

Greetings everyone!

You may or may not have noticed that we have not written a newsletter since February! (.. we can't be called guilty of clogging up your in-box at any rate..) but we thought we'd surprise you after being inspired by a mid-winter meal last night: slow roasted whole baby pumpkin with lashings of Herb Spread, and extra garlic and butter, and a wonderful slow cooked curried stew with a handful of finely cubed vegetables thrown in 15min before serving (carrots, cauli, broccoli and peas) served with fluffy white rice and a bright red blob of home-made Chilli Jam. A simple meal really, but the pumpkin was absolutely divine, and the slow cooking had brought out the tenderness and flavour of the meat, contrasted by the not mushy and overcooked home-grown winter-veges! Later, after we played some music, we served apple pie made from the last of our Granny Smith apple harvest, and other organic ingredients, (our new sacks of flour and sugar from Ceres!) The pastry had turned out just right, slightly crunchy and not too thick or thin - the result of my two sons' cooking endeavours the night before; we'd had our own Master-Chef competition going on.... We had reheated the pie slowly in what remained of the heat in the oven after the first course had been removed, which had infused the pastry with the apple and cinnamon flavours just a little more than it was when first baked. Served with a sprinkle of cinnamon and sugar, and a dollop of plain, thick yoghurt, we were in heaven!



Matariki celebrations and mid-winter feasts are a wonderful way to celebrate what otherwise feels like the longest, darkest and coldest time of the year... The ground is saturated, boggy in many places, and growth has finally died down for many plants after a very tropical autumn with lots of northerly storms and 'monsoons' here on Waiheke. However, it is the happiest time of the year for brassicas (who can't stand the heat which encourages white cabbage butterfly/caterpillars and fungal diseases) and lots of green leafy vegetables – our silverbeet is coming up like a weed everywhere! We are also about to plant out our next season crop of garlic, thanks to Kutash Organics, from central Otago, who supply all our organic garlic for our Herb Spread, with extra for us to plant and enjoy a few home-grown bulbs. The green tops are very nice chopped like chives and sprinkled on savory meals.

### WARMING HERBS:

In winter, our physical needs differ; we draw inwards, warm up our homes with fire's/heaters, and perhaps go into semi-hibernation.. Before refrigeration, we would have been eating more dried, and preserved foods, slow-cooked foods and only seasonal vegetables. These can take less energy to digest so more of our energy can be used to stay warm and well! Garlic, Chillies, Nasturtium, and spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, pepper etc, are stimulating to the system which would otherwise become sluggish as we move inside and slow down, to get out of the rain and cold.. Head-colds, flu's and respiratory congestion are all common, and keeping these warming herbs and spices in your daily diet can help to protect our bodies from invading germs!



**NASTURTIUM** - These vigorous plants have such colourful flowers, and grow everywhere throughout the year, loving the cooler, wetter temperatures, when they produce more leaves than flowers. They are high in sulphur (nature's anti-biotic) and vitamin C, just what you need at this time of the year. Chop the leaves up finely for your winter stews and stir-fries, and add a flower or too as an edible, taste-sensational garnish. They certainly pack a punch, tasting spicy, slightly sweet, and pungent at various stages of consuming! Here's what we found out about nasturtium: Generally known only as an

ornamental plant, nasturtium was brought from its native South America to Europe in the 17th Century. The Tropaeolum genus derives from Chile and Peru where 80-90 species are found, their distribution extending from the tropical rain forests to the snow line. The slopes of the Peruvian Andes are said to be the natural habitat of nasturtium. Since the early 1950's, nasturtium has proved widely effective in the treatment of respiratory and urinary infections. It was found to produce a substance not yet found in any other plant: Benzyl isothiocyanate, (mustard oil) which inhibits or kills Gram positive and negative bacteria and fungi. To date, resistance has hardly ever developed! It is interesting to note that the nasturtium action is exclusively on the lungs, kidneys and bladder, organs that deal intensively with the interplay of air and water which the Nasturtium is so sensitive to and dependent on, dying after a frost, withering during a drought, but regenerating quickly when temperatures return to a moderate range.

Urinary tract infections frequently follow a chill, and this can be countered with this "northern" yet thoroughly sulfurous plant. Compared to phytotherapy, where it is given only by the oral route, nasturtium plays a key role in the Wala acne preparations for topical use. Acne vulgaris presents a paradox in skin metabolism. On one hand hyperkeratosis produces blackheads. The masses of hardened keratin do not dissolve easily. On the other hand sebaceous gland hyperactivity leads to seborrhea. The excess sebum provides a nutrient base for bacteria which break it down into fatty acids that cause skin irritation. Fatty acids are normally broken down with the help of endogenous lipases in the human food metabolism.

With acne, we have a pathological degradation of fats by foreign organisms on the skin, i.e. in the neurosensory system. Inflammatory efflorescences go hand in hand with this.

Nasturtium may be said to be able to overcome the two fundamental pathological processes in acne. It avoids all hardening processes and also has a superb ability to control its mustard oil metabolism, keeping it in its proper place (the vacuole). [Source; AnthroMed Library Ruth Mander, Ph.D. and Ulrich Meyer, R.Ph. ]

*There you go.. maybe I'll try making up a simple paste with Nasturtium, but grinding the leaves and see if my son will try putting any of that on his skin to help his acne.....*

*A warning first before trying any home-made concoctions – always try a tiny amount on yourself first, and be aware of any dangers/warnings. I made a concoction using wild herbs*



*such as speedwell (left) and Fumitory (right), two common weeds which are supposed to reduce fevers and quicken healing... the potion was quite bitter, (even though I added honey), and he complained of it making him feel nauseous and*



*refused anymore! So I tasted it.. and it was so bitter! It made me feel a bit ill too, and the taste stuck around for quite awhile – ugh!! Perhaps I had just made it too strong! as sources on the internet recommend both these for a variety of disorders from skin complaints and digestive problems to conjunctivitis....*

More information about Speedwell: <http://www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/s/specom75.html>

More information about Fumitory: <http://obtrandon.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/fumaria-officinalis-fumitory.pdf>

### *Herb Spread Recipe of the Month:*

MID WINTER FEASTS ...lamb shanks, meaty or vegetarian stews, roast vegetables, brassicas etc! flavoured with Herb Spread!  
Enjoy ; )

**Wishing you all health, wealth and well-being**

*From Wendy and Waiheke  
Herbs Team*

