

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XXXIX, NUMBER 6



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
JUNE 2016

Editor –Linda Alderman ewalderman@comcast.net

June 2016 Calendar

- June 12** – Sun. 2 p.m. **Unit Annual Meeting** – at *Judson Robinson Center* (2020 Hermann Drive Houston, TX 77004). **Bring “finger foods.” Nothing requiring a fork!**
- June 14** – Tues. 10 a.m. **Day Meeting** at the home of Emily Delaune. Program: “*The Herbs of China Bales: TBD,*” presented by Emily Delaune. **Bring a dish to share.**
- June 20** – Mon. 7 p.m. **Herb Fair Evaluation Meeting** – at the home of Pam Harris. **Please RSVP: prharris014@gmail.com or 713-661-1109**

July 2016 Calendar

- July 12** – Tues. **The Day Section** eats out: Restaurant TBD
- July 20** – Wed. 10 a.m. **Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), hosted by **Linda Mills and Susan Wood**. Program: “*From Plant to Plate: Popular Herbal Food Trends & the Food Industry,*” presented by **Janice Stuff**. **Bring your plate, napkin and a dish to share.**
- Newsletter deadline: 25th of every month**
Submissions should be at most 1 page in Times New Roman 12

Happy Birthday!



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6/5 Emily Delaune

Board Meeting – May 11

- A meeting will be scheduled in June to evaluate Herb Day 2016 and recommend improvements for Herb Day 2017.
- An additional Board position of Assistant Treasurer was proposed.
- The dinner for new members will be held on June 9, 2016.
- The proposed Budget for 2017 which will be presented at the Annual Meeting on June 12, 2016 was accepted by the Board.





Chairman's Corner

We are making plans for the annual meeting now! In addition to annual reports and budget approval, I want this to be a stage for expressing new ideas with every member contributing. If you have thought about it and wished for it, say it.

Be creative and dream about the future of our organization. I want this to be a participatory meeting with lots of give and take.

We will gather in the large room at Judson Center, corner of Hermann Drive and Alameda, at 2:00 for high tea, which means finger food and a menu that includes meat as in sandwiches. Remember high tea was the invention of the working class, who after work needed more to eat than a sweet biscuit.

You will receive the annual reports and budget ahead of time via email. Please read these in advance and bring your questions to the meeting. Board members will be prepared to give a 5 minute synopsis of their report. In the absence of the treasurer, Janice Stuff will present the budget and take questions.

I am certain that all of you join me in extending heartfelt gratitude to Karen Cottingham, program chair. She not only has arranged superb educational programs but additionally has raised public awareness of The Herb Society with carefully crafted articles published in the VILLAGE NEWS. We all appreciate Karen's Herculeaneum efforts.

The society has eleven new members thanks to our new membership co-chair, Albert Ramos. He has an outgoing spirit that makes everyone feel welcome the minute they walk in the door.

We are adjusting to our new meeting venue at the Flores Pavilion. Each month we seem to feel more at home in the new facility and with its helpful staff. It is gratifying that both guests and members enjoy meeting in the new space. If you have any suggestions about how we can better use the facility, please let the board know as well or bring your ideas to the annual meeting. We have recently learned that we may arrive before 6:30 for meeting set up (not before 6:00). This extra time will allow us to have dinner at 6:45 and begin the meeting and program earlier.

We still need to leave by 9:25 or we will incur additional rent.

Get ready for an afternoon of conversations and convivial exchanges at the annual meeting in June! See you at high tea!

Sally Luna
Unit Chair





About Our Meetings . . .

Kitchens are wonderful places - cozy, fragrant, and full of delicious memories. The aroma of what's cooking and the enticing scents of the herbs and spices seem to draw us inside. But kitchens can also be thought of as science laboratories. Cooking is, after all, a series of chemical reactions; and our families are often the guinea pigs in our culinary experiments.

Our own HSA-STU kitchen scientists, **Benée Curtis** and **Jacqui Highton**, recently gave us a brilliant presentation about their latest food science adventures: fermentation. We felt like we were in their kitchens as they presented a fascinating overview of the history of fermented foods, the importance of fermentation as a nutritional multiplier and food preservation technique, and the types of fermentation used for different foods, settings, and cultures. We enjoyed several examples of fermented vegetables, curried cauliflower ferment, and a slightly fizzy fermented dessert called "Razzle-Dazzle Fizzle Berries". What was especially endearing, however, were the amusing anecdotes about the recipes they tested and "inflicted" on their families. They described several fermentation "incidents" with all the wit and charm of Julia Child.

The other 20 members who were fortunate enough to join Benée and Jacqui in tonight's meeting enhanced the program with their own contributions to the pot luck. Some purposefully brought fermented foods: **Donna Fay Hilliard** brought a fermented root vegetable blend that included jicama, rutabaga, white radishes, carrots, onion, ginger, peppercorns, and cayenne pepper; **Dena Yanowski** made Kombucha and shared the "mother", or SCOBY, with several other adventurous members and guests; **Donna Yanowski** brought a "to die for" chocolate cake with a deep and flavorful "tang" from a special ingredient, *sauerkraut*; and **Karen Cottingham** made a delicious quinoa and garbanzo bean salad full of probiotics from fermented carrots, ginger, chili paste, and fish sauce. She also brought a fermented pineapple drink enhanced with pineapple sage for one of our beverages (see the recipe elsewhere in this newsletter).

In addition to intentionally bringing fermented foods, some members inadvertently demonstrated the fact that fermented foods are ubiquitous in our diets:

Janis Teas brought a chocolate cake and **Lois Jean Howard** brought chocolate chip cookies (chocolate is fermented); **Sally Luna** made a macaroni and cheesedish (the sour cream in it is fermented); and others brought salads with vinegar-based dressings (vinegar is fermented).

Fermentation seems to be about healthy growth, and our members helped ferment the growth of our STU by inviting guests. Most of tonight's guests came from the personal invitations of members **Mary Sacilowski** (2 guests), **Sara Diaz**, **Jacqui Highton**, and **Karen Cottingham** (3 guests). In total, there were nine guests, and one of the nine is in the process of joining our STU.

Lois Jean Howard and **Beth Murphy** were tonight's hostesses. Lois Jean's festive tablecloths filled the room with an array of rainbow colors, and she and Beth brought a veritable garden of flower arrangements. Thank you, Lois Jean and Beth! The members and guests really enjoyed gathering in the beautiful spaces you helped create.

Next month is the annual meeting. Please make every effort to attend as we need your input to develop interesting programs for next year. Although we do not have guests at the annual meeting, start planning now to invite your friends and acquaintances to July's meeting. **Janice Stuff** will share her "insider information" as an academic registered dietitian and discuss the identification, development, and marketing of herbal food trends. Bringing your friends to our meetings is a great way to share and grow our STU.

-Albert Ramos





SUREFIRE WAY TO WIN THE GIRL by Karen L. Cottingham

While reading *Southern Farm and Garden - An Agricultural Journal*, I came across this fascinating description of an unusual courtship tradition:

In the Pacific Islands, natives pickle their foods in holes in the ground lined with banana leaves and use them as food reserves in case of storms. The pickles are so valuable that they've become part of the courting process, helping a man prove he'll be able to provide for a woman. In Fiji, guys can't get a girl without showing her parents his pickle pits.

Whatever happened to *do you want to come up and see my etchings?*

(The term "pickles" here is used interchangeably with "ferments". In case you're confused, all ferments are pickles, but not all pickles are ferments.)

From the Treasurer's Desk



Membership fees are payable in June and July. I must submit dues to HSA in August. Dues are delinquent if not received by August 1st.

- Active member, single \$67.50
- Active member, joint \$98.75
- Active member, single, life \$12.50
- Affiliate member \$12.50
(HSA member through another unit or member at large, non-voting)
- Sustaining member \$80.00
(minimum of 3-year history of active Unit membership, non-voting)

I will not be at the June annual meeting. You may pay your dues to Janice Stuff at this meeting OR mail to the Unit at:
HSA-South Texas Unit
PO Box 6515
Houston TX 77265-6515

-Lois Sutton

BY POPULAR DEMAND: SAUERKRAUT CHOCOLATE CAKE

by Donna Yanowski

The Cake:

1. Cream 1 stick butter and 1-1/2 cups sugar.
2. Add 3 eggs, one at a time, while beating the mixture.
3. Combine the following dry ingredients: 2 cups flour, 1/2 cup cocoa, 1 teaspoon baking powder, 1 teaspoon baking soda, and 1/2 teaspoon salt.
4. Add the dry ingredients and 1 cup water to the creamed ingredients, alternating between the dry ingredients and the water until all the items are added. Sometimes I use part coffee or coffee crystal in the water, as I did with the cake at the May evening meeting.
5. Stir in 3/4 cup "drained and squeezed dry" chopped sauerkraut.
6. Pour the mixture into two 8" greased and floured pans and bake at 350 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes. Let the cakes cool in the pans for 10 minutes after baking before removing them.

The Frosting:

Melt about 3/4 cup of chocolate chips with about 1/2 cup of half-and-half or heavy cream and 1 tablespoon of butter. Stir it often and do not let it boil.

Spread it on the cake, and that's it!



Destination Asheville!

The Herb Society of America, Annual Meeting of Members
Lois Sutton

Seasoned members of The Society generally call this meeting “EdCon”, with an afterthought to the “annual meeting.” This year was the kick-off of an alternating year approach to the national gathering. One year will hold the full Educational Conference and Annual Meeting of Members (Williamsburg, 2015): the next year, a single day incorporating the annual business meeting (Asheville, 2016).

Our “day” in Asheville NC was not simply the business meeting but included an awards/recognition luncheon and an afternoon of local, charismatic speakers. During the business meeting we elected incoming board members: **Janie Plummer**, treasurer (South Central District, Pioneer Unit) and **Gloria Hunter**, Membership Chair (South Central District, Texas Thyme Unit and affiliate member of the South Texas Unit). The new HSA president will begin her term in July, **Rae McKimm** (Southeast District, Little Rock Unit).

Luncheon included recognition of members achieving membership milestones, 25 years (Rosemary Circle) and 50 years (Golden Sage). The Society also bestowed its national awards at the luncheon. Our member, **Pam Harris**, received a Certificate of Appreciation; this award recognizes “those who have contributed a great deal personally to The Society or to those who have admirably completed a special assignment or project.” Congratulations to Pam!

François André Michaux (1770 –1855) came back to life and spent time with us in the afternoon – channeling through Charles Williams who has studied him extensively! His *Histoire des arbres forestiers de l’Amérique septentrionale* contains the results of his US explorations, giving an account of the distribution and the scientific classification of the principal American timber trees north of Mexico and east of the Rocky Mountains. This was not an easy feat as he traveled at a time when roads were merely trails used by the indigenous peoples of each region with an occasional military trail.

Doug Elliott (story teller, singer and plant grower) traveled some of the same trails as Michaux, but in

a VW van 150 years or so later. He too collected, but he looked for traditional medicinal plants and the tales to accompany them. Did you know that the spores of *Lycopodium* are marketed as ‘dragon breath’ in the magic industry?! Doug sang to us, told us more tales – and brought an updated version of his book *Wild Roots*. If you’re interested in Appalachian / traditional herbs, you might enjoy it!

To close the day the executive director and one of the researchers from the North Carolina Arboretum described the seed bank and germplasm research endeavors at their site. Their focus is the native plants of the southern Appalachians and western North Carolina. Another project is in the revitalization of Cherokee plants. Most impressive site and work. Informational tidbits from these talks that struck me related to the impact of the global warming we are seeing:

- A 3 – 7° increase in temperature will decimate 1/3 of the world’s plant populations.
- At 40% of the habitat monitoring stations around the US, there has been a shift upward in USDA climate zone.

And where are we next year for the full Educational Conference and Annual Meeting of Members? Relatively close to home: Little Rock AR, May 5 - 6, 2017. Plan on it!





MAKE A TROPICAL SPLASH WITH *Tepache!*

by Karen L. Cottingham

Tepache (teh-PAH-cheh) is a delicious fermented pineapple drink enjoyed by native cultures in the tropical Americas since long before the Spanish explorers arrived. A few fearless travelers to Mexico might have sampled *tepache* from street vendors in the past; but until recently, this refreshing beverage was mostly hidden away in the kitchens of cooks familiar with indigenous foods and drinks. As appreciation of the sophisticated flavor complexities of ferments is spreading among the culinary cognoscenti-, *tepache* is being enthusiastically embraced by imaginative home brewers and craft cocktail connoisseurs.

While you cannot buy *tepache* at Fiesta or Central Market, anyone with a ripe pineapple, water, sugar, spices, and a non-reactive container can make this refreshing drink at home. A spirit of improvisation and spontaneity is another essential ingredient.

This is how I made the *tepache* for the May evening meeting on fermentation:

1. Rinse a ripe pineapple and remove and discard the crown and base.
2. Cut off the rind and remove the core of the pineapple as usual. Instead of throwing these on the compost pile, place the rind and core in a large glass pitcher. Save the fruit for another use.
3. Add 1/2 cup of brown sugar and two sticks of cinnamon to the pitcher.
4. At this point, I also added a very large sprig of pineapple sage; but this is my own improvisation. It is not traditional.
5. Fill the pitcher with non-chlorinated water and cover it loosely with plastic wrap. [You can de-chlorinate water by leaving it overnight in an open vessel. Alternatively, you can use bottled water. This is critical - you need the rind's bacteria to thrive so fermentation can occur.]

That's it! Twenty-four hours later, I strained the beautiful golden liquid and the *tepache* was ready for your enjoyment.

This basic recipe is quick and simple; but as expected with a rustic, centuries-old beverage, there are many variations. A longer ferment would yield a more effervescent and alcoholic *tepache*, if that is what you prefer. Honey or *piloncillo* would be

more authentic substitutes for the brown sugar. Cinnamon, cloves, and allspice are the traditional spices.

And just as I added pineapple sage to subtly enhance the flavor, you can make your own unique *tepache* by adding ginger, tamarind, lemongrass, lemon verbena, pineapple mint, Mexican mint marigold, basil, or rosemary. Some people even add a pinch of tobacco leaves for "smokiness" and "kick", but perhaps a smoky black tea would have the same effect. Some dilute the final product with water, while others fortify their *tepache* with beer or add spirits to create artisanal cocktails. *Tepache* can even be frozen into an ice-pop!

If you are intrigued by the idea of fermenting your own food but are still a little daunted by the unfamiliar process, making *tepache* is an excellent place to start.

For the language and history lovers amongst us, the word "*tepache*" appears to be related to a verb from the *Nahuatl* language meaning "to bruise or pound something". *Tepache* may have evolved from an even earlier drink made from fermented maize. Traditional Mexican *tepache* is sometimes fermented in its own seasoned wooden barrel called a *tepachera*. *Tepache* became very popular with the Spanish Conquistadors, perhaps because of its similarity to the fermented apple cider they were accustomed to drinking.

Tepache has even found its way into a common Latin American colloquial expression warning against divulging a secret: *No riegues el tepache!* It roughly translates to our American expressions "Don't spill the beans!" and "Don't let the cat out of the bag!"

Why don't you try this traditional Latin American drink for your next holiday party? I won't spill the *tepache* about where you got the recipe!



The South Texas Unit is a non-profit educational organization incorporated under the State of Texas. The South Texas Unit has no paid employees. Our activities are accomplished through the efforts of our volunteers.

The Herb Society of America
South Texas Unit
P.O. Box 6515
Houston, TX 77265-6515



The Herb Society of America is dedicated to promoting the knowledge, use and delight of herbs through educational programs, research and sharing the knowledge of its members with the community.



Find our Unit on the web at:
www.herbsociety-stu.org

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