

# Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
VOLUME XLVI, NUMBER 3



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT  
MARCH 2023

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## March 2023 Calendar

- Mar 4, Sat. 10:00 am**      **Westbury Garden Workday** at 12581 Dunlap Street, Houston, TX 77035
- Mar 7, Tues. 10:00 am**  
**(Note: Change of Date)**      **Day Meeting** is an Herb Study Program on Mexican oregano (*Lippia graveolens*), a comprehensive research study presented by members at the Cherie Flores Pavilion, 1500 Hermann Dr. Houston, TX 77030. Bring your own lunch. Following lunch, there will be an Herb Day Craft Workshop from 12:00 – 2:00 pm. Bring craft supplies, see page 5. **RSVP** [ddwheeler16@hotmail.com](mailto:ddwheeler16@hotmail.com). **Open to the public.**
- Mar 7, Tues. 7:00 pm**      **Quarterly Full Moon Ramble** Is a members only Zoom meeting
- Mar 17-18, Fri-Sat 8:00 am**      **Pioneer Unit Plant Sale**, Round Top, TX. (Refer to Jan. 2023 Newsletter for details)
- Mar 19, Sun. 3:00 pm**      **Westbury Community Garden Education at the Pavilion** “*Spring Herbs and How To Use Them*” will be presented by **Julie Fordes**, Chair of the South Texas Unit. Location: Westbury Community Garden Pavilion
- Mar 22, Wed. 6:30 pm**  
**(Note: Change of Date)**      **Evening Meeting** “*The Aromatherapy Medicine Chest*” will be presented by **Fran Higgins**, licensed massage therapist, licensed aesthetician, and certified aromatherapist. Fran is retired from Source Vital Apothecary, and prior to that, she worked with **Lucia Bettler** at Lucia’s Garden. Location: the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, 1500 Hermann Dr, Houston, TX 77030. Doors open at 6:30 pm, program at 7:00 pm. **Free and open to the public.**
- Mar 24, Fri. 10:00 am**  
**(Note: Change of Date)**      **Westbury Garden Workday** at 12581 Dunlap Street, Houston, TX 77035

## April 2023 Calendar

- Apr 8, Sat. 10:00 am**      **Westbury Garden Workday** at 12581 Dunlap Street, Houston, TX 77035
- Apr 11, Tue. 10:00 am**      **Day Meeting** TBA
- Apr 15, Sat. 10:00 am**      **Tea and Fragrance Workshop** at **Julie Fordes**. **RSVP** [fordes.julie@gmail.com](mailto:fordes.julie@gmail.com)
- Apr 19, Wed. 6:30 pm**  
**(Note: Change of Date)**      **Evening Meeting** “*Inspiring the Next Generation – Introducing Children to Herbs*” will be presented by HSA member and educator, **Angela Roth**. Angela is retired, after serving ten years as an HISD substitute and eight years as Pin Oak Middle School Urban Agriculture teacher and Farm - to - Table cooking Instructor. Location: the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, 1500 Hermann Dr, Houston, TX 77030. Doors open at 6:30 pm, program at 7:00 pm. **Free and open to the public.**
- Apr 21, Fri. 5:00 pm**      **Set up for Herb Day**
- Apr 22, Sat. 8:30 am-2:00 pm**      **37<sup>th</sup> Annual Herb Day** Location: St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, 5501 Main St, Houston, TX 77004

**Newsletter deadline: the 25<sup>th</sup> of every month is strictly enforced (April Editor is Janice Freeman)**



1 Debbie Lancaster  
1 Susan Wood  
11 Joan Jordan  
16 Beth Murphy  
16 Janet Starr



21 Stephanie Calloway  
21 Dena Yanowski  
23 Lois Jean Howard  
28 Linda Alderman

## Chairman's Corner

Hello members,

Our Unit is busy planning Herb Day this year after a three-year hiatus due to Covid. This year's theme is:

### **Living Our Herbal Legacy - Inspiring Today's Cooks, Gardeners, and Herbalists**

I am very excited by the large number of our members who have stepped up to chair segments of the event, and those who just want to be 'worker bees'. As I talk to people, I am impressed by the enthusiasm they have for the event and the topic. I know that not everyone has committed yet to doing something to help put on Herb Day, don't worry, there is still time. I am providing a list of all the chairs we have and a brief description of what the job entails in hope that if you haven't offered your talents yet, you will now.

#### **General Schedule**

Set-up Friday, April 21 @ 5 pm at the church. (I am trying to get us in earlier) We need all hands on deck for this. Tables will be set up already. The crafts and plants need to get arranged; round tables decorated. I will be going to the storage shed earlier that day and could use help to bring over items we need.

#### **Day of the Event**

Come at 8:00 am to finish any last-minute items. After the event, it's all hands on deck once again to clean up and make a run to the storage shed.

***Think about what you can do to make Herb Day a success. Members (Chairpersons) are listed on the next page along with their area of responsibility. Let them know you can help.***

Continued



# Herbs Make Scents

March 2023

## Education/Speakers - Karen Cottingham

Prepare materials as needed and work day of the event.

## Publicity - Virginia Camerlo

Remember, everyone can do publicity! There is more to do than just share the flyer, let Virginia know if you can help.

## Decorations - Mary Starr

Help gather materials as needed. Show up on Friday to decorate and Saturday afternoon to pack up.

## Refreshments - Debbie Lancaster

Baking beforehand, acquire serving trays, work the event and coordinate refreshments around lunch.

## Plants - Jeanie Dunnihoo

Start seeds for basil and pelargoniums. Help get the plants, display them on tables. Answer gardening questions.

## Tea and Fragrance - Faith Strunk

A workday will be announced.

## Crafts - Pam Harris, Janice Stuff, Donna Wheeler

Lots of crafts are in the works. A workday will be held on March 7 at Cherie Flores Pavilion. There will be more workdays; they are just not scheduled yet.

## Door Prizes - Lucinda Kontos

Email [lucindakontos@gmail.com](mailto:lucindakontos@gmail.com) or call 713 870 6451 if you can help solicit door prizes from local businesses.

## General Workers - Julie Fordes

Anything and everything! Making a run to the storage shed is always fun!

Don't let the opportunity to get to know your fellow herbies better and raise money for our scholarship fund slip by... suit up...suit up and show up for Herb Day.

Julie Fordes  
Unit Chair



Continued

*Herbs Make Scents 2023*



## Donate to the Cause!

- Dried mint (spearmint, peppermint or red-stemmed apple mint)
- Dried lemon peel
- Epsom salt
- Sea salt
- Dried rose petals
- Coconut milk powder
- Citric acid
- Cardamom, clove and rose essential oils
- Jojoba and coconut oils



Please consider donating to the cause! Contact Julie Fordes if you have any of these items. Bring them to the next meeting if you can.

## Grow for the Herbal Marketplace!

Jeanie Dunnihoo has asked that members start plants by division or seeds for the following herbs to sell in our Herbal Marketplace:

- Unusual basil (cinnamon, purple, lemon, lime etc.)
- Scented geraniums (pelargoniums) any variety

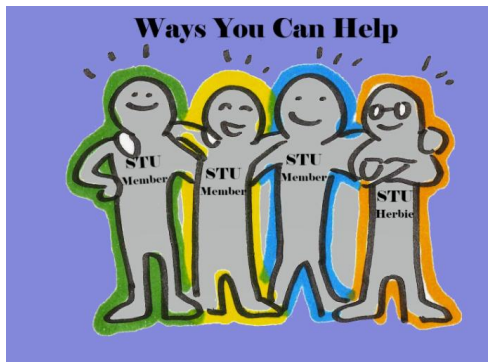
We are so fortunate to have lots of members who are great growers... planting seeds is a wonderful way to help ahead of time and increase our selection of plants. You will need to plant your seeds very soon; we are eight weeks away from the event. Please give Jeanie a call or email (Refer to Unit Directory) and let her know what you are planting.

## Prepare Table Centerpieces and Decorations

We need:

- Mary Starr needs fabrics for the table centerpieces, contact her if you can help. (Refer to Unit Directory).

Continued



## Make Crafts!

Members who are staying after the March 7<sup>th</sup> Day Group Meeting will be making crafts from 12-2 pm for Herb Day. Please bring basic craft supplies and tools to the meeting. If you have any ideas for cute easy crafts and the supplies to make them bring them along and we will work on them. Contact Pam Harris (Refer to Unit Directory) if you have any of these items or questions. Hope to see you at the meeting!

### We Need:

- Scissors
- Embroidery thread (different shades in the pink, red or blue family)
- Linen or light weight cotton (sometimes called handkerchief weight)
- Sewing needles
- Glue gun with glue sticks
- If you have a KitchenAid mixer with a foot. This will be used for a base to make bee skeps. You will be able to take the bowl home after the meeting.
- If you have any ideas for cute easy crafts and the supplies to make them bring them along and we will work on them. Hope to see you at the meeting! ■



**Thank You Volunteers!**



The Herb Society of America - South Texas Unit  
**37th Annual Herb Day**  
***LIVING OUR HERBAL LEGACY***

*Inspiring Today's Cooks, Gardeners, and Herbalists*

*Saturday, April 22, 2023*

*8:30 am - 2:00 pm*

*St. Paul's United Methodist Church*

***FEATURED SPEAKERS***

*"Heirloom Gardening with Traditional Herbs and Skills"*

*(Presented Virtually via Zoom)*

*John Forti, Author of *The Heirloom Gardener**

*"Let's Go Wild - An Introduction to Fermentation"*

*Scotty Sheridan, Scotty's Fermented Foods*

*"Heirloom Seeds - Their Place in Our Lives"*

*Charley Fisher, Urban Garden Project*

***EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES***

*Include Compost Tea, Vermiculture,  
Fermentation, and Heirloom Seed Demonstrations*

***SHOPPING OPPORTUNITIES***

*Herbal Marketplace Herb Plants for Sale*

*Sales Support Our Scholarship Program*

*Catered Lunch and Dessert Provided*

*Attendance by Pre-paid Registration Only*

*\$60.00 Registration Fee (\$40.00 STU Members)*

*Register at <http://www.herbsociety-stu.org>*



## **Mexican oregano, *Lippia graveolens***

Mexican oregano is part of the verbena family, featuring a floral and citrusy flavor. Attracts nectar-feeding butterflies, bees and other insects as well as seed-eating birds.

**...Want to learn more about Mexican oregano?**

**On March 7th at 10:00 am** Day Group members will meet at the Cherie Flores Pavilion, 1500 Hermann Drive, to share their reports on this herb. RSVP [ddwheeler16@hotmail.com](mailto:ddwheeler16@hotmail.com). **Bring your own lunch.**

## *Research and Herb Discussion*

Donna Wheeler

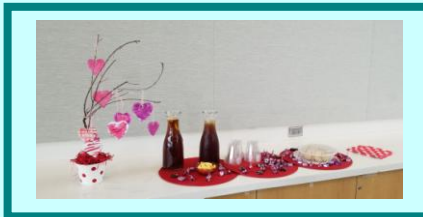


Day Group members present research on *Salvia officinalis*

*What is paradise, but, a garden,  
an orchard of trees and herbs,  
full of pleasure and nothing  
there but delights."  
William Lawson*

The Day Group of the South Texas Unit met at Cherie Flores Pavillion, February 14. Members shared and discussed their research on the herb Sage (*Salvia officinalis*).

Following their reports members enjoyed sage and blackberry tea, sage shortbread cookies, muffins and a living Valentine, a sage start to take home and plant.





“Bee” a



## Hospitality Host

Rose Wherry serves the South Texas Unit as the Hospitality Chair for our Evening Meetings. Members agree/sign-up to assist as Rose coordinates and arranges tasks so our potluck suppers are welcoming to all.

Members should sign up to host with another member for one evening.

**Hosts are needed for July through November**

Some of the host tasks include set up for the meeting then take down. Other tasks include washing tablecloths and tableware; perhaps you prefer to decorate tables or label potluck dishes? These are just a few of the simple tasks that build the foundation for a very enjoyable evening with the South Texas Unit.

Rose will provide instructions and guide you along the way. Volunteer as a Hospitality Hostess for an evening of herbal use and delight! Contact Rose Wherry at [roseawherry@gmail.com](mailto:roseawherry@gmail.com)

## Announcing Our March Evening Meeting “The Aromatherapy Medicine Chest”



Presented by Fran Higgins

Licensed massage therapist, licensed aesthetician,  
and certified aromatherapist

March 22, 2023

Join us at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion  
1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77030

Doors open at 6:30 pm

Potluck meal and program at 7:00 pm

Free and open to the public

*Plant flowers in others' gardens and your life becomes a bouquet!--Unknown*







**PHOTOS FROM THE FEBRUARY EVENING MEETING  
"TO HAVE AND TO HOLD -  
THE TRADITIONAL HERBS OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE"**



Enjoying the display of wedding pictures and memorabilia are Giselle Grandich, Dena Yanowski, Michael Gaydos, Dilia Figueroa, Palma Sales, Lovie Harrison, and Donna Yanowski. Photos courtesy of Karen Cottingham.



## BOOMTOWN COFFEE ROASTERY TOUR



Savoring their Boomtown Coffee Tour and Tasting are Jane Littell, Boomtown Coffee Roaster Savannah Childers, Doug Wheeler, Bobby Jucker, Elizabeth Grandich, Giselle Grandich, and Matthieu Bregeaut with son Elliot. Photos courtesy of Karen Cottingham.



## ENJOYING A TRADITIONAL ETHIOPIAN COFFEE CEREMONY



The room was fragrant with the loveliest of aromas - incense, lemon grass, freshly ground and brewed coffee, Ethiopian basil, freshly baked bread, and rue. Pictured here are Rose Wherry, our hostess Gannet Kassa with Giselle Grandich, Joyce Wilkenfeld, and Elizabeth Grandich. Photo courtesy of Karen Cottingham.



Enjoying the traditional Coffee Ceremony are Stephanie Calloway, Catherine O'Brien, Palma Sales with guest, Sanita, hostess Gannet Kassa, Donna Yanowski, Giselle Grandich with hostess Marianne Dawes, Dilia Figueroa, Michael Gaydos, and Dena Yanowski. In the center, a favorite Ethiopian snack of roasted sorghum. Photos courtesy of Karen Cottingham.



## Speakers Bureau Update

Garden Divas hosted **Dr. Karen Cottingham** at their January 10, 2023 meeting. The title of Karen’s presentation was “The Gift of the Magi - The Holy Tears of Frankincense”, perfect timing since the Feast of the Magi was January 6. In the presentation, the Garden Divas learned how prized frankincense is for its medicinal qualities, its sublime fragrance, and the unimaginable wealth associated with its harvest. This golden resin quite literally changed the course of human history and structured the ancient world. The “tears of the gods”, as frankincense is sometimes called, were instrumental in establishing worldwide trade relations, power, and wealth. Fabulous cities and immense fleets of ships were financed by the fragrant gum.

**Angela Roth** braved the freezing wind and cold to make butters (tarragon orange butter and rosemary garlic butter) and tisanes at Enchanted Forest on February 11.

While it was too cold to spread slices of butter on their crackers, the mint and rosemary tisane warmed everyone internally and externally (hand warmers). The group ran in ages from 6 to 80+, which goes to show one is never too old to learn about herbs.



Angela Roth warms up the crowd with a talk on herb-infused butters and tisanes at Enchanted Forest, Richmond, TX

**Susan Wood** presented “Potpourri” to twenty Old Braeswood Garden Club members on Tuesday, February 21st. Members of the club, including our own **Elayne Kouzounis**, were guests at the Warwick Towers with spectacular views of downtown, museum district, and Hermann Park. Members of the garden club, founded in 1939, declared it the “best in years” according to Elayne. Each guest received a generous bag of potpourri and 1/2 oz. pure essential lavender oil in an amber atomizer top bottle plus 4 handouts about potpourri, fragrances and how to dry and store herbs. Photos show one of the presenter display areas and the special potpourri created for this talk featuring 13 different essential oils and materials dried from Susan’s herb garden.



Interested in joining the Speakers Bureau, contact **Catherine O’Brien** at 281-467-1139 or [Vibrio13@gmail.com](mailto:Vibrio13@gmail.com).



# Herbs Make Scents

March 2023

**Speakers Bureau Community Request:** We have been invited to host an educational table at the Bellaire Planting Palooza. This event will probably have lots of families attending. If you have an idea for this activity or can help put this together, reach out to Catherine O'Brien at 281-467-1139 or [Vibrio13@mail.com](mailto:Vibrio13@mail.com) of the Speakers Bureau.

**Bellaire**  
**PLANTING PALOOZA**

500 tree seedlings will also be given away by Trees for Houston!

**Thursday, March 23**  
5:30pm - 7:00pm  
**Library Greenspace**  
5111 Jessamine

**Enjoy fun planting activities, crafts, and more!**

A community-wide planting initiative to grow our city's horticulture!  
#OneBellaire

City of Bellaire  
713-662-8280  
Like us on Facebook @BellairePARO

<https://www.bellairetx.gov/1735/Planting-Palooza>

## UPDATE

**From  
Rice University**

The Betty and Jacob Friedman Holistic Garden at Rice University has moved and are having their Spring Plant Sale at the new location

**SPRING PLANT SALE**  
**MARCH 6-12**

*Betty and Jacob Friedman Holistic Garden*  
RICE UNIVERSITY

See <https://garden.rice.edu/plant-sales>

Offering multiple varieties of warm-season crops such as tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, tomatillos, and other assorted ornamentals, vegetables and herbs. Don't miss the lisianthus plants grown from seed by Dr. Joe Novak.

The Garden has moved and is now located north of the Gibbs Recreation Center. If you have not visited yet, this would be a great time to see the new garden.



### 2023 Herb Fair Update from Catherine O'Brien

Although you should wait to plant basil until the temperatures get warmer, you can continue to plant chives, horseradish, oregano, rosemary, sage, thyme, lemon balm, and mint. Red stem apple mint, peppermint, and lemon balm (which is also in the mint family) are needed for the Texas Herb and the Christmas Herb teas. If you are new to gardening, take heed and don't put your fast-growing mints directly in the garden. They need to be contained.

You can set out lemongrass at the end of the month if it is warm enough. Lemongrass goes into our Texas Herb tea and into our Pink and Lemony tea along with roselle. It's not quite warm enough to plant roselle yet, so we'll talk about it next month. If you can't find lemongrass at a nursery, try one of the many oriental grocery stores around Houston or ask a member to share some of theirs.

To start lemongrass from cuttings:

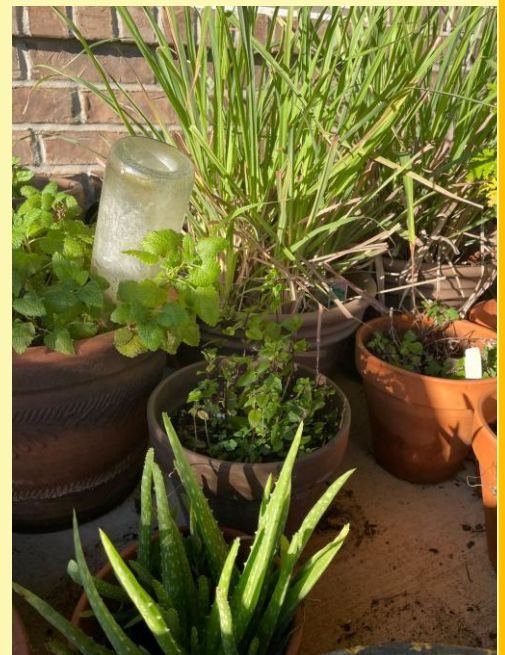
Begin with a fresh piece of lemongrass, preferably with as much of the bottom bulb attached as possible. Peel back a layer or two from the fresh lemongrass stalks and then root the stalks in water for several weeks. Once roots form and new leaves begin to sprout, plant the rooted lemongrass with the crown just below the surface.

To harvest lemongrass, you cut it into ½ - 1" pieces as needed while it is fresh. Lemongrass has a saw tooth edge on the leaves which can easily give you a paper cut if not handled with care. Gather them up with one hand and snip them off with the other. It's like cutting grass by hand. See Harvesting, Drying & Storing Herbs on our website ([Harvesting, Drying and Storing Herbs \(herbsociety-stu.org\)](http://herbsociety-stu.org))

To dry lemongrass, you can gather 5-6 stalks together into bunches, tie them and place them on an herb drying rack or hang them to dry. Let them hang for about 1-2 weeks. I have a lovely old metal quilt rack on which I hang bundles of herbs to dry. An alternative is to dry them in the oven on a parchment-covered baking sheet at the oven's lowest temperature setting. A word of caution, though: while this method works for drying lemongrass and most other herbs, the heat can drive off the wonderfully scented organic compounds that are the flavor enhancers in herbs. Air drying really is the best way to go. If you are using a dehydrator, cut the lemongrass into 1.5-inch pieces and lay them on the dehydrator rack. Follow the directions of the dehydrator for drying herbs.

To store your dried lemongrass, the stems can be bundled together and stored in a glass jar or other airtight container. Store lemongrass, like most other dried herbs in a cool, dark, dry place until you are ready to use them.

You may want to plant flowers this month: coneflower, coreopsis, cosmos, daylilies, dianthus, geraniums, salvias, and verbena. A nice flower mix is added to the calming bath soak fragrance blends so plan to harvest your flowers early in the morning. Another item needed for the bath soaks is muslin bags. If you catch any on sale, grab them and bring them to any meeting. Catherine O'Brien will get them to the right committee chairs.



Lemon balm on left, mint in the middle, lemongrass in the background.



Citrus trees (lemon, Satsuma, orange, and grapefruit) are probably available for planting now. Although you won't have citrus fruits from a newly planted tree for this year, you can always find organic citrus in the grocery store. We need dried orange peel for the Christmas Herb tea blend, and dried lemon peel for the Balanced Blend tea. Use organic fruit, if possible, or wash and dry the oranges and lemons. Using a potato peeler, remove the outermost layer of the peel from the orange. Try not to get the white pith underneath because it is bitter. Allow the peel to dry and cut into a small dice, about ¼ inch squares. Don't make the mistake that I made and use a grater. It's a lot of work and the pieces are too small. And don't use sour oranges off your tree. I made both mistakes my first year, but learning is what we're all about, right? If you need a little more help and a video, you can look back at the March 2020 newsletter on our website for a good article by Julie Fordes ([Herbs Make Sense \(wsimg.com\)](#)). **Learn how to dry citrus peel** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peiKl\\_F6GJ0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peiKl_F6GJ0)



## Founders' Breakfast In The Garden Fundraiser

You are invited to a special fundraising event!

**WHO:** All members, friends, and supporters of Westbury Community Garden

**WHAT:** Founders' Breakfast In The Garden

**WHEN:** Saturday, March 25, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**WHERE:** Westbury Community Garden Pavilion, 12581 Dunlap St.

**WHY:** This important fundraiser will finance the 2023 operating expenses at the garden.

For More Information

<http://westburycommunitygarden.org/founders-breakfast-in-the-garden-fundraiser/>





## AT-HOME RECIPES



### At-Home Recipes March 2023

Carolyn Kosclskey



*Trivia: A common flavoring for many kinds of rye bread; sounds the same as the name of the narrator\* of The Great Gatsby. [See answer at end]*

March was named for the Roman god of war, Mars, and around 700 BC in the early Roman calendar was the first month of the year. It later became the third month when January and February, previously at the end of the calendar, were moved to the first and second months around 450 BC. Important dates during the month begin with Daylight Savings Time on the 12<sup>th</sup>. The vernal equinox, when the sun is directly over the equator, is on the 20<sup>th</sup> which also marks the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere. One of the most celebrated days in March is St. Patrick's Day on Friday the 17<sup>th</sup> this year, when we think of shamrocks, the color green and the beverages and foods associated with the holiday. *But when is Easter...glad you asked. Easter falls on April 9<sup>th</sup> this year because of the full Pink Moon, also the Paschal Moon (first full moon after the spring equinox), rising the evening of April 5<sup>th</sup>.*

In the South Texas Unit 'birthday world' March and November have a lot in common...each month has 10 birthdays to celebrate. That's a lot of cakes! The month of July runs a close second having 9 birthdays. This month's birthday person I emailed and spoke with is **Debbie Lancaster**, who celebrates her birthday on the first of the month. Debbie grew up in New Orleans and said her mother loved flowers and we always had cut flowers in the house from the garden—roses and sweet peas, and camellias floating in crystal bowls. She said rather than her mother spending time in the kitchen baking and cooking, she remembers most of her birthday cakes coming from Mackenzies Bakery, and the family going out to eat. Being a true Southerner though, Debbie admits her signature dish is red beans and rice with good luck coming to the person who gets the bay leaf.

#### RED BEANS AND RICE NEW ORLEANS-STYLE

<https://www.camelliabrand.com/recipes/camellias-famous-new-orleans-style-red-beans/>

#### Ingredients

- 1 (1-pound) package Camellia's Red Beans
- 1 pound smoked sausage, sliced
- 8-10 cups water
- 1/4 stick of butter
- 2 cups chopped seasoning blend (onions, celery, green bell peppers, parsley flakes)
- 1 toe garlic, chopped



1 bay leaf  
Salt to taste  
Pepper to taste  
Cajun seasoning to taste  
Hot cooked rice

### Directions

Rinse and sort red kidney beans. (Optional: Soak beans using your preferred method.) In large heavy pot, cook sliced sausage for 5 minutes. Add chopped seasoning blend and garlic to cooked sausage, along with 1/4 stick butter, and continue to cook until onions turn soft and clear. Add beans, water, and bay leaf.

Bring to rolling boil for 30 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes. Reduce heat; simmer for 1-2 hours, stirring occasionally, until beans are desired tenderness.

Add Cajun seasoning plus salt and pepper to taste. Serve over hot cooked rice.

### **SODA BREAD**

A history of soda bread including cake, farl and spotted dog

Have you ever wondered why the shape of the cross is slashed on the top of Irish soda bread, and why it's known as soda bread, or farl, or Spotted Dog? The earliest reference to the chemical reaction that makes soda bread rise is actually credited to Native Americans. Centuries before soda bread became popular in Ireland, they added pearl-ash (potash), the natural soda in wood ashes, along with an acidic ingredient, to make their breads rise.

Soda bread, classified as a quick bread like cornbread, biscuits and banana bread; became popular in Ireland when bicarbonate of soda became available to use as a leavening agent. Bread soda made it possible to work with the "soft" wheat grown in Ireland's climate. "Hard" wheat flour, the main kind used in the US today, needs yeast to rise properly. "Soft" wheat flour doesn't work well with yeast but is great for "quick breads" like soda bread. The earliest published recipe for soda bread was in a London magazine in 1836 that refers to a "receipt for making soda bread" from a newspaper in Northern Ireland. In 19th century Ireland, making bread was part of daily life and most families lived in farmhouses where kitchens had open hearths, not ovens. Bread soda meant that anyone who didn't have an oven could make soda bread.

Bread soda wasn't perishable, was relatively inexpensive, and buttermilk and soft wheat for flour, both necessary components of soda bread, were commonly available. The bread was cooked on a griddle or a big cast-iron pot with a lid that could be put right into coals or a turf fire. It comes both brown and white, and in two main types, cake and farl.

Traditional brown Irish soda bread is basic table bread made from whole meal flour, baking soda, salt, and buttermilk. White soda bread, made with white flour, is considered slightly more refined than brown soda bread and is sometimes thought of as a more special occasion bread. Cake tends to be found more in the south of Ireland while people in Northern Ireland seem to prefer farl, although both can be found in the North and South, sometimes with different names.



Cake is soda bread that is kneaded, shaped into a flattish round, then deeply cut with a cross on the top, and normally baked in an oven. For farl the dough is rolled into a rough circle and cut all the way through into four pieces or farls. It's usually baked in a heavy frying pan, on a griddle or on top of the range or stove. It's flatter and moister than cake. Each farl is split in half "the wide way" before it's eaten and is best when hot. It's also allowed to cool and then grilled or fried as part of other dishes.

There are regional variations of the basic recipe, even though some purists would say there should be no additions to the dough. In Donegal, caraway seeds were traditionally put in the bread. In earlier times when raisins or dried fruit were luxuries, a fistful of them or maybe even a little sugar or an egg would have been put into the white flour version of the bread during the harvest as a treat for the working men. The non-traditional varieties of soda breads that are made with raisins, caraway, orange zest, and other add-ins are often called Spotted Dog.

Before baking, a cross is traditionally cut on the top of the loaf with a knife, often said to release the evil fairies and to protect the household. The practical reason for the cruciform shape is to let the heat penetrate into the thickest part of the bread and allow the bread to stretch and expand as it rises. Slashing a round loaf with a cruciform shape ends up dividing the bread into quadrants that can be easily broken apart. Since Ireland is a Catholic country, the symbolism of the cross can also be interpreted as blessing the bread and giving thanks.

### IRISH SODA BREAD WITH CARAWAY SEEDS

*A delicious and easy recipe*

#### Ingredients

½ cup white sugar  
4 cups all-purpose flour  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
¾ teaspoon salt  
1-3 cups raisins or other dried fruit plumped up in liquid before using  
1 tablespoon caraway seeds, optional  
2 eggs, lightly beaten  
1¼ cup buttermilk  
1 cup sour cream or Greek yogurt

#### Directions

Preheat oven to 350° F (175° C). Grease a 9-inch round cast iron skillet or a 9-inch round baking, spring form or cake pan and line with parchment.

In a mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, dried fruit and caraway seeds. In a small bowl, blend eggs, buttermilk and sour cream. Stir the liquid mixture into flour mixture just until flour is moistened. Knead dough in bowl using a rubber spatula and your hands about 10 to 12 strokes. Dough will be sticky so kneading with wet hands and lining pan with parchment is recommended. Place the dough in the prepared skillet or pan and pat down. Cut a 4x3/4 inch deep slit in the top of the bread. Brush with an egg wash and sprinkle with turbinado sugar. *In comments some bakers recommended cutting slit for venting half way through baking.*



Bake in a preheated 350° F (175° C) oven for 60 to 70 minutes. Let cool and turn bread onto a wire rack.

Inspiration from <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/18456/irish-soda-bread>. Reading comments beneath recipe from other bakers are helpful.

For those of you who are more experienced bakers, or who prefer a more technical recipe, one from King Arthur Flour is included.

### **AMERICAN IRISH SODA BREAD**

<https://www.kingarthurbaking.com/recipes/american-irish-soda-bread-recipe>

When Ireland was more agrarian this was a snack typically made by farmers' wives and transported to the fields wrapped in a tea towel and served whiskey-filled with hot sweetened tea. This sweeter, richer version of Irish soda bread is more in tune with American tastes than the traditional Irish bread, which simply combines flour, baking soda, salt, and buttermilk. Still, it's not as sweet as many American soda breads; chewy and light, most of its sweetness comes from its currants, and a crackly-crunchy sugar crust.

#### Ingredients

3 cups (340g) King Arthur Pastry Flour Blend or 3 cups (360g) King Arthur Unbleached All-Purpose Flour

1 tablespoon baking powder

1/4 teaspoon baking soda

3/4 teaspoon salt

Heaping 1/2 cup (120g) granulated sugar

1 cup (128g) currants or raisins

1 tablespoon caraway seeds, optional

1 large egg

1 3/4 cups (397g) buttermilk\*

4 tablespoons (57g) butter, melted

1 tablespoon (14g) milk

1 tablespoon (14g) coarse sparkling sugar

\*Buttermilk substitute 1 cup milk + 3/4 cup (one 6-ounce container) plain or vanilla yogurt

#### Topping

1 tablespoon (14g) milk

1 tablespoon (14g) coarse sparkling sugar

#### Instructions

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Lightly grease a 9" x 5" loaf pan. In a large bowl, whisk together the pastry blend or flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, sugar, currants, and caraway seeds. In a separate bowl, or in a measuring cup, whisk together the egg and buttermilk (or milk and yogurt). Quickly and gently stir the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients. Stir in the melted butter.



Spoon the batter into the prepared pan. Draw your finger around the edge of the pan to create a "moat." Drizzle the bread with the 1 tablespoon of milk; the moat will help prevent the milk from running down the sides of the loaf. Sprinkle with the coarse sugar.

Bake the bread for 50 minutes to 1 hour, or until a cake tester inserted into the center comes out clean; the interior of the bread will measure 200°F to 210°F on an instant-read thermometer. Remove the bread from the oven, loosen its edges, and after 5 minutes turn it out onto a rack to cool. Cool completely before slicing. Wrap airtight and store at room temperature. Makes one round loaf.

### THE GREENING OF BEER AND OTHER BEVERAGES AND FOODS

If you would like to add a "green" adult beverage to your celebration, the recommended way is to stir in a few drops of green food coloring. If the beverage is of a pale yellow color such as a Pilsner or a white wine, the suggestion is to stir in a few drops of blue food coloring to obtain a vibrant emerald green color. [This would also work with other foods such as oatmeal, scrambled eggs, pancakes or waffles, vanilla custard, whipped cream or toppings, etc.]. **Sláinte!**

As we progress into springtime of this year remember the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans theme of making "every bite count" with nutrient-dense foods and beverages, selecting a variety of foods from each group and using portion control.

**Answer:** Caraway seed. *\*The novel's narrator, Nick Carraway, is a young man from Minnesota who, after being educated at Yale and fighting in World War I, goes to New York City to learn the bond business.*

The April At-Home Recipe section will feature Easter and Spring recipes. Readers enjoy personal comments regarding the origin of the recipe so please include that. You may submit your recipe (in a form convenient for you) to **Carolyn Kosclskey** at [therecipeladycollection@gmail.com](mailto:therecipeladycollection@gmail.com).

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