

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XLI, NUMBER 4



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
APRIL 2018

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APRIL 2018 Calendar

- Apr 10, Tues. at 10 a.m.** **Day Meeting** is at the home of **Jane Littell**. The program will be devoted to planning and hands-on activities related to Herb Day Symposium. **Bring a dish to share.** **Guests should RSVP** by leaving a text or voice message at 281-702-3751.
- Apr 18, Wed. at 6:30 p.m.** **Evening Meeting** is at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004). **Hosts are Nita Rowe and Sally Luna.** The program is “*Provence, Herbs and the British Author Lawrence Durrell*”, presented by **Merrienne Timko**. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**
- Apr 27, Fri. at 12 noon** **Set-up for the Herb Day Symposium** at St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, Fondren Hall (5501 Main Street, Houston, TX 77004). **Contact Herb Day Chair [Dena Yanowski](mailto:denayanowski@gmail.com).** (denayanowski@gmail.com).
- Apr 28, Sat. 8:45-3 p.m.** **Herb Day Symposium** at St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, Fondren Hall (5501 Main Street, Houston, TX 77004).

MAY 2018 Calendar

- May 6, Sun. 6-10 p.m.** **The South Texas Unit 50th Anniversary Reception & Dinner.** All members are invited to honor our **50th Anniversary.** See **Chairman’s Corner** for more information. **RSVP by April 18th.**
- May 8, Tues. at 10 a.m.** **Day Meeting** is at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004). **Hosts: Lois Jean Howard and Beth Murphy.** The program is “Tea Party”, presented by **Pam Harris**. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**
- May 15, Tues. at 7 p.m.** **Board Meeting** at the home of **Sally Luna.**
- May 16, Wed. at 6:30 p.m.** **Evening Meeting/Annual Meeting** is at Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Herman Park (1500 Herman Drive, Houston, TX). Hosts: **Pam Harris** and **Julie Fordes**. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**

Newsletter deadline: the 25th of every month



Chairman's Corner



Greetings,

In like a lion and out like a lamb, or so I am hoping as yellow oak pollen swirls around coating everything. A good rain is certainly needed to wash this away. A few thoughts this month:

- **Elayne Kouzounis** called to notify me that she has yet to receive any phone calls or emails regarding members that are ill, experiencing surgery, death in the family or other personal concerns. I was not aware that she sends cards on behalf of the **South Texas Unit** in these circumstances. Please do not hesitate to contact Elayne if you have a request – she is waiting to “do her job”.
- It was so nice to see **Nutti Doodeheefver** and **Lois Sutton** who were in town last month. Nutti attended the March meeting and Lois helped prepare items for **Herb Day's Herbal Market Place**.
- To support our **educational mission** we are participating in the first annual **Spring Plant Sale and Garden Festival at The Cockrell Butterfly Center**. Participation includes providing information about our unit to the public on Saturday April 14, 8am – 4pm. We need volunteers to set up our information, station our table and provide our unit's information. Interested in volunteering? Have a question? Contact me. The hours you volunteer go toward your HSA commitment.
- Exactly 50 years from the inception of our **South Texas Unit**, Members will be invited to celebrate **The South Texas Unit 50th Anniversary** on Sunday May 6, 2018 from 6pm –10pm at Maggiano's, 2019 Post Oak Blvd. We are excited to celebrate this accomplishment with our members. Look for more information in the near future. Attire: Cocktail. Limited guest tickets \$90. **RSVP by April 18th** to [Donna Yanowski](mailto:donnayanowski@gmail.com) (donnayanowski@ gmail.com) or 832-998-3655 (c), 713-524-3542 (h).
- The May 16th Evening Meeting will be our **Annual Meeting of Members**. There will be a full agenda with plenty of time for eating, socializing and business.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at Herb Day. Even if you are not able to attend, there are plenty of volunteer opportunities that can be performed in advance. Now, to tackle the pollen on the screened porch!
Donna Yanowski, Unit Chair

Treasury Report

- In order to be reimbursed for Herb Day expenses, keep your receipts and tickets and turn into the Treasurer. Mail to STU/HSA PO Box 6515, Houston Tx 77265 or Email to jestuff@pdq.net
- Members who actually work at **Herb Day** preparation, setup, or during the event, may pay the discounted registration fee of \$20. Complete the on-line or mail-in registration form; **specify your lunch preference**. <http://www.herbsociety-stu.org/>



By Janice Stuff



35th Herb Day Symposium Preparations

I'm sure by now everyone's calendar has been marked for our Spring Herb Day event "**Herbs, Hives and Honey**" **April 28, at St. Paul's United Methodist Church**. Things are falling into place perfectly thanks to those who are chairing the sub-committees and finding ways to help with behind the scene prep work.

If you have not already set aside Friday afternoon, April 27th to **help us prepare for set up Herb Day** in Fondren Hall at 12 noon, we still need lots of help. Come at 12 noon. We have lots of decorating, folder stuffing, plant arranging, and general set up to do in a short amount of time and need as much help as possible. We will begin Saturday Event Set up on Saturday April 28 at 7:30 am; come early to help with the finishing touches.

Included in the mail is an event flyer, **help us advertise** by emailing the flyer to your friends, posting it on your facebook. Also share it with other organizations you belong to and ask local businesses to display our flyers at local businesses. We are so excited to offer online registration this year, and expect this event to be very well attended.

If you have not found your way into a specific sub committee role PLEASE email me, [Dena Yanowski](mailto:DenaYanowski@gmail.com) (denayanowski@gmail.com) and I will happily put you in contact with someone in need of support.

You should have already been contacted in regards to **refreshment making**. Please be generous with your time and talent. Last year we did not have as many homemade treats as we hoped. This year we need much more involvement from Members this year. Contact our refreshment coordinator, [Elizabeth Grandich](#) to help.

If you have any **bee skeps (8 inch or greater in size)**, contact [Shirley Mills](#) (shirleymills@aol.com). We are hoping to borrow a few this year for decoration purposes.

Don't forget, if you are helping out this year, follow the prompts for "members only registration" to reserve your \$20 ticket online or register by mail. Thank you for your continued support.
Dena Yanowski.

Additional Volunteers are Needed for Mason Bee Assembly & Beewaxing 101 Salves, Soaps & Wraps

Mason Bee House Assembly

Saturday, April 7th @ 9 am
5526 Wigton 77096
Contact [Julie Fordes](#) or 832-969-8349.

Supporting our **educational mission**, I have 16 scrap wood native bee homes for **Herb Day**. I need help cutting materials with power tools & assembling the houses. Cold drinks & tools provided; **bring your gloves**. I need volunteers to:

- Cut bamboo with a small Dremel saw (FUN!)
- Drill holes in cut branches with a power drill (FUN!)
- Assemble the bee home with cut materials. No power tools required!



BEESWAXING 101 WORKSHOP

SALVES, SOAPS & WRAPS

Experience the aromatherapy of the apiary while preparing **Herbal Marketplace** beeswax crafts for **Herb Day**. We your need help completing the production and embellishment of honey-herbal soaps, herbal

beeswax salves, and those popular reusable beeswax-coated food wraps. Materials are provided, but bring your creativity! Choose the time that's best for you, or **Bee-a-Friend** and come to both! Contact [Karen Cottingham](#) at 713-524-0414.

When:
Thursday, April 12
(1:00-5:00 p.m.)
&
Saturday, April 21
(1:00-5:00 p.m.)

Where:
1919 Binz St., Houston, TX 77004

About our meetings...

Membership & Meeting Report

By Albert Ramos

Spring is the time of joy and new life; and this year especially, the lush new growth we see in our gardens is a welcome rebuttal to the bitter cold of last winter. Our HSA-STU March program, *The Bitter Herbs of Passover*, similarly reminded the 35 members and 13 guests in attendance that enduring yesterday's bitterness can help us fully appreciate the gifts we harvest today.

The Bitter Herbs of Passover was a thought-provoking program presented by Master Gardener, biblical plant scholar, and retired chemistry professor **Jean Fefer, PhD**. Passover, which will be celebrated for seven days beginning the evening of March 30, commemorates the flight of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt more than 3,300 years ago. The *seder* meal at Passover recounts through storytelling and symbolic foods the hardships the Israelites endured during slavery and celebrates their liberation, hope, and spiritual redemption as a people. Our program focussed on the symbolism of the bitter food on the *seder* plate, the *maror*, which is consumed as a reminder of the trauma of slavery. Today, *maror* is most frequently represented by the horseradish root.

The Jews are an historical and traditional people, and one would expect the symbolic foods consumed during the Passover *seder* to adhere to traditions. But horseradish was not likely grown in the Middle East during the earliest practice of Passover. So how is it traditional? To add to the confusion, horseradish is not strictly "bitter"; it is more accurately described as sharp or pungent.

So why does a non-traditional and seemingly ahistorical, herb represent bitterness during

Passover today? There are many reasons for this. Some speculate that there was a misinterpretation of the Hebrew words for lettuce and horseradish. Others point to practical considerations necessitated by the *diaspora*, or the spread of the Jewish people throughout the world. Jews who left the Middle East for the colder climate of northern and eastern Europe could not always obtain bitter lettuce for Passover, so the sharp and pungent horseradish root was commonly used in its place.

But we still need more support. Horseradish is documented in 12th century rabbinic literature as a component of another part of the *seder* meal, thereby giving some "tradition" to the use of the pungent root. By the 18th century, horseradish was a generally popular condiment to accompany meat for anyone - Jewish or not - making it a readily accessible choice for a bitter food for Passover. And most importantly, it was much easier to find horseradish than lettuce when there was still snow on the ground. Finally, in the early 19th century, an important Austro-Hungarian rabbi legitimized the substitutive use of horseradish as the bitter herb on the *seder* plate since it was often difficult to sufficiently clean lettuce of insects. Thus we see tradition, scholarship and practicality combining to fulfill the ritual requirements.

Dr. Fefer also explored how the nasally assaultive pungency of horseradish occurs. When the root is grated, the broken cells release a compound called *sinigrin*, which in turn produces mustard oil. Mustard oil is highly irritating to the sinuses and mucous membranes. Interestingly, it is this feature that also makes it unlikely that animals will eat your crop of horseradish!



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We also learned that in mythology, the Oracle of Delphi told Apollo that horseradish was worth its weight in gold. And while this pungent root is not really considered buried treasure, records show that two of our early American presidents, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, included horseradish in their kitchen gardens.

Finally, Dr. Fefer added that horseradish is high in vitamin C, potassium, calcium, and iron and that the roots and leaves of the plant were used medicinally in the Middle Ages. And as we learned last year in **Karen Cottingham's Herbs In The Headlines** program, traditional medicines from long ago can become today's miracle cures. Consistent with this idea, Dr. Fefer noted that horseradish is being studied for medical and industrial applications as well as for "green" chemistry.

The success of the evening was due in large part to our enthusiastic hosts, **Andi Leger, Bobby Jucker, Cheryl Israel, and Mary Sacilowski**. Bobby and his wife, **Janice Jucker**, decorated each table with a stack of homemade *matzahs* (unleavened bread) and an assortment of bitter herbs, horseradish, and other symbolic foods traditionally placed on the *seder* plate. Several members brought in a great variety of bitter herbs, which Andi made into lovely arrangements for the tables. We all enjoyed Cheryl's refreshing teas and herbal waters. Cheryl - with the help of two other guests - also decorated the main display table with vintage *seder* plates, Passover cookbooks, and more herbal arrangements. Mary made herself indispensable and helped everyone put it all together. We thank all our hosts for their generous work to provide us pleasing, colorful, and multi-sensory decorations for tonight's event.

The potluck supper was a meal perfectly suited for celebration and was as delicious and varied as any we've had: from **Bobby and Janice Jucker's** *matzo* ball soup to **Kathy Ballanfant's** popular chicken enchiladas covered in a tomatillo/white chocolate sauce-it really was a feast. Other notable potluck items were **Cheryl Israel's** homemade orange marmalade and new member **Sandy McElroy's** amazing *Southern Living Cream Cheese Pound Cake*. Sandy made it better than the original recipe by replacing the all-purpose flour with spelt, a delicious ancient grain. Spelt is probably healthier

than all purpose flour - not that it matters, though, considering the cream cheese, butter, and sugar! The cake really was extraordinarily delicious. I heard several people commenting on how good it was and asking Sandy for the recipe.

We even had five types of *charoset* on the buffet table. You may recall from last month's newsletter that *charoset* is another symbolic food of Passover. It represents the mortar the Hebrew slaves used to construct buildings for their Egyptian masters and reminds participants in the *seder* meal of the associated hardships of slavery.

While *charoset* generally is a mixture of apples, walnuts, honey, cinnamon, and sweet wine or grape juice, worldwide variations include unexpected and surprising ingredients such as Uganda's peanuts and bananas; the black currants, raisins, orange rind, allspice, cloves, and nutmeg in Spain; Guatemala's maple syrup, almonds, and **refried beans**; and even the dried mango, pineapple, and shredded coconut of Cuba! Within the United States, there are also many variations, some of which include figs, apricots, hazelnuts, and blood oranges. I guess there's more than one way to set a brick!

In sum, our March 2018 evening meeting was another outstanding event. Each of our meetings demonstrates that there's more to herbs than meets the eye (*and* nose)! And our members make it memorable. To top off this evening's excellent program and all that great food, **Janis Teas** shared more than a dozen jars of **her homemade kumquat marmalade!** Thank you, Janis!

Next month's meeting promises to be *superb* as well. Don't miss *Provence, Herbs, and the British Author Lawrence Durrell* presented by culinary historian **Merrienne Timko**. Mark your calendars now for April 18, 2018 to learn how this renowned author celebrated the spirit of Provence through his literary descriptions of the Mediterranean herbs that exemplify traditional Provençal cuisine. ■



What's Coming Up...

PROVENCE, HERBS,
AND THE

BRITISH AUTHOR LAWRENCE DURRELL

By Merrienne Timko with Karen Cottingham

We are extremely fortunate that culinary historian **Merrienne Timko** has agreed to share her insights into the authentic culinary traditions of Provence in an April 18, 2018 program, ***Provence, Herbs, and the British Author Lawrence Durrell***.

You may know of Merrienne as the culinary historian for the **Houston Museum of Natural Science** who has created nearly forty “Cultural Feasts” inspired by the art and artifacts of dozens of museum exhibits. Merrienne approaches culinary history with the passion of the art-lover, the epicure, the historian, the traveller, and the deep reader. Her decades-long interest in the culinary traditions of the Mediterranean and the writings of Lawrence Durrell have come together in a fascinating article just published in the Spring 2018 issue of ***Gastronomica***. In ***“Exploring the Christmas Eve Menu in Lawrence Durrell’s Avignon Quintet”*** Merrienne recreates the true culinary ambiance of Provence prior to its “discovery” as a tourist destination and the related “Americanization” of traditional French cuisine.

For her HSA-STU program, Merrienne will be discussing some aspects of the traditional, celebratory cuisine of Provence but also the no-less-mouth-watering day-to-day cooking in Durrell’s own Provençal kitchen.



His culinary escapades reflect what Durrell called his “meager” income as a writer - but also his prodigious imagination and appetite and the influence of his friendships with noted culinary experts and a colorful local herbalist.

Here is the program description in Merrienne’s own words:

The recent BBC/PBS series “The Durrells in Corfu” has generated renewed interest in the British author Lawrence Durrell (1912–90). A writer, poet, and even a painter, Durrell is best known for his popular collections of novels such as the *Alexandria Quartet* (1957–60) and *Avignon Quintet* (1974–85) as well as various nonfiction travel books including *Prospero’s Cell* (1945) and *Caesar’s Vast Ghost* (1990). Durrell’s works appeal to a diverse audience as they can be appreciated from many different perspectives. However, a distinctive hallmark of Durrell’s writing is his ability to capture “the spirit of place” of the many venues described in his works.

That food and wine play a role in his depiction of the spirit of place is suggested by Durrell’s statement that *“as you get to know Europe slowly, tasting the wines, cheeses and characters of the different countries you begin to realize that the important determinant of any culture is after all—the spirit of place.”* Yet, in spite of the numerous references to food and wine in his works, placing these references in a more serious context has received little attention until Merrienne began her research.

In the course of investigating the little-known culinary side of Durrell, including his interest in cooking and gastronomy, a nearly fifty-year friendship with the British food writer Elizabeth David, and the influence of his third wife’s translation of Marcel Rouff’s 1924 novel

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published under the title *The Passionate Epicure*, Merrienne has discovered many new insights regarding the author's depiction of Provence's spirit of place through its cuisine, wine - and herbs.

Merrienne's lecture will specifically focus on Durrell's references to herbs such as garlic, rosemary, and thyme in the *Avignon Quintet*. None of the other venues in the *Quintet*, including Alexandria, London, and Geneva, are as poetically described through their cuisines as Provence, the primary site of this lengthy narrative set before, during, and immediately after World War II. In her recent article published in the Spring 2018 issue of *Gastronomica*, "Exploring the Christmas Eve Menu in Lawrence Durrell's *Avignon Quintet*", Merrienne identified the previously unknown primary reference used by Durrell for his crafting of a traditional Provençal Christmas Eve menu of the late 1920s to early 1930s - a scene considered by some to be one of the ten best Christmas depictions in literature. However, the work used by Durrell for this menu - a book published in 1904 by a now largely forgotten American author - fails to explain Durrell's inclusion of Chicken flamed in *Cognac* on this traditionally meatless menu. Merrienne attributes this dish to Durrell's culinary friendship with the herbalist Ludo Chardenon, whom he first met at the market in Arles around the time that Durrell was crafting his Christmas Eve menu.

Through his friendship with Chardenon, Durrell learned much about the herbal lore and cuisine of Provence. When Durrell was writing and publishing the *Quintet* during the 1970s, culinary aficionados and tourists were just beginning to discover the cuisine of Provence. At a time when many home cooks were still trying to emulate *haute* or *grande* French cuisine by using canned soups, frozen vegetables, and salted cooking wine, Provençal cuisine represented a fresh approach, for it combined aspects of classical French cuisine with more rustic traditions.

Olives, capers, lavender honey, and *Herbes de Provence* became trendy and popular, while cookbooks by authors like Richard Olney and Elizabeth David attracted new culinary converts. Durrell's *Quintet* should perhaps be viewed as a literary complement, for in this work, he pays homage to Provence by weaving aspects of the region's cuisine into the novel's narrative.

Although American home cooks readily adopted the use of green herbs in their renditions of dishes from Provence, the use of garlic was more problematic. In addition, divergent views regarding what herbs should comprise *Herbes de Provence* also evolved, notably whether or not lavender should be included. To address the lavender issue, Merrienne will present some of the traditional Provençal evidence dating back to medieval times and the old Occitan, Latin, and Hebrew sources that shaped Chardenon's herbal background regarding the traditional nature of herbal blends. As we will learn, the marketing of Provence to the American public since the 1970s can be credited with the inclusion of lavender in this popular herb blend.

After receiving a B.A. in art history from the University of Texas, Merrienne Timko was awarded a scholarship to study Islamic art and architecture at the American University in Cairo. While traveling in Upper Egypt, she was inspired by depictions of food in ancient Egyptian art to pursue further study regarding the history of food and its relationship to art and culture. A master's degree from the University of Michigan in ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean studies, including courses in Egyptian hieroglyphs, provided an academic foundation for Merrienne's interest in culinary history. She has lectured to groups in Houston and presented various topics at culinary conferences on the history of food, wine, chefs, and gastronomy from antiquity through the nineteenth century.

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What's Coming Up...

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Since 2002, Merrienne has served as the culinary historian for the Houston Museum of Natural Science's popular Cultural Feasts dining program. This unique program focuses on the culinary interpretation of works of art in special exhibitions. To date, nearly forty Cultural Feasts have been organized to complement a variety of exhibitions including, among others, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Medici, Benjamin Franklin, the Titanic, Gladiators, and Knights.

Merrienne's interest in Lawrence Durrell dates back to her time studying at the American University in Cairo. On subsequent trips to Egypt, including two led for the Houston Museum of Natural Science, she began investigating the various places Durrell frequented in Alexandria and Cairo when he lived in Egypt during World War II. As a member of the International Lawrence Durrell Society, Merrienne has presented "tidbits" of her research regarding Durrell from a culinary perspective at the organization's conferences in New Orleans, London, and Vancouver. ■



THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA SOUTH TEXAS UNIT

35th Annual Herb Day Luncheon and Symposium



April 28, 2018 - 8:45am - 3pm
Fondren Hall, St. Paul's United Methodist Church



Bee Happy Herbs
SUSAN GAIL WOOD



Don't Be Fooled by Furry Honey - Know Your Beekeeper
NICOLE BUERGERS

Ambrosia from the Bees - The Sweet History of Honey Wine
MARIA CORSI

Sweet, Savory & Tart - Honey & Herb Compositions from
URBANCHEF



CATERED LUNCH

HERBAL MARKETPLACE



SILENT AUCTION



\$50.00 Registration Fee
Attendance by pre-paid registration only.
For further information visit www.herbsociety-stu.org
or email southtexasunit@gmail.com



Keeping afloat with Linda...



The link below will show her current location.
<http://share.findmespot.com/shared/faces/viewspots.jsp?glld=0DTJavcXcMXDaOjYh39mv1PHWLxa6rjbW>



Invitation to Herbal Eco Printing

By Karen Cottingham

Eco printing is a natural process that uses the pigments in leaves to create intricate “leaf-prints” on fabric or paper. Leaves are scattered on the material, which is then bundled tightly and tied. When the bundle is steamed, the steam releases pigment from the leaves and creates an image - sometimes delicate and sometimes bold - on the fabric or paper. While aspects of this printing technique can be expected to follow semi-predictable “rules”, there is always an exciting element of surprise and suspense in the unrolling of each bundle.

Molly Koehn, an artist who lives and works in Houston, has just finished an artist residency at **Houston Center for Contemporary Craft**. Her art practice examines “idealizations of nature” through drawing, weaving, sculptural installation, and eco printing. Molly enjoys conducting eco printing workshops, and she and I have been discussing using herbs as the plant material printing agent. I’m sure you can imagine how lovely a print of the delicate leafy foliage of yarrow might be, or you might prefer a more dramatic print of the stiff array of needles on a rosemary branch. The possibilities are endless.

Molly has generously agreed to teach a workshop on Herbal Eco Printing to anyone interested as long as there are at least eight. HSA-STU member **Haley Bowen** has offered the use of the studio space in the Watercolor Art Society-Houston Building (near the Menil Collection). Since there will be no charge for the use of the facility (Thank you, Haley!) the cost for the workshop will be a very reasonable \$50.00 per participant. This includes 4-5 hours of instruction and some materials. The workshop will take place in May or June on a leisurely Sunday afternoon so that everyone has a [Karen Cottingham](#) to attend if they wish.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Karen Cottingham so we can finalize the date and other details.

In the meantime, enjoy these images of Molly’s previous workshops and her own art work, and start looking at the artistic possibilities in *your* herb garden!



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

South Texas Unit Celebrates 50 years



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



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.



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.

Herbs Make Scents – April 2018