.com/

Oral milk thistle extract stops colorectal cancer stem cells from growing tumors

In results presented at the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) Annual Meeting 2015, a University of Colorado Cancer Center study shows that orally administering the chemical silibinin, purified from milk thistle, Silybum marianum, slows the ability of colorectal cancer stem cells to grow the disease in mice. When stem cells from tumors grown in silibinin-fed conditions were re-injected into new models, the cells failed to develop equally aggressive tumors even in the absence of silibinin. Previous studies showed that silibinin affects cell signaling associated with the formation and survival of colorectal cancer stem cells.

The current study extends this line of research. http://www.coloradocancerblogs.org/oral-milk-thistle-extract-stops-colorectal-cancer-stem-cells-from-growing-tumors/



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Cacao / Chocolate ~ Love it or Loathe it!

By Kelly Holden FAMH, MACH



Many years ago, when I was about 18 months old, my favourite Aunt came to babysit one evening while my Parents went out, leaving her to look after my 2 older siblings and myself.



There used to be a product called Fry's Chocolate Spread, which came in a waxed cardboard carton, with a push-on lid. (Some of you may remember it!) It was a favourite in our family, particularly with me.

My Aunt, who was a 20-year old carefree singleton at the time, bathed me and put me to bed wearing a pretty, white cotton nightdress. After settling my 2 siblings into bed too, she was looking forward to a quiet evening enjoying a glass of wine and a good book.

Unfortunately for her, I thought otherwise and wouldn't go to sleep, so she decided it would be a good idea to give me the Chocolate Spread pot, making sure the lid was securely pushed on. (I can sense parents out there, reading this with raised eyebrows!)

An hour later, all was quiet and she came upstairs to check on us. On coming into my bedroom she was met with a sight that filled her with horror – one empty pot, one sleeping niece covered from head to foot with a brown gooey mess and a cot that looked like someone had smeared something unmentionable on every surface!

The rest of her "quiet evening" was spent bathing me again, cleaning up my cot and washing my nightdress and all the bedding! As you can imagine, my Parents were not best pleased and it was a very long time before she was asked to babysit again!

The title of this article (Cacao / Chocolate – Love it or Loathe it!) had a particular relevance to me, as after this incident I went off chocolate for many years. In fact I can't remember enjoying it again until I discovered the Holy Grail – Raw Chocolate (or Cacao to give it its proper name).

Raw Chocolate = Cacao = Theobroma Cacao
Family: Malvaceae
Genus: Theobroma
Species: T. cacao

The cacao bean is what all chocolate is made from. Most commercial chocolate bars have a high sugar content, hydrogenated fats, and dairy products. Chocolate in its purest form - the raw cacao bean - has amazing health-giving properties. It is the number one dietary source of magnesium – one reason why many women crave it around the time of menstruation. It is also exceptionally high in sulphur, the "beauty mineral". Added to that, it is rich in antioxidants; it's a natural anti-depressant, and an aphrodisiac! In fact, it contains over 300 identifiable chemical compounds, making it one of the most complex foods known to man. So not only does it taste divine, it makes you feel good too!

Cacao is the seed of a fruit of an Amazonian tree that was brought to Central America during or before the time of the Olmecs. Cacao beans were so revered by the Mayans and Aztecs that they used them as money; for example, one fish was worth three cacao beans, or one avocado was worth one cacao bean! In 1753 Carl von Linnaeus, the 18th-century Swedish scientist, thought that cacao was so important that he named the genus and species of this tree himself. He named this tree, Theobroma cacao, which literally means "cacao, the food of the gods."

Nutritional Profile

Pharmacological significance discussed in scientific literature includes:

- Magnesium - one of the most commonly deficient minerals.
- Sulphur - cacao detoxifies mercury because of its high sulphur content.
- Anandamide - known as "the bliss chemical" is released while we are feeling great. Cacao contains enzyme inhibitors that decrease our bodies' ability to breakdown anandamide, making us feel good longer, when we eat cacao.
- Arginine - nature's Viagra.
- Epicatechins and polyphenols - antioxidants - cacao is one of the richest sources.
- Serotonin, tryptophan, and dopamine - neurotransmitters which help alleviate depression and are associated with feelings of well being.
- Phenylethylamine - PEA is an adrenal-related chemical that is also created within the brain and released when we are in love. This is one of the reasons why love and chocolate have a deep correlation. PEA also plays a role in increasing focus and alertness.
- MAO Inhibitors - cacao reduces appetite, probably due to its monoamine oxidase enzyme inhibitors (MAO inhibitors) - these are different from digestive enzyme inhibitors found in most nuts and seeds. These rare MAO inhibitors actually produce favourable results when consumed by allowing more serotonin and other neurotransmitters to circulate in the brain.

Cacao contains subtle amounts of caffeine and theobromine. However, experiments have shown that these stimulants are far different when consumed raw than when cooked.

Commercial Chocolate versus Raw Chocolate

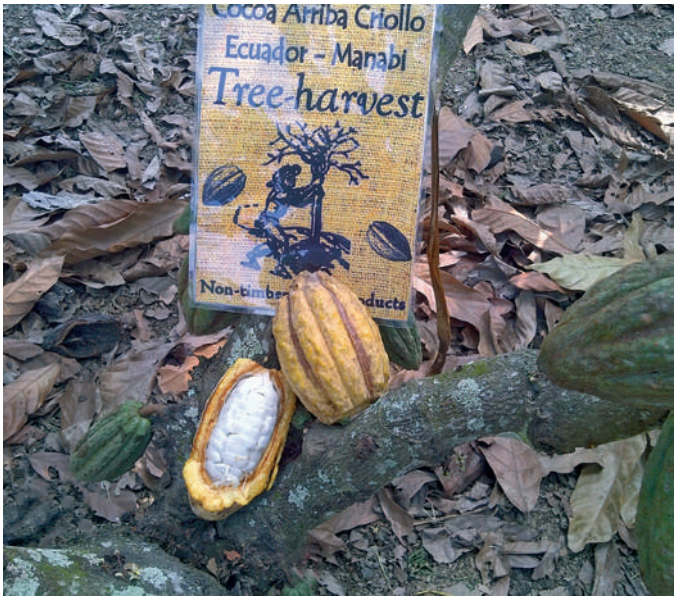
In commercial chocolate bars the cacao beans are roasted between 130-400°C and chemically treated, which destroys many of the enzymes, antioxidants and nutrients. The cacao beans in true raw chocolate are never heated above 42°C.

The Cacao Tree, or Theobroma Cacao, is native to South America and produces pods which contain 20-40 beans. The word “cocoa” is an anglicised word for cacao, but cacao is the official name, and is generally associated with the unroasted beans and powder. Cocoa is more often used to describe the roasted and chemically treated commercial kind which removes the bitterness of the cacao and involves washing the cacao paste in potassium carbonate. Recent studies have shown that this process can result in the loss of up to 90% of the antioxidants in cacao.

There are three types of cacao – Criollo, Triniterio and Forastero. Criollo is the rarest, and most expensive, and was the cacao bean used by the Maya. It is less bitter and more aromatic than any other bean. Forastero is the most common type and is hardier than the Criollo trees, resulting in cheaper cacao beans, and is used to make about 80% of commercial chocolate. Trinitario is a hybrid of Criollo and Forastero, and is used in about 10% of chocolate.

From Tree to Bean to Bar:

As this article is primarily about raw chocolate, we’ll discuss the process used from tree to bean to bar, which differs from cacao produced for the commercial chocolate industry. Once the pods are



collected from the cacao tree, they are cracked open to reveal a sweet, mucilaginous pulp (known as 'baba de cacao'). Inside this pulp are the beans, or seeds, which are generally a purple colour. These are then left to ferment for several days, to break proteins into

amino acids, which changes the flavour and colour of the beans to brown. After fermenting, the beans are laid out to air dry for several days, raking them frequently to make sure they dry evenly.
After this they are then bagged up ready for storage, sale and shipping to various outlets.
As well as being used to make chocolate, the cacao beans are made



and sold as a variety of different products, including the bean itself. The next stage is to remove the



outer skin, or husk, in a process known as winnowing, which cracks the bean and separates it from the outer skin. These pieces are called cacao nibs. The cacao nibs are then slowly ground over many hours in a stone grinder or melanger into a smooth paste (also known as cacao liquor or cacao mass). This is either sold as the paste, or pressed to separate the oil, which is then cooled and becomes cacao butter. The remaining cake is left to dry and then ground into cacao powder.

In the next image, you can see the cacao products mentioned above - clockwise from the top we have the cacao beans, broken beans and shells, cacao nibs, cacao paste, cacao butter and cacao powder, plus in the centre, the "holy grail" – the raw chocolate bar!
The cacao bean is the number one cash crop in the world – so yes, money does grow on trees!



Tempering

To make chocolate, several basic ingredients are essential. Cacao powder, some form of sugar and cacao butter. Cacao butter (the fat from the cacao bean) contains several different fatty acids, which when melted separate into unstable fatty acid crystals. In order to produce chocolate which has a great mouth-feel, a good shine and snaps easily when broken, and remains solid even at room temperature, a process called tempering is necessary, to stabilise the crystal structure. In raw chocolate, this is done by gently melting the chocolate mixture to 42°c and then cooling it to 31.5°c. There are a number of different ways to achieve this, and as raw chocolate making has become more popular, several affordable machines are now available to make this process easier.

Recipes: Chocolate Mousse

Ingredients:

- 1¼ cups unsweetened nut or seed milk
- ¼ cup chia seeds
- 2 Tbsp dried white mulberries
- 2 Tbsp raw cacao powder (more or less depending on how chocolaty you want it)
- ¼ tsp ground vanilla bean powder or vanilla extract (optional)
- ½ tsp beetroot powder (optional)
- Pinch of pink Himalayan salt
- 2 strawberries
- 1 Tbsp local, organic raw honey or grade B maple syrup
- 1 pitted Medjool date



Method:

1. Add all the ingredients to a high speed blender and blend until well combined.
2. Pour into a small bowl or glass and leave in the fridge to set and chill for at least 30 minutes.
3. Just before serving, decorate with your choice of toppings, such as berries, grated coconut, or fresh mint leaves.

Mint Choc Chip Milkshake

Serves 2
Ingredients:

- 1 cup coconut milk **
- ½ cup coconut water
- ¼ cup cashews, soaked for 2 hours and rinsed
- 2 Tbsp + ½ Tbsp cacao nibs
- 1 Tbsp lucuma
- ½-1 tsp Chlorella powder (optional)
- 1 Tbsp coconut oil

- 1-2 tsp agave
- 1 drop peppermint essential oil
- Large handful of baby spinach
- A few mint leaves and sprinkle of cacao nibs to garnish
- Several ice cubes (optional)



Method:

1. Blend all ingredients in a high-speed blender until smooth, reserving ½ Tbsp of the cacao nibs for blending in at the end.
2. Once you have a nice, smooth consistency, throw in the rest of the cacao nibs and blend just enough to break them down to tiny, crunchy pieces.
3. Pour into 2 tall glasses and add a sprinkle of cacao nibs and a few mint leaves.
4. Add ice cubes (optional) and serve immediately.

** To make Coconut Milk:
2 cups raw coconut flakes
3 cups water

1. Soak the coconut flakes in the water for 2 hours.
2. Once soaked, blend the mixture for a minute until you have a smooth liquid.
3. Pass the liquid through a straining bag or a sieve lined with a fine mesh cloth. You are aiming to collect a smooth white liquid which is the coconut milk.
4. Refrigerate until needed – will keep for up to 3 days.

References:

Wolfe D, Shazzie (2005) Naked Chocolate – pub: Raw Creation
http://www.sacredchocolate.com/home.php
Levin A (The Raw Chocolatier)
http://ooosha.co.uk
Kenney M, Baird M (2012) Raw Chocolate – pub: Gibbs Smith
http://www.ecolechocolat.com

Resources:

Raw Food Teachers, Classes & Websites
Deb Durrant
http://deborahdurrant.com
Amy Levin http://ooosha.co.uk
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http://www.therawchef.com
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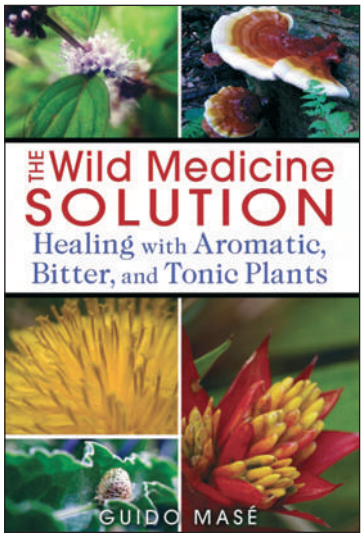
Equipment (High Speed Blenders, Dehydrators, Juicers etc.)
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www.balliihoo.co.uk (for mesh straining bags)
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www.homechocolatefactory.co.uk (for chocolate moulds)
Silikomart
www.silikomart.com/home_silikomart_en.html (moulds)

BOOK REVIEW

The Wild Medicine Solution: Healing with Aromatic, Bitter and Tonic Plants by Guido Mase.

I am very grateful to Barbara Griggs for bringing this book to my attention – it is a book in a class of its own, very special, extremely informative and a pleasure to read. Guido Mase sets out to describe just a few herbs that he defines as essential for the maintenance of health; these are herbs that he suggests are used on a daily basis to keep us well. Tales from the past are woven into the narrative, and he conveys meaning in a very beautiful and easily understood way. In describing the herbs and their actions he switches from historic tales to looking at the traditional approach, and then the pharmacological approach to understanding the herbs.

He says there are three broad classes of plants that humans beings require constantly – aromatics, bitters and tonics. This book tells how he arrives at this conclusion, with very detailed and informative



reasoning, and also gives examples of herbs and recipes that can be used as food on a daily basis. Accessibility and safety were important in his choices of herbs.

To use his words, this book " strives to provide a clear and understandable framework for using plants mindfully in daily life, based both on thousands of years of safe use and also a reasoned argument that draws on modern understanding".

Aromatic plants, Mase tells us, have always been important in rituals, "to dispel harmful influences on the mind and body, helping to relax and attune people who consume them to the flow of events around and within them". There is a long discussion about heart rate variability (HRV) and how those with a high HRV cope with stress better. He has found that aromatic plants increase HRV, and also both protect from heart disease and help us to cope with stress and changing circumstances. Modern research is showing enhancement of HRV in those who smell aromatic plants, and especially in those who consume them. Examples he gives are peppermint (Mentha piperata), lemon balm (Melissa officinalis), motherwort (Leonurus cardiaca), holy basil (Ocimum sanctum), chamomile (Matricaria chamomilla). He points out that David Hoffman says that all formulae for high blood pressure should include hawthorn (Crataegus spp.), dandelion (Taraxacum officinale) and an aromatic plant.

The five aromatic plants he recommends for everyday use are peppermint, ginger, garlic, lemon balm and linden, and he gives instruction for growing, harvesting and using these herbs. He describes a very simple home made still for distilling peppermint tincture to make a powerful peppermint spirit. There are some beautiful closeup photos taken by Guido Mase of many of the plants discussed.

In the section on bitters he descibes how we have adapted over milions of years to be able to ingest the chemicals plants produce as deterrents to browsing and feeding. Without this adaptation, foods such as the apigenin in carrot would be harmful to our health. We cope with potentially harmful plant chemicals by breaking them down into safer forms in our livers and intestinal tissue, and, as a result, experience no ill effects from most of them. Our detoxification organs seem to require some exposure to these plant chemicals in order to be active and function well. So the bitter flavour is the signal from "the plant world to watch out - eat less – and activate your detoxification mechanism". Bitters are vital because they improve digestion, improve detoxification, balance hormones, improve general metbolism, and solve the issues of overconsumption of sugar.

The bitters he recommends for daily use are burdock (Arctium lappa), yellow dock (Rumex crispus) and dandelion root (Taraxacum officinale); he also discusses wormwood (Artemesia absinthum) for occasional use.

Herbal tonics "are remedies whose effects can reverberate though every aspect of our being", they are " an expression of love from the plant world to our own", and they are able " to affect the balance of cancer promoting and cancer suppressing genes and the balance of cellular metabolism" and to "speak to the effector cells of the immune system and alter the immunological chemistry of our blood and lymph". There are great descriptions of epigenetics and immunity, easily understood, and using beautifully descriptive language to convey the meaning. He deals with the detail in a very readable manner in the pharmacological exploration of tonic plants – there is a lovely description of the way that saponins work to modulate cortisol metabolism and help us to deal with the effects of stress. He points out that Panax ginseng contains at least 25 different saponins. He shows us that tonic herbs can blunt an overactive immune system, can address deficient immunity, protect against cancer and infection, and deal with the after effects of stress. He sums up by saying about the tonic plants " they help to find a place of balance. Their effects depend on the context. And, in the end, through the modulation of epigenetics and immune function, they help bring the most basic processes of life to their most positive, healthful expression".

The four tonics he recommends for daily use are reishi (Ganoderma lucidem), Astragalus membranaceus, hawthorn (Crataegus spp.) and chocolate (Theobroma cacao).

Christine Herbert

Thai Noodle Soup
from Rumana Zahn MAMH



For: 2 people, time: 20 minutes

Stock
- 5 mugs of water
- 2 slices of dried or fresh Galangal
- 2 tablespoons dried or 1 stick or fresh Lemongrass
- 4 dried or fresh Lime Leaves

Base
- 1 tblsp Lime juice
- 1 tblsp Tamari
- 1 tblsp Thai Fish Sauce
- 3 cloves chopped garlic
- 1cm piece of chopped ginger
- 4 squashed small red chillis

Vegetables – you can use a selection of vegetables here is a mixture:
Broccoli
Mushrooms
Spring onions
Carrots sliced
A little red cabbage or 2 chopped leaves Chinese leaf
Chicken or prawns (optional)
Chinese noodles (rice, wheat or buckwheat noodles)
1 cup chopped fresh coriander

Method
1. Use a deep pan and make the stock. Place the water in the pan and add in the stock ingredients. Simmer for 10 mins.
2. You can use a muslin or sieve to hold the dried herbs so that they can be removed after simmering or just strain the liquid and remove solids.
3. Cook the noodles in boiling water. Check timing so that they coincide with the vegetable cooking.
4. Add the base ingredients and vegetables into the stock and simmer for about 5 mins.
5. Just before serving add the fresh coriander.
6. Serve the noodles first into a deep noodle bowl. Then add the vegetables and liquid on top of the noodles.

Then enjoy!

Optional
- If using chicken then add the chicken and base ingredients to the stock and simmer for 15mins or until cooked. Then add in the vegetables and simmer for a further 5mins.
- If using prawns cook as above adding the (cooked) prawns 2 mins before serving.

Tip
This is a great recipe for warming and soothing. The lime leaves and lemon balm are tonics for the digestive system. I make this recipe when there's any sign of a cold/flu or when I simply need a soothing meal.



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Plants and Herbalism:

A Herbal Adventure in France with Cathy Skipper and 7Song

by Christine Herbert



Copper still, lavender museum©Julie Bruton-Seal

As soon as I saw this course advertised last year I knew I had to go on it – as far as I was concerned it was the perfect combination of venue (Provence), subject (botany and herbal medicine) and teachers (Cathy Skipper and 7Song). And to put the icing on the cake it was at the end of April when the sun should be shining and the plants would be at their best.

It became a joint venture when Julie Bruton-Seal and Matthew Seal also decided to come, and instead of flying we travelled by train, a great decision which went extremely well – a very civilised way to travel.

We stayed in a former nineteenth-century silk farm in the heart of French Provence, about 40 minutes away from Avignon. The area was covered in small vineyards, olive trees, and especially lavender, which is grown for tourism and also to distill. This is an important place for aromatic herb growing and distillation into both hydrosols and essential oils. It is also a significant area for wildcrafters and small-scale distillers – with lavender, thyme, helichrysum and other aromatics growing freely in the wild and rugged countryside.

One of the important points Cathy wanted to make was the difference between the industrial-scale lavender industry and the individual wild crafters. We met and were taught by a wild crafter who showed us the thyme chemotypes. The high-linalol thyme only grows in the mountains, and wild is always best, containing 76% linalol. This is a monoterpenol that is gentle and soft, fine to use on skin and for children; it smells heavenly too. High-thymol thyme is much harsher and more difficult to use on skin, although is a better antibacterial – this is the industrial-scale thyme we buy as “thyme”.

One of the shared passions of our two main teachers is botany – Cathy and 7Song could spend hours poring over botanical keys for just one plant. We had some excellent botany lessons from them. Some of the botanical highlights that we saw included Lady's orchid, man orchid, wild Good King Henry, horned poppy, mignonette and soapwort.



Christophe Bernard

Christophe Bernard, a French herbalist who had lived and worked for some years in the US, demonstrated percolation to us (on which Julie will write more later). He chose a herb that deserves to be used more – fumitory, Fumaria officinalis. The result of the percolation was the most amazing tincture, rich, bitter with a hint of sweet. It is great for any digestive or livery headaches, and is used as a specific in Germany, according to Matthew Wood, to open the gall duct and flush bile and pancreatic enzymes.

Christophe explained that fumitory was used traditionally in France as a depurative (i.e. stimulates liver and gall bladder to excrete more bile) and taken for 10 days at the end of winter with burdock, Arctium lappa root and linden, Tilia cordata inner

bark as a decoction to cleanse the liver after winter excesses. Today we should take it any time after an excess, but he cautioned against taking it for more than 10–14 days, or it will drain too much. He also said that it will tonify smooth muscle contractions, prepare the digestive tract for digestion and help both with cramps and also an over-lax sphincter. He advised caution with large gallstones.



Making medicine balls © Julie Bruton-Seal

We made medicine balls using essential oils – Cathy Skipper is an expert in the French tradition of using essential oils internally – with a mixture of coconut flour and honey plus essential oils to end up with each ball containing one drop of the mix of essential oils. Some of the group made their medicine balls with digestive oils such as basil, mint and oregano; our group made a tonic mix of Agonis fragaris, Ocimum sanctum, sweet orange and patchouli essential oils with marjoram powder.

Suppositories are a regularly used means of supplying herbs in France – the rectal and vaginal membranes are very absorbent – and would be used to treat localised conditions, but also for infants and young children. Treatment of respiratory tract problems is also excellent via suppository as the active principles are absorbed into the bloodstream and bypass the liver and digestion in their original volatile state able to eliminate pathogens. An example of essential oil suppository for a cough would be:

- 30g coconut butter
- 20 drops Pinus sylvestris
- 20 drops Myrtus communis
- 10 drops Artemesia dracunculus

Powdered herbs could also be added to suppositories, and cocoa butter is an alternative base.



Nicola wildcrafting thyme © Julie Bruton-Seal

Another regularly used method of delivering herbs in France is the clay poultice – the French have good sources of different clays available, and choosing the clay itself is important as some are high in minerals. Montmorillonite clay is rich in silica and has both adsorbent and absorbent properties. Adsorption is where the clay is able to exchange particles of minerals for other things, for example, toxins from the body; and absorption means it can sponge up liquids that can remove toxins. Bentonite clay is a Montmorillonite clay. Illite clay is a mica clay from acid rocks with a smaller particle size and strong absorbing qualities. It is less good at remineralising, but very good as a poultice for drawing fluids – in oedema or abscesses, for example.



Cathy Skipper cutting Avens root

A clay poultice is seen in France as a cheap and effective way to treat arthritic joints – mixing it with essential oils such as Eucalyptus citriodora, Laurus nobilis, Lavandula spand/orGaultheria procumbens. The poultice would be applied at least 1.5 cm thick for about 2 hours. Herbal infusions can also be used to mix with the essential oils and clay.

Using a clay poultice for a burn is also recommended, with the proviso that a gauze should be applied before the clay – this would be after cooling with cold water – and for burns the poultice should be reapplied as soon as any burning sensation is felt. Lavender or chamomile hydrosols would be good to mix with the clay here.

For drawing boils and abscesses the following essential oils combination is recommended:

- Melaleuca alternifolia 2 drops
- Chamaemelum nobilis 2 drops
- Pelargonium asperum 2 drops
- Lavandula angustifolia 2 drops
- Origanum vulgaris 2 drops

in a soup spoon of runny honey – all added to the clay before adding water and then applied to the area. This should be repeated with new poultices until the wound is clean.

Making a percolated tincture
by Julie Bruton-Seal

Christophe Bernard showed us how to make a percolated tincture with fumitory, and the resulting tincture was certainly far superior to any we have been able to buy in the UK since we returned home. Percolation was widely used in the early twentieth century, but has largely been forgotten since then.



Christophe used simple kitchen equipment for his percolation. The dried herb was ground in a blender and then sieved, first through a coarse sieve and then a finer one. For the actual percolation, he used an upturned cut-off bottle, adjusting the cap to regulate the flow of liquid. He had an ingenious method for cutting the bottom off the glass bottle – wrapping a strand of wool around the bottle where he wanted it cut, then soaking the wool in strong alcohol and setting fire to it. The flame will cut the bottle neatly, and it can then be sanded to smooth off the edges.

The finely powdered dried herb is weighed, and the amount of alcohol needed is calculated. In percolation, you need extra alcohol, because for every 500 ml of alcohol used you will only get 350 ml of tincture, with the rest being retained in the herb (because it is not being pressed out as in a macerated tincture). One third of the alcohol and water mixture (he used 50% alcohol for the fumitory tincture) is used to moisten the powdered herb, then the moistened mixture is packed relatively firmly into the upturned bottle.

Apparently this is the part where experience comes in, because if the herb is too tightly or too loosely packed it will not percolate properly. The cap on the bottle is tightly closed at this point to stop any liquid coming out the bottom. The remaining alcohol is poured onto the herb. The cap is then loosened just enough for the tincture to start dripping out of the bottom at a rate of about 1 drop per second.



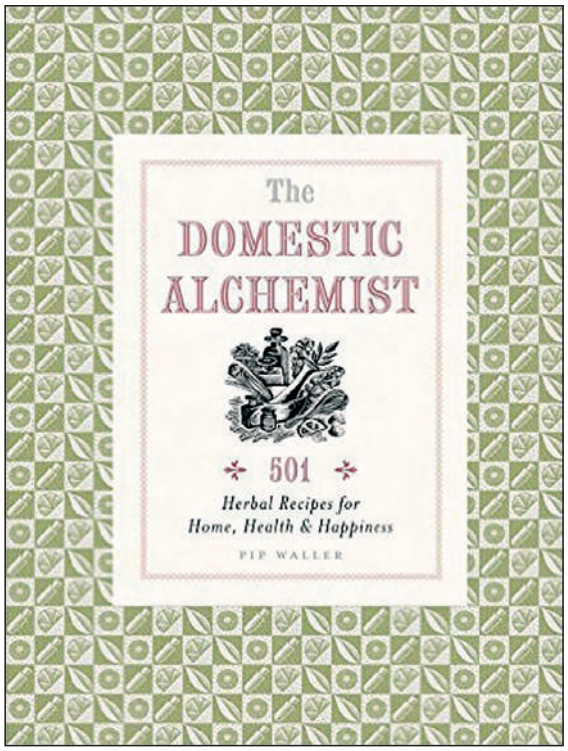
Fumitory © Julie Bruton-Seal

The advantage of this method is that it is much faster than maceration, and theoretically produces a better tincture as fresh alcohol is filtering through all the time instead of brewing. The disadvantages are that you have to use dried herb, it is more fiddly, and you lose quite a substantial amount of alcohol in the process.



Bee Orchid © Julie Bruton-Seal

BOOK REVIEW



The Domestic Alchemist by Pip Waller reviewed by Adam Smith

"This is a book for anyone with an interest in using plants in the home – for herbalists and kitchen herbalists, for conservationists, for anyone with even a passing interest in herbs."

In every possible way, this book is a beautiful thing. Superficially, it's a simple pleasure to hold in one's hands, its heavy, green-patterned hardbound cover – entirely out of time, and exactly how I imagine a recipe book of the 1950s to look and feel – ushering one satisfyingly into a cool, welcoming interior of cream-coloured pages that are pleasingly robust without being unwieldy. More importantly, it's an incredible repository of herbal lore, the knowledge of a lifetime spent wandering the verdant world distilled into 250-odd pages and 501 recipes.

Here, the eco-conscious householder can stock their cleaning cupboard with everything from chamomile & marjoram surface cleaner to desert-style moth repellent; those looking for a health boost can benefit from recipes like linseed rehydration tea and probiotic lemonade; the more medically minded will be itching to try out the waterfall smoothie and Solomon's seal bad back salve; and gastronomes will rush to cook up the chickweed sag paneer and oak leaf wine. Something for everyone indeed!

To whet your appetite, here are a few recipes from the book. First off are two recipes from American herbalist Matthew Wood that use true Solomon's seal root (Polygonatum spp.) as an infused oil as their key ingredient.

Joint-aligning salve

This helps to tighten loose joints and bring them back into alignment.

- 200 m/¾ cup + 5 tsp infused oil of true Solomon's seal (you'll need a copy of the book for the recipe for this part!)
- 1600 IU vitamin E oil
- 40 mL/2 tbsp + 2 tsp comfrey oil (also in the book)
- 3 tbsp grated beeswax

Solomon's bad back salve

This muscle and joint-relaxing salve has a particular affinity with the back.

- 200 mL/¾ cup + 5 tsp infused oil of true Solomon's seal
- 1600 IU vitamin E oil
- 0 mL/2 tbsp + 2 tsp ginger root infused oil (also in the book)
- 3 tbsp grated beeswax

Swap out the third ingredient in the list for the same amount of marsh mallow root for a salve for dry joints – "Adding marsh mallow seems to enhance Solomon's seal's ability to moisten and nourish the joints" – or for the same amount of horsetail tops infused oil for a cartilage-healing salve.

Another US herbalist, Stephen Buhner, provides his recipe for a fissure salve that "Heals painful skin fissures (fingers, feet or anal) that do not respond to other interventions," as follows:

- 28 g/1 oz Japanese knotweed root, dried and cut into tiny pieces
- 28 g/1 oz Stephania root (a Chinese vine with strong anti-inflammatory

effects), dried and cut into tiny pieces
- 7 g/¼ oz dried thyme
- Up to 500 mL/2 cups olive oil, enough to cover
- ½ tsp vitamin E oil
- 3–6 tbsp grated beeswax

Method: make an infused oil (recipe in book) by putting the herbs in a lidded ovenproof dish and adding olive oil to cover to a depth of 1 cm (½ inch). Leave overnight in the oven on its lowest setting. Cool for an hour or so, strain and measure, then add the vitamin E oil and slowly reheat, adding 2 tbsp of beeswax per 250 mL/1 cup of oil.

To someone like me who is just starting out on the herbal path, relatively speaking, books like this are a testament to just how much there is to learn out there – and let's face it, even an entire lifetime is barely enough to scratch the surface.

Pip Waller's wonderful book is like the smiling teacher, radiating wisdom from every pore, gently beckoning the herbal student onward into a realm of magic and practicality, healing and sensuality. Seek it out and add it to your collection immediately.

A Brief History of the Association of Master Herbalists

1953 - The School of Natural Healing was founded by Dr John R Christopher.

1982 – Last time Dr. Christopher taught Master Herbalist course in the UK, along with Dr. Richard Schulze (a former graduate of the school).

Graduates included Kitty Campion, Jill Davies (Herbs, Hands, Healing), and Malcolm Simmonds (Specialist Herbal Supplies).

1983 – Dr. Christopher died following complications from a severe head injury.

1984/85 – UK branch of The School of Natural Healing separated into 2 herbal schools – The College of Herbs & Natural Healing (Kitty Campion), and The Selfheal School (Jill Davies). Dr. Schulze became principal and taught for the schools.

1995/96 – Discussions between Kitty Campion, Peter Jackson-Main and Kelly Holden led to the creation of The Association of Master Herbalists (AMH) for the graduates.

During their time on the AMH Council, Peter has held posts as General Secretary, Treasurer, Chairman and is the current Vice-Chairman, and Kelly has been General Secretary and is the current Treasurer. Dr. Christopher's legacy lives on in the UK through the College of Naturopathic Medicine (CNM), where Peter teaches on the herbal diploma course for practitioners, with Jill as a guest lecturer. Also Peter, Jill and Jill's daughter Lorna co-wrote a short course in "Herbs for Everyday Living" which runs 3 times a year at the London branch of the CNM, taught by Jill and Lorna. This Dr Christopher style naturopathic herbal medicine course for laymen is soon to be an online course too.



"A herbalist in every home, a practitioner in every town"

Dr John Christopher (1909 – 1983)

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DIARY DATES

The 20th Anniversary Conference and AGM of the Association of Master Herbalists – Saturday 12th September 2015 at the Manchester Conference Centre, Keynote Speaker Dr. Christopher Hobbs L.Ac, PhD, AHG. Morning Lecture: 10:30-12:30 "What's Bugging You? The Science and Practice of Probiotics, Prebiotics, and Traditional Fermented Foods" Afternoon Lecture: 2:00-4:00 "Chronic Inflammation is Yin Deficiency, and the Underlying Factor In All Chronic Disease." Contact: Anton Bennett father.anton@virgin.net

Natural Approaches to Improving Fertility led by AineMarie Reilly MNIMH Saturday August 8th 2015 10.30am-4.30pm Registration from 10am, Venue: Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham B3 3BS.
Website for venue location and details: http://bmi.org.uk
Earlybird £45, standard rate £50. To book please contact NIMH office: NIMH, Clover House, James Court, South Street, Exeter EX1 1EE Tel: 01392 426022 or email: info@nihm.org.uk

Medicinal mushrooms – identification skills and medicine making A one-day workshop led by Jesper Launder, MNIMH Sunday 27th September 2015 9.00am–5.00pm NB Early start. Venue: The Pavilion. The Speech House Hotel, Coleford, Gloucestershire, GL16 7EL and The Forest of Dean. (wear clothes/shoes for walking). Earlybird £65, standard NIMH member rate £70, non members £90.
To book please contact NIMH office: NIMH, Clover House, James Court, South Street, Exeter, EX1 1EE. Tel: 01392 426022 Email: info@nimh.org.uk

151st Annual NIMH Conference 8th – 11th October 2015 Park Royal Hotel in Warrington, Cheshire Herbal Medicine, Health and an aging population.
www.nimh-conference.com

Trade, Discovery and Influences in the History of Herbal Medicine" 15 October, 2015 10 a.m. - 4.30 p.m. Venue: Jenner Room, Gibbs Building, The Wellcome Library, 215 Euston Rd. London NW1 2BE Programme and full details from nicky@nickywesson.com

Research activity for practitioners A one-day seminar led by various speakers including herbal medicine research presentations, an introduction to research methodologies, Clinical audit as a tool to improve the service you can offer your patients; what you need to record in case histories; how to do a case study/report with a view to publishing. Saturday 21st November 2015 10.30am – 4.30pm. Registration from 10.00 Venue: University of London Union, Malet Street, London, WC1E 7HY Earlybird £45, standard rate £50 To book please contact NIMH office: NIMH, Clover House, James Court, South Street, Exeter, EX1 1EE. Tel: 01392 426022 Email: info@nimh.org.uk

COPY DEADLINE for the next issue of The Herbalist is: **September 30th 2015**
Articles to John Smith: jesmithbodytonix@aol.com or Donald Purves: dapherbs@yahoo.co.uk

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