

Herbs Make Scents



THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XLV, NUMBER 3

SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
MARCH 2022

Co-Editors Linda Alderman (ewalderman@comcast.net) & Janice Freeman (janicehfreeman@comcast.net)

Mar. 2022 Calendar

- Mar. 8, Tues. 10:00 am** **Day Meeting:** “Celtic Herbs” for St. Patrick’s Day will be at the home of **Lois Jean Howard**. Guests are welcome. **Bring a sack lunch and drink.**
- Mar. 16, Wed. 7:00 pm** **Evening Meeting:** “Citrus Problems – What’s Wrong with My Citrus Plant” presented by **Janis Teas**, member of the South Texas Unit of The Herb Society of America (since 1989), life-long horticulturalist, and Inspector with the Texas Department of Agriculture. The program will be in person at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004) and is open to the public. Watch your email and our Facebook page for updates and current Covid-19 guidelines.
- Mar. 11 & 12, Fri. & Sat. 10 am** **Westbury Garden Workdays** at 12581 Dunlap Street 77035
- Mar. 18, Fri. 7:00 pm** **Full Moon Ramble** (Zoom gathering for Members Only)

Apr. 2022 Calendar

- Apr. 8, Tues. 10:00 am** Save the date for the **Day Meeting**
- Apr. 20, Wed. 7:00 pm** **Evening Meeting:** “The Use of Medicinal Herbs in Prehispanic and Traditional Mexican Medicine” will be presented by **Liliana Cracraft, PhD, MPH**, and retired medical educator, researcher, and administrator at the University of Texas Health Science Center. The in-person gathering is at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004) and is open to the public. Watch your email and our Facebook page for updates and current Covid-19 guidelines.
- Apr. 11 & 12, Fri. & Sat. 10 am** **Westbury Garden Workdays** at 12581 Dunlap Street 77035
- Apr. 18, Fri. 7:00 pm** **Full Moon Ramble** (Zoom gathering for Members Only)
- Apr. 28 & 29, Th. & Fri.** **Annual Meeting** Herb Society of America Charleston, South Carolina

Newsletter deadline: the 25th of every month is strictly enforced
(April editor is Janice Freeman)

Happy Birthday Pisceans!

February 20— March 20

3/01 – Debbie Lancaster
3/01 – Susan Wood
3/11 – Joan Jordan
3/16 – Beth Murphy



3/21 – Dena Yanowski
3/23 – Lois Jean Howard
3/28 – Linda Alderman

[Horoscope Signs and Corresponding Herbs \(thespruce.com\)](https://thespruce.com) Herbs for Pisces: Borage, Basil, Lemon Balm



Chairman's Corner



Greetings,

We have postponed having our traditional spring event, Herb Day. As the board perceived it, the group doesn't have the collective energy to make the event as wonderful as we would like it to be.

We all know how much effort it takes to make an event like Herb Day memorable and the board didn't see it happening. We already have many wonderful ideas for future Herb Day speakers and themes and will use these ideas when it is time to plan Herb Day 2023.

While disappointing on many levels, this decision affords us the opportunity to try to meet the needs of our group in a different way. It is the board's impression that it is important for the South Texas Unit to recharge its collective battery, to reboot, reset, recommit and most of all to reinvigorate our love of herbs. We need to meet all our wonderful new members and to reconnect to all the members we haven't seen in a while in a real way. What better way but a pot luck dinner at the Southside Place Clubhouse on May 7, 2022!!!

So far, this is my plan, I will chair the event. I plan on keeping it simple and reaching out to a both old and new members to form a planning committee. If you would like to volunteer to help, call me. If I call and ask you to volunteer, please say yes!!! Anyone is welcome to present ideas, but beware, you may be asked to make that idea a reality!!! We have not had a New Member Orientation in quite a few years, so that seems like it should happen. Food is a given, but do we want some kind of program; icebreaker activities, herbal trivia games, a craft??? Lot of possibilities... Stay tuned and stay engaged...

Who's going to Round Top??? I was planning to attend the Saturday Forum, but since I am not very mobile, I think I will only go up on Friday to shop... who else wants to go?? I feel we should definitely support the Pioneer Unit!

It has been our tradition to donate funds to local gardens. We have donated to a wide variety of gardens over the years. We vote on which gardens and how much to give them every year at the HSA-STU Annual Meeting, which will be June 15 this year. Please find and read the blurb in this newsletter about how to nominate a garden to be funded.

Now is the perfect time to use our membership at the Houston Botanic Garden and take a walk around those beautiful gardens! Remember, we are allowed 10 free general admissions EVERY DAY. Check out their adult education offerings too, we get a discount. Our membership at the garden expires August 1, so use it or lose it.

The video of "Mushrooms - The Third Life-form; Identification and Usage" is now available on Merriwether's YouTube channel. You can find it here: <https://youtu.be/CnxzhqKZ58I>

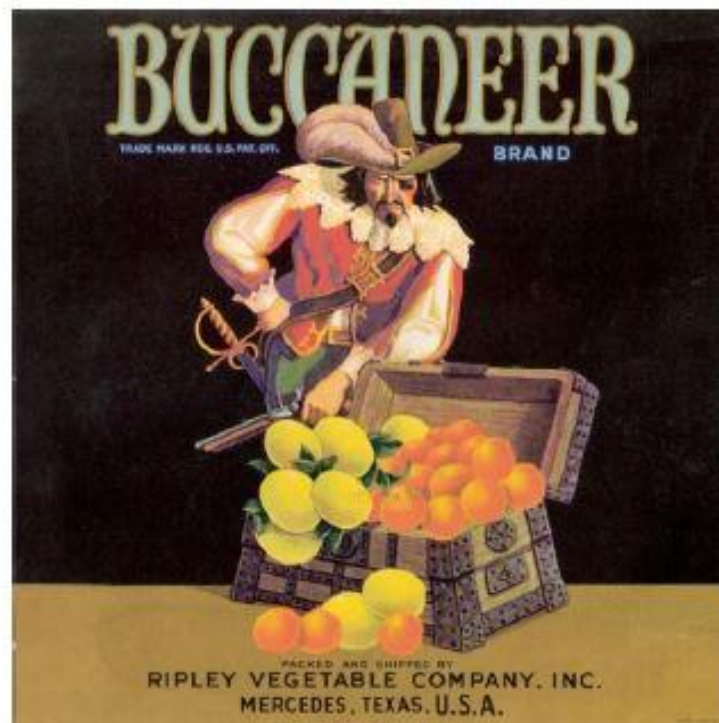
Stay Safe!

Julie Fordes
Unit Chair



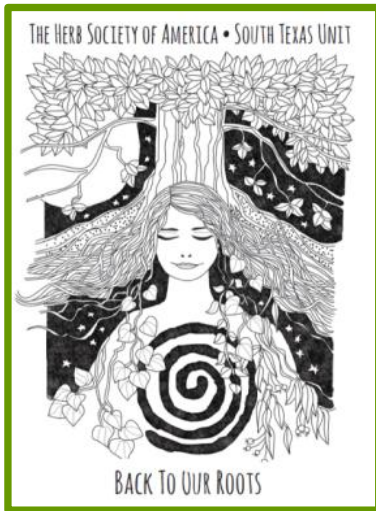
**Announcing Our March 16, 2022
HSA-STU Evening Program**

**“CITRUS PROBLEMS -
What’s Wrong with My
Citrus Plant?”**



Presented by:

**Janis Teas, HSA-STU Member,
Inspector, Texas Dept. of Agriculture**



BACK TO OUR ROOTS

Julie Fordes

A BIG “thank-you” to those who volunteered and wrote Herb of the Month (HOTM) articles for our *Herbs Make Scents* newsletter and another BIG “thank-you” to **Catherine O’Brien** and **Susan Wood** for coordinating the volunteer assignments. The HOTM articles provided resourceful information for the “newbie” and the “experienced” herb member. I hope you continue the journey learning about herbs and reading the HOTM articles from the Herb Society of America website.



Don't miss this week's HSA Blog Post:

“Gather Ye Redbuds While Ye May -
A Colorful Harbinger of Spring...
and Edible, Too!”

By HSA-STU Member
Karen Cottingham

<https://herbsocietyblog.wordpress.com>

Potpourri workshop 3-26-22 by Susan Wood

Potpourri has three elements:

Bulk materials: dried for color, size & textures

Fixative: spice, seeds, roots, and bark to absorb fragrance

Essential oils: several different fragrance notes blended
for a new personalized scent

<https://hbq.org/>

STU Members get a \$10 discount on class fee from Houston Botanic Garden when using our Cultivator Giving Circle Membership = \$60 total cost. **Limited to 16 participants**



Photo by Susan Wood



A
Grand Welcome
To
Our
NEW
MEMBERS!



Donna Adair
Mary Nurre

Calling All Speakers

Periodically, the South Texas Unit receives requests for a speaker to present at other organizations. If you have a plant that you are passionate about and want to share with others, please let **Catherine O'Brien** know. Contact her at Vibrio13@gmail.com or 281-467-1139.

We can help you set up a PowerPoint presentation and teach you how to do voiceovers if you are not comfortable presenting in person.

You could join their online meetings or you can present in person. If there is one thing that we've learned from this pandemic, it's that there are multiple ways communicate with other plant lovers other than in person.





South Texas Unit Crafts St. Brigid's Crosses

By Catherine O'Brien

Masked up, vaxxed, or socially distancing out of doors, members of the Herb Society – South Texas Unit gathered at Westbury Community Garden on January 30, a sunny Sunday, to learn how to make a St. Brigid's cross. Members of the Herb Society were joined by members of the Westbury Community Garden and other gardeners who follow the Herb Society. The day was beautiful. Snacks and a warm cup of herb tea were shared. And while the wind was brisk, the sun was bright and shining, and made us look forward to getting out into our own gardens in the near future.

Dr. Karen Cottingham gave a brief talk on the historical significance of St. Brigid, one of three popular Irish saints. Following a Zoom meeting and presentation on January 19 by **Dr. Jonathan O'Neill** from the Flynn Center for Irish Studies at University of St. Thomas, Herb Society members were excited to craft their own St. Brigid's crosses.

Making the crosses on February 1 for the Feast of St. Brigid of Kildare is a long-standing tradition in Ireland. Several members shared that not only was February 1 the Feast of St. Brigid this year, but it also marked Chinese New Year (the year of the Tiger) and Imbolc, one of the quarter days in the old Gaelic calendar. Imbolc celebrates the halfway point between winter solstice and spring equinox. While the crosses are traditionally made from rushes, participants learned that the crosses could be made from a variety of resources – everything from stiff paper to plant material. Several members brought iris leaves, reeds, and there was plenty of lemon grass available in the community garden. It was most helpful to have more than one pair of hands to hold, bend, and rotate the leaves as everyone shaped their crosses and tied the ends with string or more leaves.





South Texas Unit Crafts St. Brigid Crosses

By Catherine O'Brien



The Brigid's Cross Gathering was so enjoyable that I thought we should gather on the remaining Cross Quarter Days of the year. If you can help research and plan similar events for Beltane, Lammas, or Samhain, let me know at karen.redbrick@gmail.com



Membership Tips: Recording Your Hours For Meetings And Other Events

Carolyn Kosclskey, Membership Chair

This is a gentle reminder to keep up with recording your hours from July 1, 2021 to present. These may be recorded on page 28 of the 2021-2022 Directory (violet). If you need more space use a straight edge to insert extra lines between the printed ones, or include a sheet of your choice with columns marked. Hours should be recorded in whole and half hour increments: 1 ½ hour = 1.5 hour. *There was a question on how to record time less than 30 minutes. If it was 15 minutes or more round up. If it was less than 15 minutes roll that over to your next hours until it adds up to at least 15 minutes.* Did you volunteer at the 48th Annual Herb Fair setting up on Friday, November 5 or on-site Saturday, November 6? Remember to indicate with one asterisk (*) for Friday and two asterisks (**) for Saturday.

We've recently had a day and evening meeting, Westbury garden days and a field trip that if you participated should be recorded. The evening meeting on Wednesday, February 16 allowed persons to attend in-person or virtually, the actual presentation lasted from approximately 7 p.m. to 8:30, and later for discussions. If you attended the field trip to Lone Star Mushrooms on Sunday, February 27, the hours for that were from 1 to 3 p.m.

If you have any questions about volunteer hours please don't hesitate to contact me at stxu.membership@gmail.com

WESTBURY COMMUNITY GARDEN WORK DAYS TWO DAYS TO VOLUNTEER

Friday and Saturday
March 11 & 12 @ 10 AM

12581 Dunlap Street 77035

Fertilizing, aerating, planting seeds and transplants for the spring.
Whatever needs to be done.
Come on out and join us!!!

Bring a mug, I will bring hot water and we can take a break with some
fresh herb tea.

Julie

[Location of Westbury Garden](#)



ANNUAL CHARITABLE GARDEN DONATION

Julie Fordes

As a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the knowledge, use, and delight of herbs, the HSA-STU allocates funds annually to support educational gardens that share our vision. We are now calling for members to propose additional gardens they feel are deserving of our support. Big, small, famous, or tucked away in a corner - we are looking for gardens that exemplify a dedication to herbal education.

Please send a written proposal to **Julie Fordes** before April 15th. We need the full 411 on the garden - who, what, when, where, why and how. Be sure to let us know if the funds are to be used for a special project. Including pictures in your proposal would also be very helpful.

Your written proposals will be featured in the May newsletter. The gardens to be supported will then be determined by a vote of the membership at the Annual Meeting.

Proposal Due: Before April 15th

The Annual Charitable Garden Donation 2021 was awarded to the Houston Botanic Garden, Cultivator Circle Membership

BOOK

If you have suggestions for books or other media members might like, submit your suggestions to Linda Alderman at ewalderman@comcast.net

**C
O
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The HERB SOCIETY of AMERICA
Booklist Recommendation



Richard Power's **The Overstory** is a masterpiece that won the 2019 Pulitzer for Fiction. It is monumental piece of environmental fiction whose ubersubject (the "overstory" if you will) is trees and how humans have misunderstood them, fought over them, destroyed them, and even died for them.



Educational & Other Opportunities

Houston Botanic Garden - Saturday March 26, 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Potpourri workshop at Houston Botanic Garden by STU member **Susan Wood**. Learn how to harvest and dry herbs & flowers to mix with fixatives and essential oils. Limited to 16 participants; tickets & info: www.hbg.org

Houston Botanic Garden – Check out the HBG calendar for interesting topics such as, “Herbal Yoga” and more! www.hbg.org

HSA Texas Thyme Unit Herb Festival, Education & Plant Sale - March. 26, 8 am - 2 pm

View website for information - <https://www.texasthymeunit.org/>

HSA Pioneer Unit Herb & Plant Sale - March. 18 & 19, 9 am - 5 pm

View website for information - <https://www.herbsocietypioneer.org/events/>

Rice Holistic Garden Spring Plant Sale - March. 7-13, while supplies last. “Come by the Garden Mon.-Thurs. from 4-6 pm, Fri. from 1-3 pm, or Sat. or Sun. from 10 am-2 pm. View website for information and a complete plant list.” <https://news.rice.edu/news/2022/rice-garden-hosting-semiannual-plant-sale-plant-sale>

Houston Arboretum and Nature Center

1) **Spring Plant Sale - April 1** View website for information

2) **Native Plant Propagation April 9** View website for information

[Houston Arboretum & Nature Center - Houston Arboretum & Nature Center](http://www.houstonurbangardeners.org)

www.houstonurbangardeners.org HUG

View website for meetings dates and topics

<https://www.urbanharvest.org/education/classes/>

View website for class information and topics





AT-HOME RECIPES



AT-HOME RECIPES

March 2022

Carolyn Kosclskey

*I Martius am! Once first, and now third!
To lead the Year was my appointed place;
A mortal dispossessed me by a word,
And set there Janus with the double face.*

–Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, American poet (1807–82)

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 Ash Wednesday on the 2nd and Daylight Savings Time on the 13th. March's Full Worm Moon rises on the 18th making it also the Lenten Moon. The vernal equinox, when the sun is directly over the equator moving north, is on Sunday the 20th, which also marks the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere. Remember that the date of Easter is determined by the first full moon after the equinox, which will occur this year on Saturday April 16, the day before Easter. Even though all of these calendar dates are important, most of us think of St. Patrick's Day on the 17th when we think of the month of March, along with shamrocks, the color green and beverages and foods associated with the holiday.

GREEN BEER AND OTHER GREEN FOODS

If you would like to add a "green" adult beverage to your St. Patrick's Day 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, mashed potatoes, vanilla custard, whipped cream or toppings, etc.]. **Sláinte!**

DUTCH BABY

From the recipes of Susan Wood

Heartier than pancakes and taking only a few minutes to prepare, this has become a favorite weekend breakfast or brunch dish. Seasonal fruit or savory toppings may be used. Preheat oven to 425° with about a tablespoon of butter in 6" x 8" x 2" Pyrex baking pan. Let butter melt and use pastry brush to coat pan including sides. To avoid heating kitchen in warm weather a toaster oven may be used.



Ingredients:

3 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
2/3 cup flour (for gluten free use 1/3 cup almond flour and 1/3 cup gluten free flour)
2/3 cup milk

Mix ingredients together until incorporated and pour into baking pan. Bake 20 minutes until golden brown on top. Remove from oven and let cool several minutes. Top with fresh fruit and maple syrup. Dried fruit and organic Montmorency cherries may be hydrated and used if fresh fruit not available. Place a generous amount in microwave safe bowl, add enough water to barely cover and heat 30 seconds then drain. Served at Salt & Ivy Café and Patio Bar in Las Vegas with blueberries, lemon curd, a dusting of powdered sugar garnished with a spearmint sprig. Recipe serves 2 and easily doubles to serve 4 using a larger pan.

CHICKEN SAUTE WITH ASPARAGUS AND BASIL

From the recipes of Linda Alderman

3 whole chicken breasts, boned, skinned, and cut into strips
Salt and pepper
¼ cup (1/2 stick) butter
2 leeks (white part only), sliced
4 red potatoes, diced
6 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup dry white wine
1 tablespoon good-quality Dijon-type mustard
½ pound fresh asparagus, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
4 sun-dried tomatoes packed in oil, coarsely chopped
¼ cup heavy cream
½ cup chopped fresh basil, tightly packed

Season the chicken with salt and pepper. In a large skillet, heat butter and sauté chicken on both sides, just until it turns white, about 3 minutes. Remove and reserve. Add additional butter if needed and, in the same skillet sauté the leeks, potatoes and garlic until barely tender, about 5 minutes. Add wine and mustard and bring to a boil; cook about 5 minutes. Return chicken to skillet, along with asparagus and tomatoes. Cover and simmer about 5 minutes. Add cream, stir, and cook another 2 minutes. Sprinkle with basil and serve. From *Season to Taste* (1988).

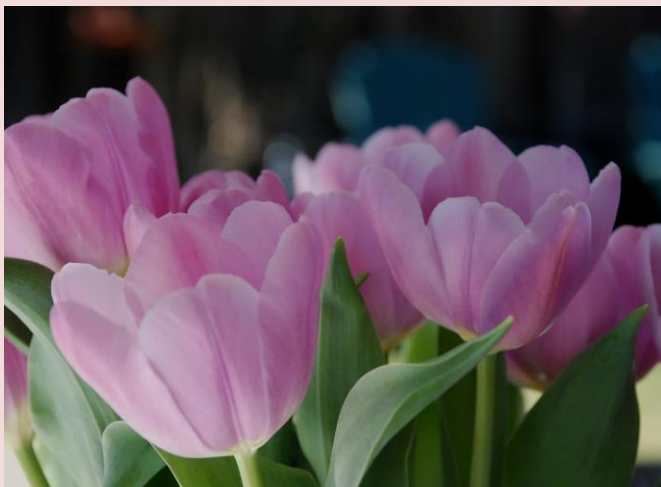
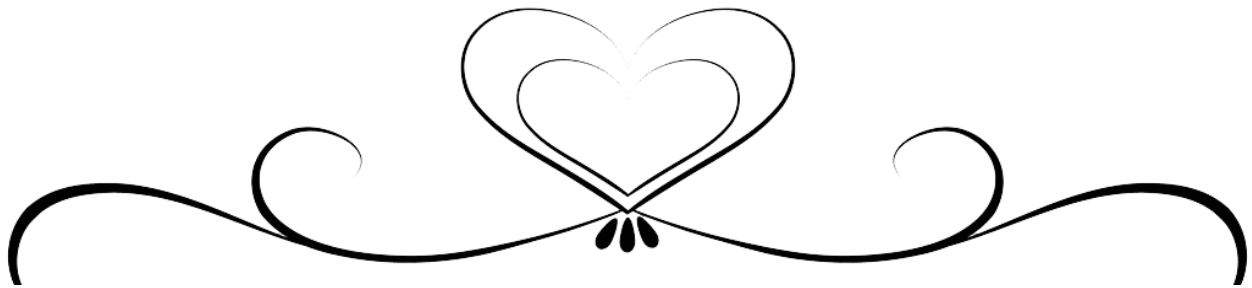
New Year's Resolution: Waste less, better still waste nothing. Reminder that coffee grounds, coffee filters torn into smaller pieces, paper tea bags torn open and spilling their contents, crushed eggshells and clippings from vegetables and fruits prepared in our homes can be incorporated into our soil. If you don't happen to have a formal compost, dig a shallow trench in your garden close to your plants, sprinkle in your organic "waste," preferably before a rain, and cover with soil. If you use this method again, dig in a different space. Leftover water from cooking vegetables once cooled can be used for watering plants. Used paper coffee filters make excellent filters in bottoms of pots before adding soil and plants.



“Make Every Bite Count” Dietary Guidelines for Americans:

<https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/>

The April At-Home Recipe section will feature recipes appropriate for celebrating holidays and birthdays within the month including Easter (4/17) and Earth Day (4/22). Members having April birthdays will be invited to submit a recipe. Recipes from other members and readers are also welcome and appreciated.



*Requests for
Get Well Soon or Sympathy
Cards*

*should be sent to
Donna Wheeler
Member Outreach Coordinator*

ddwheeler16@hotmail.com



There's Still Snap in the Celery Karen Cottingham

Every year, the editors of *The Oldie* magazine in Britain celebrate the many achievements of mature folks by granting their "Oldie of the Year Award". Last year's "Oldie" nominee, **Queen Elizabeth II**, declined the honor with aplomb - "Her Majesty believes you are as old as you feel, as such The Queen does not believe she meets the relevant criteria to be able to accept, and hopes you will find a more worthy recipient." We should all strive for such pitch perfect diplomacy!

According to the magazine's founder, **Richard Ingrams**, it's not enough for the "Oldie of the Year" awardee to be an "elderly achiever" - they must also have that "certain something" - what he calls "a snap in their celery". That was a new expression for me, but why not? After all, we say "cool as a cucumber", "two peas in a pod", and "full of beans".

Making the leap from celery to the Queen was not exactly immediate, since I'd always thought of celery as the boring wallflower of the vegetable drawer. Celery just didn't seem that interesting, much less inspiring. I began to wonder if there might not be hidden depths to this everyday vegetable. I was amazed at what I found. Did you know that wreathes of celery crowned the victors in early athletic competitions? Or that celery was displayed as a status symbol by upper-class Victorians wealthy enough to purchase it? And for the common people, drug-store celery sodas were the rage (never mind the cocaine - they thought it was good for you). Outrageous claims were made for celery seed in patent medicine miracle "cure-alls", and celery was even featured in "healthy" breakfast cereals. And now, following a long slump in celery's popularity, there's a huge celebrity-fueled Instagram trend promoting the amazing miracles of celery juice!

Thousands of Human Wrecks

SAVED BY CELERY

PERLE

Crippled by stiff, locked, inflamed or arthritic joints and muscles; racked with pain; thousands of sufferers are now **completely well** again, thanks to **FULLER CELERY PERLES**.

It is only in **FULLER CELERY PERLES** that you can obtain in digestible form these natural curative properties: each tiny, easy-to-swallow Perle represents the medicinal value of 25 lbs. of Fresh Golden Celery.

1/3 size, 5 days' Course
3/- size, 15 days' Course
5/- size, 30 days' Course
for Chronic Cases

SOLD BY ALL CHEMISTS

For **FREE TRIAL SAMPLE** send **TWO STAMPS** and full name and address to **FULLERS, 323, CITY ROAD, LONDON, E.C.1**

CELERY JUICE IS HEALING MILLIONS

A MORE POWERFUL HEALING TOOL

Promotional material for "the natural curative properties" of the patent medicine Fuller Celery Perles (1930s) and the current celebrity-endorsed celery juice health trend said to be "healing millions". Notice any similarities here?



Since the month of March is officially designated “National Celery Month”, let’s see what we can learn about this “miraculous” vegetable.



Our modern celery (*Apium graveolens*) originated in the Mediterranean region as a bitter umbellifer growing wild in flooded salt marshes. In 628 BCE the Greeks established a city called Selinos, or “celery city”, for the wild celery growing nearby. The inedible plant was considered sacred, and was used extensively in funeral rituals and in the cult practices associated with Linus, the god of melody and rhythm. Coins ornamented with celery leaves demonstrate the plant’s importance as the symbol of the polis.

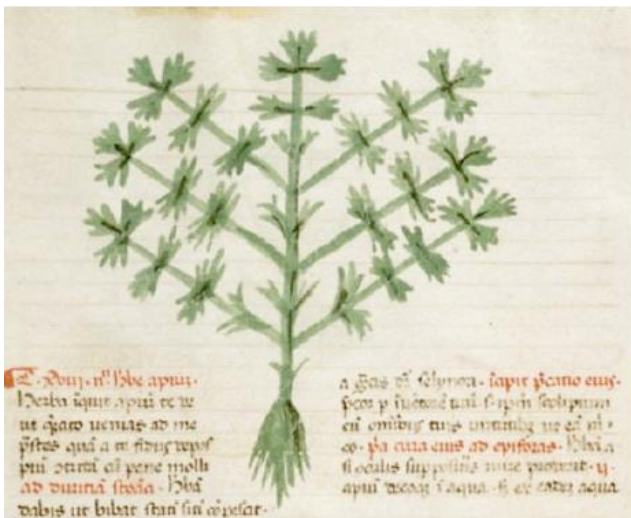
Celery was also used for medicinal purposes. The Greek physician **Hippocrates** (460-370 BCE) recommended celery as a good medicine for calming one’s nerves, and the later use of celery seed to relieve pain and inflammation was described by **Aulus Cornelius Celsus** (c. 30 CE).

There was also widespread belief in celery as a powerful aphrodisiac. In **Homer’s** epic poem, *The Odyssey* (c. 850 BCE), the passionate years with the enchantress Calypso enjoying the violets and wild celery on her magic island.

Along with lust, celery was frequently associated with ancient rites and celebrations of death and the underworld. Ancient Greeks planted celery on graves and used it to season funeral feasts. Garlands made of celery leaves and water lily petals were placed in Egyptian tombs including the tomb of the 14th-century BCE pharaoh **Tutankhamen**.



Wreaths of celery also celebrated athletic and musical prowess and crowned the victors in ancient gymnastic competitions. The Roman marble relief fragment above is from the second century CE. (Rogers Fund, 1959. Metropolitan Museum of Art)



The Frankish king **Charlemagne** (747-814) considered celery an indispensable medicinal herb. In an edict written to manage and regulate his royal estates he decreed the mandatory growing of celery throughout his kingdom.

Apium illustration from **Barbarus Apuleius’ Herbarium**, c. 1400



It would be another thousand years before celery was considered edible, but the bitter ancestor of our modern celery slowly began to spread throughout Europe as a medicinal herb. The exact medicinal use of celery is difficult to ascertain. Early herbals, with contradictory translations and interpretations, are hopelessly confusing. **Pliny** and **Dioscorides**, for example, apparently suggested that celery mixed with bread or polenta is good for inflamed eyes, while **Chrissyus** (c. 279 - c. 206 BCE) warned that celery is “an enemy to clarity of sight”. In contrast to the general belief that celery is a boost to virility, **Pliny** warned that eating celery will make both men and women sterile. Sometimes it depends on the translations - mothers eating too much celery in the puerperium will become epileptic...or maybe it's the babies who suckle at the breast of a woman who eats celery who will become epileptic. It's hard to tell. **Gerard** warns that the seed of smallage (another name for wild celery) “hurteth those that are troubled with the falling sicknesse”, yet **Culpeper** quotes **Galen** as praising celery in his advice for a child with epilepsy. Most writers, though, are in agreement that celery is useful to “relax breasts swollen with clots of milk”.

Well, medical recommendations do change - even today.

Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535) was a physician, legal scholar, soldier, theologian, and magician of the German Renaissance. His most famous (and unsurprisingly, condemned) work, Three Books of Occult Philosophy, was a widely influential interpretation of magic in relationship to medicine, alchemy, and ritual. According to Agrippa, smallage was one of the “spirit herbs”, along with the other umbellifers, coriander, henbane, and poison hemlock. Burning these herbs he said, would bring “the spirits” together.

Another herbal incense, consisting of a fetid resin called sagapenum, poison hemlock, henbane, mullein, red sandalwood, and black-seeded poppy, would attract false spirits and cause false visions. Adding smallage to the mixture would cause the false visions and spirits to disappear.



Henricus Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim. Colored line engraving, 1645, after T. de Bry.

Francis Bacon, 1st Viscount St Alban (1561-1626), also weighed in on the powers of smallage. Bacon was an English philosopher and statesman who served as Attorney General and as Lord Chancellor of England during the witchcraft hysteria of King James I's reign. In his book Sylva Sylvarum (1627), he lists the purported ingredients of witch's flying ointments as “the fat of children digged out of their graves, of juices of smallage, wolfe-bane, and cinque-foil, mingled with the meal of fine wheat”.

The assertion that wild celery was an ingredient in witch's flying ointments naturally brings up celery's reputation as an aphrodisiac. In addition to its role in Odysseus' adventures in Calypso's cave, celery was key to the amorous escapades of **Giacomo Casanova** (1725-1798). The famous Venetian lover was said to fortify himself with celery and oysters to maintain his considerable vigor. Luckily for Casanova, Italian gardeners by this time had learned to propagate more palatable varieties and celery moved from pure materia medica to a cultivated vegetable. Undesirable characteristics such as the hollow stems and the bitter taste were eliminated, while plants with stouter stems were encouraged.



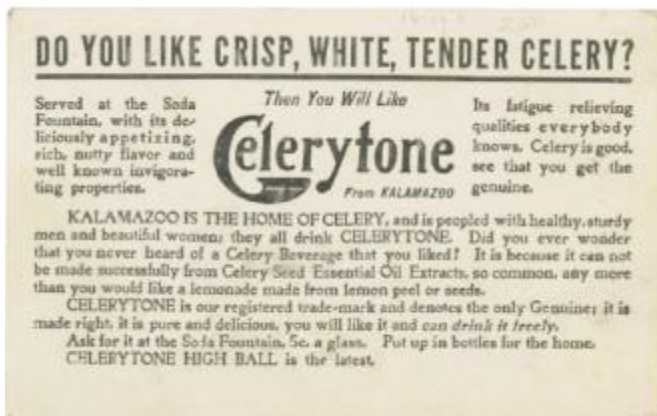
Casanova was not the only one who turned to celery as an aphrodisiac. Despite her reputation as **King Louis XV's** beautiful and seductive mistress, **Madame de Pompadour** apparently didn't have much of a sexual appetite. And whether "authorized" or not, many of the royal mistress's private concerns were revealed by her "waiting woman", **Madame du Hausset**. In her "tell-all" *Mémoires of Madame de Pompadour*, Madame du Hausset recounts a conversation in which the royal companion laments,

I am tormented by the fear of losing the King's heart and ceasing to please him. Men, as you know, set store on certain things; and I have the misfortune to be of a very cold temperament. My idea was to adopt a somewhat heating diet to remedy this defect, and for the last two days this elixir had done me some good, or at least I think it has.

The 'heating diet' consisted of "chocolate flavored with triple essence of vanilla and scented with ambergris, truffles, and celery soup." She believed firmly in the power of celery to stimulate the sexual appetite, at least for men, saying "If the woman knew what celery did to man, she would go and get it from Paris to Rome." Sadly, the remedy was not particularly successful, but no matter, the royal mistress had wisely made herself indispensable as a trusted companion and political advisor.

Celery-based aphrodisiacs were very much in vogue later in America. Celerytone, for example, was a popular product made in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the Celery Capital of America. This 19th century concoction was a flavor enhancer derived from celery seed, meant to be used in small doses to add to soups, stews, oysters, broth teas, and cocktails.

If you doubled the dosage to twenty drops, though, it became a veritable Viagra - "The beneficial effect of the peculiar properties of celery upon the nervous and sexual system is wonderful and unequalled. It strengthens exhausted nature, and rejuvenates the entire being, counteracts dissipation, etc." Or so promises the inventor and provider of the miraculous product, Mr. Dunkley.



Whether it helped his customers or not, I don't know, but it made Mr. Dunkley a very rich man. How amazing that a simple celery elixir could contain "peculiar medicinal properties which act in a wonderful way in all cases of Nervousness, Exhaustion, Stomach Troubles, Impotency, Constipation, Wasted Energies, Excesses, Rheumatism, Gout, Headache"!

Maybe that 30% alcohol content had something to do with it.



I particularly like the implication in the postcard above that Celerytone was responsible for a significant increase in the population of Kalamazoo! The storks must have been working overtime making their deliveries!

Before leaving the topic of celery as a performance enhancer, here is another of my favorite celery "testimonials".

From O. B. Joyful in Sleepy Slope, Klondike, Alaska to The P. L. Abbey Co., Kalamazoo, Michigan:

Gentlemen: I wish to say in regards to your Kalamazoo Celery Pepsin Bitters that they have restored me and my wife to complete happiness. For five years my wife was so nervous that I could not sleep with her. She took three bottles of your Celery Pepsin Bitters and now anyone can sleep with her. She is as quiet as a kitten. Respectfully, O. B. Joyful



If you believe there's a place in Alaska called Sleepy Slope and a man named O. B. Joyful, I have a miraculous celery tonic to offer you.

This come-hither model advertising Celery Pepsin Bitters promises epic amorous adventures - if she can stay awake after her dose of the alcohol-laden nostrum. No wonder she's as quiet as a kitten - she's knocked out!

And Kalamazoo Celery Pepsin Bitters is just the thing for when she wakes up. According to the 1886 label, it is "Indispensable to settle stomach after alcoholic excesses". If that isn't convenient!





There was a huge market for similar celery pepsin tonics. The version above, made with dandelion, claimed to strengthen the reproductive organs and cure nervous exhaustion, sleeplessness, loss of brain power, restlessness, indigestion, and loss of physical power. Notice that it is called “A Morning Bracer” - “bracer” was code for a product whose primary active ingredient was alcohol. Paine’s Celery Compound, another popular “bracer” produced from the early 1880s until at least 1906, was one of the most widely advertised patent medicines of the period. (Patent, or proprietary, medicines were medicines composed of secret, or “proprietary”, formulas. The patents actually protected the names and bottle designs rather than the formulas themselves.)



OVERWORK Exhaustion of Nerve Force. The Digestive Organs are Sluggish, Making Impoverished, Acid Blood Filled With Morbid Material. The System is Un-nourished and Loses Strength, Endurance. The Body Does Not Rest at Night and Cannot Work in the Day.

PAINE'S Celery Compound

ALMOST INSTANT EFFECT

Tired Feeling—Blood Trouble—Grip
Cured—Fought Off—Vanquished—
The Homes of the Nation Send
Their Thanks and Praise for

PAINE'S CELERY COMPOUND.

Tunbridge, Vt., Dec. 11, 1903.—“I began taking Paine's Celery Compound in the spring after having spent a year and a half confined to my bed on account of having pneumonia and a bad knee, due to blood trouble. At the time I began taking your medicine I was very nervous and did not want to see any one—only my own folks.

“The doctors all said that there was not anything else they could do for me, and also said they did not think that I would ever be any better, and if I was better I would never be able to walk again.

“A friend of mine was taking Paine's Celery Compound at the time, and I thought I would try it. I took several bottles before I saw much improvement. But soon my nervousness left me. I again enjoyed seeing all who called at the house.

“I kept right on gaining until now I call myself **VERY WELL AND HEALTHY.**

“I had a light attack of the grippe and I took one bottle of Paine's Celery Compound. It helped me to regain my strength.

“I can truly say your medicine has been of great benefit to me.”—Anna C. Ballou.



Miss ANNA BALLOU.
Grip Was Cured—Blood was Purified—Her Whole System Strengthened by Paine's Celery Compound.

CURES
MALARIA,
KIDNEY DISEASES,
LIVER COMPLAINT,
FEMALE WEAKNESS,
OPIUM HABIT,
SALT RHEUM,
SCROFULA,
and all
DISEASES of the BLOOD.



COMPOUND

CURES
NERVOUSNESS,
HEADACHE,
NEURALGIA,
RHEUMATISM,
CONSTIPATION,
PILES,
DYSPEPSIA,
and
GENERAL DEBILITY.

Advertising utilized psychological tactics along with “testimonials” of satisfied customers ranging from the nice lady next door to politicians, famous soldiers, and well-respected pillars of the community.

There was almost no ailment that Paine’s Celery Compound failed to cure, as outlined in the 1883 broadside above. The magic elixir consisted of alcohol, celery seed, calisaya bark, cascara sagrada, senna



leaves, prickly ash bark, hops, black haw, chamomile flowers, sarsaparilla root, ginger, dandelion, mandrake, gentian, black cohosh, yellow dock. And sometimes, cocaine.

About the same time, patent medicine entrepreneurs began creating “therapeutic” syrups designed to be mixed with the carbonated seltzer water now available at drug stores. Pharmacists had already realized that sweet-tasting soda flavors would make even the most bitter medicines such as quinine and iron palatable. And medicinal tinctures and tonics already contained generous doses of alcohol. So why not combine the two? It was also a good business decision. As **Darcy O’Neil** writes in Fix the Pumps, “Many of the elixirs and tonics contained as much alcohol as a shot of whiskey. This was popular with both the imbibers and pharmacy. The imbibers could get an alcoholic drink at a fraction of the bar’s price because there were no taxes on alcohol-based ‘medicine.’”

Associating patent medicines with the respectability of pharmacies also lent credibility to their use. Many customers came to soda fountains early in the morning to get a refreshing and “healthy” beverage to start their day off right. Terms like “bracer” and “pick-me-up” referred to the physical and mental stimulation sodas could provide, whether from caffeine, cocaine, or other addictive substances.



Pharmacists were soon making soda mixtures with drugs known as “nervines” - strychnine, cannabis, morphine, opium, heroin, and cocaine. “Cocaine was a wonder drug at the time when it was first discovered,” **Tristan Donovan** explains in Fizz: How Soda Shook Up the World. “It was seen as this marvelous medicine that could do you no harm.” And, it was legal, cheap, and unregulated.

Many of the celery “health tonic” formulas were expanded to include “coca” - actually cocaine, which is an extract of the coca leaf - and “kola”, referring to kola nut which contains another stimulant, caffeine. Celerytone, discussed above as a sexual stimulant and all-purpose cure-all, was reformulated into a drink containing cocaine which was sold from a dispenser like the one visible above on the drug-store counter. In



Herbs Make Scents

March 2022

1887, a businessman named James C. Mayfield of Birmingham, Alabama created his own version of the cure-all celery-cocaine-caffeine tonic, which he called Celery-Cola. Dallas was one of the major distribution points for Celery-Cola.

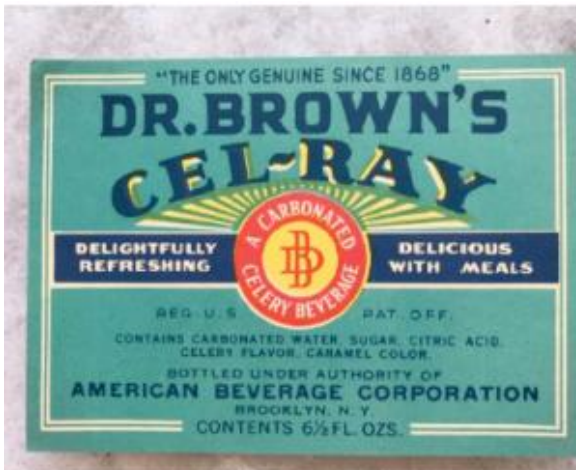
Another celery-based brand, Celerina, advertised unbelievable results in this 1901 ad:

The active principles of celery, coca, kola, and viburnum, with aromatics, should convince the most skeptical physician of its value in All Languid or Debilitated Conditions of the system, such as Loss of Nerve Power, Nervous Headache, Neuralgia, Paralysis, Impotency, Hysteria, Opium Habit, Inebriety, Dysmenorrhea, Prostatitis, Dyspepsia, etc.

Interesting that one addictive drug is marketed to treat addiction to another.

Ads for Celerina also contained testimonials from physicians and promised a free sample bottle to any physician wishing to test it.

In 1906, the Pure Food and Drug Act set out to eliminate fraud and deceptive advertising and to hopefully prevent accidental poisoning. By 1910, several brands of celery colas and tonics found to contain illegal amounts of caffeine and cocaine were shut down by the Pure Food and Drug Administration. Cocaine itself was still technically legal, as long as manufacturers labeled their products accurately and adhered to purity standards. The Harrison Narcotics Tax Act of 1914 merely regulated and taxed the drug. It wasn't until 1922, with the Jones-Miller Act, that the government really cracked down on cocaine manufacturers.



Not all celery sodas contained stimulants, though, and one of the most famous is still produced today. Dr. Brown's Cel-Ray, also known as "Jewish champagne", has been available for over 150 years in traditional Jewish neighborhoods. Opinions vary on its taste, ranging from positive - "a mildly sweet ginger ale with subtle celery seed/lovage undercurrents, and an almost creamy, smooth finish" to emphatically thumbs down - "a nasty, bilious tonic". Some detect a slight "coumarin-woodruff sweetness" and others describe it as "herbaceous, bitter, and peppery".

Dr. Brown's has been in production since 1869, when it was first marketed as "a pure beverage for the nerves." According to company lore, it was invented by a mysterious Dr. Brown, who "made tonics for the people, including a celery tonic that was thought to be good for calming stomachs and bowels" and for soothing nerves. This thick celery tonic was later mixed with carbonated water and was sold in delicatessens and door-to-door in Jewish neighborhoods. When Dr. Brown debuted the soda in 1868, he called it "Celery Tonic". The name was later changed to Cel-Ray when the FDA objected to the use of the word tonic.

This is what it looks like today, *if you can find it.*





Interested in trying celery soda for myself, I called Katz Deli on Westheimer and was told they can no longer offer Dr. Brown's because of "supply chain issues".

When Cel-Ray was first produced in the mid-19th century, America was in the midst of a celery craze. After years of careful selection, European farmers had finally developed a celery that was less bitter and "earthy tasting" and not as stringy as the original wild form. The originally hollow and slim stalks filled out to become the wider, milder, and crisper stalks we know today.

Celery seeds were brought over by Dutch, Italian, and British immigrants, who began establishing celery farms in Florida, Michigan, and even in Denver, Colorado. The crop was very difficult to grow. As a plant that originated in marshes, celery preferred a wet soil that was challenging to work in. Blanching, or protecting the stalks from exposure to the sun, was also required to reduce the remaining bitterness. This could involve "planking", or setting up wooden planks to shield the plants from the sun, or "trenching", transplanting the plant into a trench and covering the stalks with dirt. Some farmers shielded their plants with newspapers. Either way, the multi-step process was laborious and costly, and the yield was low.

These intensive cultivation practices were well worth the effort, though, since the only winter vegetables otherwise available were potatoes, turnips, and cabbage. And more importantly, the limited supply was in great demand by wealthy customers.

We don't normally think of celery as exciting but that's exactly what it was.



Out in the celery field in Sanford, Florida.

With its limited availability and exorbitant cost, this exciting new vegetable became a luxury item. Try to imagine celery as a stylish and sophisticated vegetable accessible only to the wealthy. Celery was served at the dinner parties of the social elite, in high-end restaurants, and even in the first-class cabin of the Titanic. Celery was so popular in the United States in the 1800s and early 1900s that the New York Public Library's historical menu archive shows that it was the third most popular dish in New York City menus during that time, behind coffee and tea.



In those days celery cost more than caviar. It was the perfect status symbol.

Celery was so highly prized that people who could afford it displayed their precious stalks in special “celery vases” on the dining table. Made of hand-blown, hand-cut crystal or engraved silver, these vases held the crisp stalks like a fine bouquet of flowers. Diners could munch on celery throughout the meal. The wealthy served celery as the centerpiece of every dinner, while the average middle-class family reserved it for the conclusion of holiday meals. No proper Victorian household was complete without a celery vase.

Its scarcity and high labor cost had made celery a fashionable status symbol; but when it became available and affordable, celery was just another vegetable.

By the end of the nineteenth century, new types of “self-blanching” celeries were introduced by seed companies. No longer needing the laborious steps of “planking” or mounding dirt around the plants, growers could expand their production. Mass production and marketing reduced the cost per bunch, and since a cheaper celery was no longer a useful indicator of status and wealth, celery and their vases disappeared from the table.

Clever entrepreneurs found other ways to incorporate celery into products ranging from chewing gum to pickles.



HEINZ'S CELERY SAUCE

Celery has long been known to the medical world as a NERVE FOOD, and Heinz's Celery Sauce contains these medicinal qualities, hence it is found to be healthful.

FIRST--It is an aid to Nervous Diseases.
SECOND--It is a most Excellent Appetizer.
THIRD--It is a great Aid to Digestion.

Ask Your Grocer for it.

All dealers are authorized to refund your money even after one-half of the bottle is used if you are not fully pleased with it.

No GLUCOSE, NO GELATINE, NO ADULTERANTS are used in our

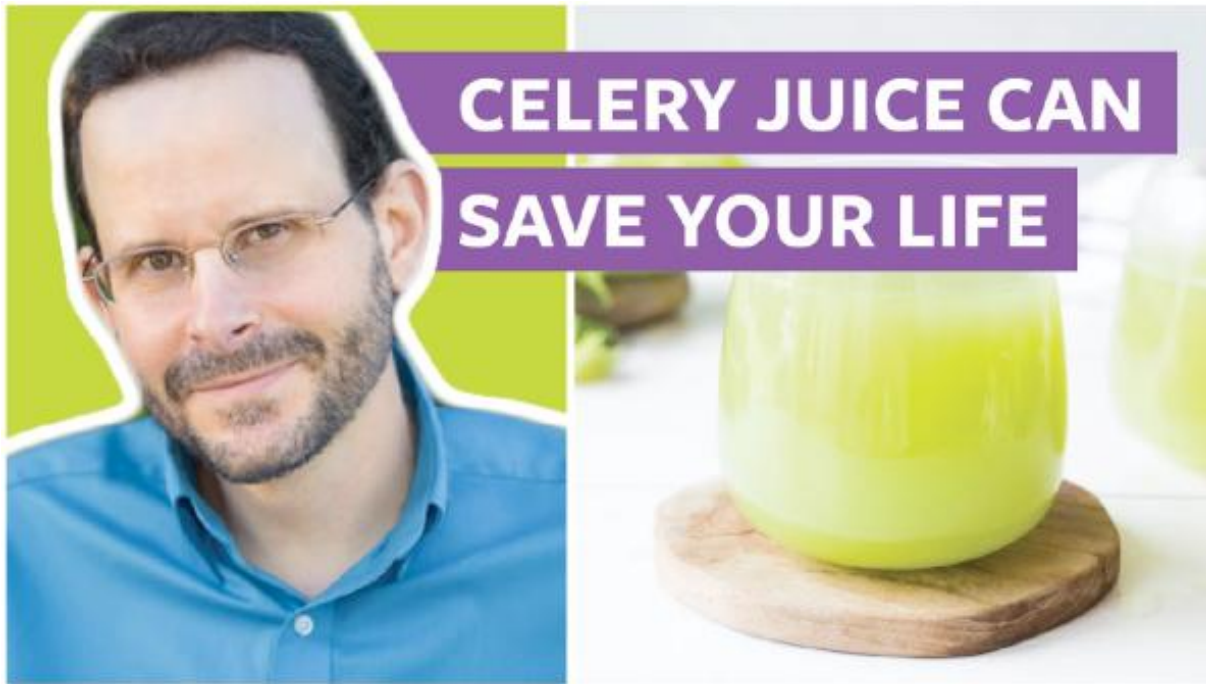
PRESERVES AND FRUIT BY HEINZ.

Only sound ripe Fruit and Granulated Sugar are used in all goods bearing our name.

My favorite celery health food product from the past is Dr. Price's Wheat Flake Celery Food cereal, billed as essential for the health of vegetarians and the infirm. Not surprisingly, celery cereal is no longer available!

Today, though, the young, beautiful, and health-conscious start their day with another miracle product, celery juice! Sixteen ounces, freshly juiced - don't forget the selfie posted on Instagram - and you're set for another amazing day.

Celery juice is supposed to help cure everything from psoriasis to brain fog. Digestive issues, autoimmune disorders, acne, chronic-fatigue syndrome, thyroid problems, acid reflux, ADHD, high blood pressure, anxiety and obesity - these are just a few of the conditions defeated by the celery juice protocol. It's been endorsed by celebrity "influencers" and Instagrammers, but not by too many doctors or dietitians. At least I can't find any.



The Celery-Juice Influencer-in-Chief is a man, seen here, who calls himself the Medical Medium. His real name is **Anthony William** and he wrote the bible of wellness called Celery Juice: The Most Powerful Medicine of Our Time Healing Millions Worldwide. William, who has no nutrition or medical training, says he receives medical information from the Spirit of Compassion, who "provides him with extraordinarily accurate health information that's often far ahead of its time." In an interview he explains "I hear a voice perfectly clear that provides me advanced medical information on illnesses. So all I do is I receive information that's decades ahead of science and research in chronic illness."

Through his website, podcasts, books, and celebrity connections, the Medical Medium has spread the gospel of celery juice to a huge fan base. He has also contributed to **Gwyneth Paltrow's** Goop website, where he was described this way: "William is a force with a devoted following, working well outside the bounds of conventional science and medicine. He's become known for, as he explains it, being guided by "Spirit" to help people claim their health."

You can make up your own mind about the Medical Medium's ideas about celery juice, but "It's definitely not a 'miracle juice'," says **Rebecca Scritchfield**, dietitian and author of Body Kindness. "It can join the list of the snake-oil remedies."



It does make you look good, though. Carrying around an expensive bottle of celery juice or having the time to juice it yourself reminds me of the status that came with having a celery vase on the table.

Well, at least celery juice is “reasonably healthy”, and it doesn’t contain cocaine.

And no one is recommending burning celery to call the spirits or using it to concoct a flying ointment!

At least not yet!

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