

NOURISHING HERBAL INFUSIONS: OUR SUPER FOOD

SECOND EDITION

The image shows three glass jars filled with green herbal infusions, arranged on a wooden surface. A metal strainer is placed in the foreground. The background is a lush green forest scene with a stream and a pink flower.

by Rosalee de la Forêt

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Introduction

As herbalists we are given a wide variety of tools to extract the healing powers of plants. Depending on the plant's constituents we can extract medicinal qualities using alcohol, vinegar or oil. We can use fresh or dried herbs in our daily cooking, and we can use water – either hot or cold – to draw the vitamins, minerals, and other important nutrients into a drinkable form. Each method of transforming plant properties into an assimilable and concentrated form of medicine for our bodies has a different purpose depending on the action wanted.

This article focuses on Nourishing Herbal Infusions (NHI). We use NHI as opposed to tinctures and extracts to draw out nutrients, mainly minerals and vitamins, from plants to nourish ourselves daily. In this way we can heal from the inside out – building strong bones and teeth, strengthening our cardiovascular system, and tonifying our organs for maximum health. Drinking our daily brew of NHI is akin to taking vitamin supplements. However, an NHI has many more benefits than pills that were manufactured and synthesized in a far-away factory.

By using freshly dried whole herbs from organic and nutrient-rich soils we can ensure we are getting the highest quality of nutrition available. Also, when we consume vitamins and minerals from a whole source, rather than extracted materials, we ensure that our body is able to readily assimilate these valuable nutrients. As naturopathic physician Dr. Joseph Mercola points out, *“In whole foods, there are a variety of accessory micronutrients that work synergistically with the primary one. It is very rare where the isolated nutrient will perform better than the whole food version.”*

Many of the herbs we use for our daily nourishing herbal infusions can be found in our backyards. The topic of wildcrafting, or the harvesting of wild plants, goes beyond the scope of this article. If wildcrafting interests you, it's best to learn from a wildcrafter, botanist, or herbalist near you. If you are newer to the world of herbs then ordering them from a respectable herb dealer is a simple way to gain access to them. You can find a list of places to buy quality herbs at the end of this ebook.

How to Make Nourishing Herbal Infusions

We prepare NHIs much like teas, though the amount of plant material used is greater and the soaking time is much longer. The greater volume of herbs and the extended soaking time of NHIs fills these beverages with nutrients and minerals.



To make my NHI, I place one ounce of dried leafy herbs in my French coffee press. (This is about two cups of dried and sifted nettle leaf.) Some herbs, like red clover, are so light it's hard to get an ounce in the jar. In this case I fill the jar about a 1/3 of the way full.

I pour one quart of just-boiled water over the herbs, cover with the press, and let sit overnight.



In the morning I strain off the plant material and drink the infusion throughout the day. You can see how this nettle infusion has changed color dramatically.

You could also make the infusion in the morning to drink at night. Some people brew their infusions in mason jars, using a strainer to strain off the plants when ready. Whatever you brew your infusion in, be sure to cover it tightly so water-soluble vitamins do not escape with the steam. After straining, refrigerate and drink within 36 hours. Typically, one quart is drunk each day.

Branching Out – Using a variety of materials

You can make nourishing herbal infusions from leafy material (e.g., stinging nettle, comfrey), roots and barks (e.g., burdock), flowers (e.g., calendula), or seeds and berries (e.g., celery seed, lamb’s quarters).

The brewing time differs for different plant parts. Flowers and berries tend to be more delicate, while roots and bark need a little more prodding.

The following brewing table is taken from *Healing Wise*, by Susun Weed.

Plant Part	Amount	Jar/Water	Length of Infusion
Roots/barks	1oz	pint	8 hours minimum
Leaves	1oz	quart	4 hours minimum
Flowers	1oz	quart	1 hour maximum
Seeds/berries	1oz	pint	30 minutes maximum

List of Nourishing Herbal Infusion Herbs

The herbs we use for nourishing herbal infusions are just that – nourishing. These plants are high in vitamins, minerals, and nutrients and do not contain bitter oils, esters, or resins that can create unwanted side effects – and a bitter taste. There are circumstances that call for more “medicinal” herbs in an infusion, but this article focuses on herbs specifically used for nourishment.

The following is a list of commonly used plants for NHI. I have included the part that is used, the nutrients found in that plants, the gifts this plant offers us, and any special consideration specific to that plant. At the end I include a simple summary to keep things simple.

The nutrient tables contain information taken from Mark Pederson’s book *Nutritional Herbology*. These tables can give us an idea of what vitamins and minerals are in herbs, but these are only snapshots of particular herbs that were tested. The amount of vitamins and minerals contained in plants, whether they are herbs or vegetables, also depends on the soil in which they were grown. To get the most out of your infusions, buy herbs as locally

as possible, use them as fresh as possible (recently dried), and even search out organic and biodynamic farms that are taking steps to enrich their soils with minerals.

Also included is a listing of secondary herbs to add to infusions. You might choose to add these in small amounts for increased nutrient value, to balance the properties of the main herb used (increase warmth or add moistening qualities), or simply to improve the flavor of the infusion.

This new edition also includes a section written by Kimberly Gallagher on how to incorporate nourishing herbal infusions into your child's life. If you have any questions about how to incorporate nourishing herbal infusions into your child's life, you'll love this beautifully written section based on Kimberly's experiences.

While reading about the nutritional profile of these herbs you may find yourself wondering what exactly these vitamins and minerals do for us. Appendix A includes a list of vitamins and a short description of our understanding of how they work in the body. Appendix B offers the same for minerals.

Any further questions you may have about nourishing herbal infusions may be found in the frequently asked questions section.

At the end of this e-book is a glossary of terms often used by herbalists and should help guide you if you come across any unknown terms.

“These infusions are an excellent way to incorporate herbs into our daily lives, and to gently yet effectively rebalance the body. I have personally used these infusions as a daily nutritive base for many years, and have found them invaluable in the healing process.”

-Kiva Rose, herbalist



Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

Stinging Nettle is a beloved herb that has been in use for time immemorial throughout the world. It is extremely nutritive and the infusion I use most regularly. Nettles are a strong ally for strengthening the kidneys and toning the lungs, intestines, and arteries. It helps restore vibrancy to the adrenal system, transforming sluggish energy into vitality.

Hair and skin love nettle rinses and become more full and vibrant, when the infusion is used externally and internally.

According to Susun Weed, Nettle infusions are

...recommended for those wanting to stabilize blood sugar, reset metabolic circuits to normalize weight, reduce fatigue and exhaustion, restore adrenal potency to lessen allergic and menopausal problems and eliminate chronic headaches.

I love nettle for its incredible calcium and magnesium levels. Unlike supplements, the naturally occurring vitamins and minerals found in nettle is easily absorbed by our bodies. Consider drinking daily nettle infusions if you are interested in supporting bone and teeth health.

Daily nettle infusions for two weeks will increase the quantity and quality of breast milk in lactating moms. NHI made from nettle are one of Susun Weed's favorite anti-cancer remedies. Long-term use of nettle infusions is recommended to receive full benefits.

Parts used

Young leaves – before the plant flowers

Properties

Cool/dry, nutritive, kidney/adrenal trophorestorative, adaptogen, diuretic, astringent, hemostatic

Special considerations

Nettles are diuretic and, therefore, drying. If you tend to have dry skin, eyes, or other symptoms of dryness, you may want to add a pinch of marshmallow root or slippery elm bark to your infusion.

Nettles can also be somewhat cooling and for this reason some people put a slice or two of fresh ginger in their infusions.

Keep it simple

Nettle is a gentle and powerful herb that can be drunk daily for increased energy and chi. Taken over a long period of time it is beneficial to the kidneys, lungs, intestine, arteries, hair, and skin.

Vitamins/Minerals	High	Very High
Calcium		X
Chromium		X
Cobalt	X	
Magnesium		X
Manganese	X	
Phosphorus	X	
Potassium	X	
Protein	X	
Riboflavin	X	
Selenium	X	
Thiamine	X	
Vitamin A	X	
Vitamin C	X	
Zinc		X

“When in doubt, use nettle.”

David Hoffman, *herbalist*



Photo from:
<http://ravengrrl.blogspot.com>

Red Raspberry (*Rubus* spp.)

Red Raspberry is commonly considered a woman's herb often used during pregnancy. It gently eases nausea and morning sickness. Red Raspberry has been scientifically proven to ease uterine and intestinal spasms and strengthen the uterine wall. These actions help to ease labor pains and facilitate births. There is also evidence that regular infusions taken during the third trimester reduce the incidence of false

labor.

Drinking infusions after birth increases the colostrum found in breast milk helping to ensure a healthy start for the newborn. Susun Weed notes that although for some woman Red Raspberry leaf increases breast milk, for others the astringency of the herb may counter that.

It's unfair to classify raspberry leaves as only beneficial to women. Not only does red raspberry tone the uterus, it has a toning effect for the male reproductive system as well. It is used for enuresis, spermatorrhea, premature ejaculation, impotence and sterility.

As a strong astringent, raspberry is helpful in cases of prolonged diarrhea and frequent urination.

Raspberry leaves have the ability to promote healthy bones, nails, teeth, and skin. It's common to find it paired with red clover as a fertility tonic for both men and women.

Parts used

Leaves

Properties

Cool/dry, astringent, tonic, uterine tonic, hemostatic, mild alterative.

Special considerations

There are no major cautions with red raspberry, but take note of its astringent affects to determine if this is the right choice for you. Some may find it initially too drying.

Keep it simple

Red Raspberry is a uterine tonic especially beneficial to women during pregnancy. Its high calcium and mineral content make it beneficial to all.

Vitamins/Minerals	High	Very High
Calcium	X	
Iron		X
Magnesium	X	
Manganese		X
Niacin		X
Selenium	X	
Vitamin A	X	
Vitamin C	X	

“My daily cup of nourishing herbal infusion is my safeguard against cancer, my longevity tonic, and my beauty treatment – all in one cup.”

- Susun Weed



Oatstraw (*Avena sativa*, *A. fatua*)

Oatstraw acts as a restorative nerve tonic. This makes it ideal for those experiencing stress, exhaustion, nervous breakdowns, or grief.

Regular use decreases inflammation in the body, which is especially helpful for those with crohn's disease, lupus, or other autoimmune diseases.

It's a wonderful source of calcium and silicon for those wishing to strengthen their bones, teeth, and nails. Susun Weed recommends adding a pinch of horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*) in your oat straw infusion.

Oatstraw has been known as a love tonic for centuries because of its ability to nourish your nervous system, bringing rejuvenation to a stressed out system. Oatstraw is also a powerful restorative for those who are just plain worn out. You can also simmer oatstraw to extract more of the silicon.

Parts used

Aerial portions (I like infusing both the straw and the milky buds; you can also do either separately.)

Properties

Neutral/moist, nutritive, nervous system trophorestorative, relaxing nervine

Special considerations

There is some debate as to whether or not oatstraw contains gluten. If you are gluten intolerant you may want to approach this one with caution.

Keep it simple

Oatstraw is a wonderful restorative tonic especially helpful to those feeling stressed or worn out.

Vitamins/Minerals	High	Very High
Calcium	X	
Chromium		X
Magnesium		X
Niacin	X	
Silicon		X
Vitamin A	X	



Burdock (*Arctium lappa*)

Burdock is an alterative – sometimes called a blood purifier. It does this by strengthening the kidneys and liver, which in turn helps to clean up the circulatory system.

Burdock root is so effective because it is a super food that is jammed-packed with essential nutrients. It is high in chromium, magnesium, and inulin – all of which help to regulate blood sugar. Herbalists

commonly use burdock for those with diabetes, syndrome X, insulin resistance, and other blood sugar disorders.

Burdock is also high in iron and helps to strengthen the liver and kidneys, making it the first plant many herbalists reach for when treating hot skin eruptions such as psoriasis, eczema, herpes, acne, and boils. It's also commonly paired with red clover as a duo that has been used for thousands of years to slow or eradicate tumors.

High in inulin, this “pre-biotic” feeds and nourishes intestinal flora – a great ally to use after a round of antibiotics.

Burdock is a cooling herb that helps us to feel grounded and stable.

Parts used

Root

Properties

cool/dry, nutritive, alterative, lymphatic, anti-tumor, diuretic

Special considerations

Because it is a strong diuretic, burdock root is not appropriate for those with low blood pressure or excessive urination.

Keep it simple

Burdock is a grounding herb that strengthens the immune system, kidneys, and liver. It's especially useful for those dealing with skin problems, from blemishes to tumors.

Vitamins/Minerals	High	Very High
Chromium		X
Cobalt	X	
Iron		X
Magnesium		X
Phosphorus	X	
Potassium	X	
Silicon		X
Thiamine		X
Vitamin A	X	
Zinc	X	

“Burdock is like a cleaning woman, or garbage collector: essential to modern life, but underpaid and undervalued. She’s the old black rag-a-muffin of herbs.”

Ellen Greenlaw, 1988



Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*)

Red clover is world renowned as an anti-cancer herb. It is used by at least 33 different cultures as an aid against cancer. It is one ingredient in the famed Essiac Tea, and scientific studies have found 4 anti-tumor compounds in this miraculous plant. Besides being a strong ally for those dancing with cancer, red clover is a strong alterative. Loosely defined alteratives means promoting overall health.

Rich in phytosterols, red clover nourishes hormones, making it an excellent choice for women going through menopause as well as those wishing to increase their fertility. It's been used to treat whooping cough and other dry, irritable coughs – even tuberculosis.

The infusion can also be used externally (as well as internally) to nourish the skin, eliminating eczema and psoriasis.

Parts used

Flowers and top leaves

Properties

Cool/dry, astringent, alterative, blood thinning, antispasmodic, expectorant, anti-tumor

Special considerations

Although safe to use for many people, red clover's ability to thin the blood makes it a poor choice for pregnancy and for those already on blood thinners. Regular use of this plant should also be stopped before surgery.

Vitamins/Minerals	High	Very High
Calcium	X	
Chromium		X
Magnesium	X	
Niacin	X	
Phosphorus	X	
Potassium	X	
Thiamine	X	
Vitamin C	X	

Keep it simple

Renowned for its anti-cancer properties, red clover is also an important alterative, supporting our elimination organs to promote overall health and vitality.

Linden (*Tilia cordata*)



Linden is a cooling and mucilaginous herb – I love to brew it up on hot, dusty days when I am feeling parched.

It's used extensively in Europe, especially in France, for soothing sore throats and coughs. Its diaphoretic properties make it a beneficial herb for colds and flu. Sharol Tilgner reports its use has been shown to

shorten the duration of infectious viral conditions.

It is a superb relaxing nervine for nervous tension, stress, and panic conditions.

Linden is used to nourish the heart and is specifically beneficial for high blood pressure associated with arteriosclerosis and nervous tension.

In France it is commonly used in lotions for itchy skin conditions.

Parts used

Flowers and leaves

Properties

Cool/moist, relaxing nervine, anti-spasmodic, relaxing diaphoretic, hypotensive, demulcent, diuretic, mild astringent

Nutrients

Flavonoids, glycosides

Special considerations

None known

Keep it simple

Linden's demulcent properties make it a valuable ally for colds, flus, and parched conditions. It's a gentle nervine that calms the heart.



Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*)

Comfrey is well known under its other names such as knitbone or bruisewort. It's a champion for healing superficial scratches and cuts, bruises, broken or fractured bones, and torn tendons and ligaments. Commonly used externally for all of these ailments, the leaf can be taken internally as well for additional benefit*.

Comfrey leaf is a strong ally against osteoporosis. Its high calcium content is readily absorbed into our systems, creating strong and flexible bones.

A comfrey nourishing herbal infusion is also powerful in healing bronchial conditions and lung congestion, and its demulcent and wound healing qualities are useful for gastric ulcers and colitis.

Parts used

Leaf

Properties

Relaxing expectorant, demulcent, alterative, astringent, vulnerary, cell proliferant, nutritive

*Special considerations

The scientific community recently determined that pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PLAs) found within comfrey can cause silent liver disease. You will find herbalists who claim that the internal use of comfrey poses absolutely no threat, while others absolutely refuse to use it internally at all. Every person who wants to use comfrey needs to come to their own conclusions on this matter.

The risks of using comfrey seem to be rare, but real. The roots have more PLAs than the leaves, the young leaves contain more PLAs than the mature leaves. With these considerations in mind, the internal use of comfrey is definitely **contraindicated for pregnancy, children, alcoholics (including a history of high alcohol use), and those with liver disease.**

Keep it simple

Although we now know we need to approach this herb with caution, comfrey leaf remains a powerful herb for healing our skin, ligaments, and bones as well as for strengthening our lungs.

Vitamins/Minerals	High	Very High
Calcium	X	
Chromium	X	
Manganese	X	
Niacin	X	
Potassium	X	
Riboflavin	X	
Selenium	X	
Silicon	X	
Vitamin A	X	
Vitamin C	X	



Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*)

Commonly used as an animal feed, alfalfa is rich in vitamins and minerals. Besides being high in the ones listed above it also has good amounts of calcium, chromium, magnesium, phosphorus, and potassium.

As a bitter herb it promotes digestion. It also contains the digestive enzyme betaine.

Alfalfa is used in cases of inflammation that are causing pain such as arthritis, rheumatism, and other chronic degenerative issues.

With an affinity for the heart, it has been shown to cause the regression of atherosclerosis.

High in isoflavones (phytoestrogens) it is used to prevent menopausal problems as well as osteoporosis.

Parts used

Aerial portions

Properties

Cool, moist, bitter, diuretic, nutritive, alterative, anti-inflammatory

Special considerations

Should not be used by people with fertility problems, those on blood thinners or during pregnancy.

Keeping it Simple

Alfalfa is a mineral rich plant especially beneficial to those experiencing pain from inflammation and atherosclerosis.

Vitamins/Minerals	High	Very High
Cobalt	X	
Niacin	X	
Riboflavin	X	
Vitamin A	X	
Vitamin C	X	



Hawthorne (Crataegus spp.)

Hawthorne has a strong affinity for the heart and can be effective for both high and low blood pressure. It is considered a general cardiac tonic to restore and maintain healthy heart function. In western herbalism the berries are often used, while the Chinese seem to use the leaf and flower more often. As an infusion I really enjoy using the leaf and flower, though the berries can be used as well.

Hawthorne goes beyond healing the physical heart as it can be a powerful ally for the emotional heart as well. You can find it commonly used in grief formulas to help heal broken hearts. Used also as a relaxing nervine, hawthorne is a great ally for those experiencing stress and hardship with symptoms showing up as heart palpitations.

Herbalists David Winston and Mathew Wood both use hawthorn for children and adults who are restless and irritable with a difficulty in focusing. In his book *The Earthwise Herbal* Matthew Wood shares his experience using hawthorn for an autistic child.

The Chinese have used the leaves and flowers for stagnant digestion associated with poor lipid metabolism. Indications for this include heartburn and indigestion.

Parts used

Leaf, flower, berries

Properties

slightly cool/dry, cardiac trophorestorative, relaxing nervine, digestant, astringent, diuretic, antioxidant

Nutrients

Known to be high in anti-oxidants, chromium, selenium, choline and vitamin C

Special considerations

None currently known.

Keeping it Simple

Hawthorne has a strong affinity for the heart, both physically and emotionally. It can also soothe stress and promote digestion.



Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*)

Mullein leaves are one of our best remedies for chronic and acute respiratory conditions. Considered a pectoral tonic, it can help strengthen lungs that are prone to infection. It can also bring relief in a variety of acute problems like bronchitis, whooping cough, asthma and hay fever.

Mullein's gifts are not limited to the lungs, however. It can be used to relieve lymphatic congestion and can aid in muskulo-skeletal pain.

Parts used

Leaves for infusions (herbalists also use the roots and flowers)

Properties

Expectorant, astringent, alterative, pectoral tonic, lymphatic

Special considerations

The fine hairs of mullein leaves can be irritating when ingested. Be sure to strain the infusion through a cheesecloth to remove all hairs.

Keeping it Simple

Mullein is a fabulously nutritive herb that has an affinity for the respiratory system.

Vitamins/Minerals	High	Very High
Aluminum		X
Calcium	X	
Chromium	X	
Cobalt	X	
Iron		X
Magnesium	X	
Manganese	X	
Niacin	X	
Phosphorous	X	
Silicon	X	
Vitamin A	X	
Vitamin C	X	



Violet (*Viola* spp.)

Violet is a delicate and beautiful plant emerging from the earth in the early spring. Don't let violet's delicate nature fool you, however. This plant is a powerful ally in disguise.

The flowers and leaves are nutrient dense. They contain very high amounts of vitamin C - some say higher than any other plant. The leaves are also high in vitamin A.

Violet's most famous use is to dissolve cysts, lumps, and fibrotic tissue of the breast. Besides drinking it as a nourishing herbal infusion, it is also prepared as a fresh poultice or into a fresh oil salve for topical application.

Violet eases pain. It is used externally and internally for pain associated with arthritis and headaches.

Another name for violet is hearts-ease. It has been used for the physical and emotional heart for thousands of years. Violet is high in a constituent called rutin. Rutin strengthens capillaries, prevents platelet aggregation, and is anti-inflammatory.

Violet can aid the lungs during times of infection, especially when there are signs of heat such as thick yellow mucous and congestion. It will also soothe an irritated throat. As a potent lymphatic mover you can also drink an infusion to support overloaded lymph glands that have become swollen.

The official violet used in medicine is *Viola odorata*, but many herbalists agree that any members of the *Viola* genus will work. *Viola odorata* originally comes from Europe and has naturalized across much of the United States. The North American continent also contains many native species of violets.

Parts used

Leaves for infusions (herbalists also use the roots and flowers)

Properties

Cooling/moistening, expectorant, nutritive, alterative, pectoral tonic, lymphatic, demulcent, anodyne, antineoplastic.

Nutrients

Known to be high in vitamin C and vitamin A.

Special considerations

Violet roots should not be used in large quantities. Note that African Violets often sold in stores as indoor plants are not related to the violets we use in infusions.

Keeping it Simple

Violets are a nutritious food that has been used extensively for dissolving cysts, easing hot bronchial infections, and supporting the heart.

“Violet’s optimum nourishment supports the liver, gall bladder and digestive and urinary systems every day.”

*Susun Weed
Healing Wise*

Nourishing Herbal Infusions for Children

By Kimberly Gallagher



Many people who are just learning about herbs and the benefits of nourishing herbal infusions ask us about giving these infusions to their children. Is it safe? What dosage is appropriate? How much would my child ideally drink? Which herbs should I use for my children?

At first these sorts of questions may seem as overwhelming as many of the other health issues we face with our children. Luckily, these questions do not need to be overwhelming at all. The herbs that Rosalee is discussing in this ebook are all nourishing herbs. The way I think of that, is that these

herbs are like food. (Some other herbs have stronger constituents and actions and need to be thought of more like medicine, and questions about dosage and safety are very important to consider.) It is possible to overdo it with one particular nourishing herb or one particular food, but you have to work pretty hard at it. I always tell people to worry about children drinking too much herbal infusion as much as they worry about their children eating too much broccoli.

I drink one quart of a nourishing herbal infusion every day. I would absolutely love it if my children would do the same. I think about all those vitamins and minerals swimming into their little bodies and get all excited inside. Right now my kids are not drinking that much. Rowan (age 10) drinks about 2 cups of infusion a day and Hailey (age 5) drinks 1/2 to 1 cup each day. I make the infusions in the morning and let them steep all day. We drink them as our drink with dinner each night. Having a rhythm that works for us has been very helpful in keeping the infusions flowing. I think it helps that we're all drinking our tea at the same time, but you may find a different rhythm that works equally well with your family. Take time to experiment a bit. Maybe you will enjoy making the infusions before going to bed and then offer them a little bit at a time throughout the day.

A couple more things I will add to our story. Hailey likes her infusions cold, so I make hers a day in advance. I strain all of them at night and put hers in

the fridge for the next day. Then I take hers out of the fridge at dinner time and put the new one in as I'm cleaning up.

I generally let the children choose which herbs they want in their infusions. Since all the herbs on our shelf offer a wide array of vitamins and minerals I can be happy with whatever they choose. This seems to me like a great way to help them develop their own intuition about what their bodies are needing in terms of nourishment. If they have a particular health issue going on, I may add an ingredient of my own or suggest something to them - Astragalus to boost their immune system or comfrey to help with an injury. Each infusion is an opportunity for nourishment, healing, and learning. It's great when we can involve our kids in the process.

Also both children like peppermint in their infusions. I don't like to infuse peppermint because of the volatile oils, so instead I make a small jar of peppermint tea in the mornings, strain it when we finish with breakfast and put it in the fridge. I add a small amount to each of their infusions when I strain them at dinner time. It's all about rhythm and getting a system going. I don't have to think about this any more, but at first it was clunky and I would forget to strain the peppermint or to put Hailey's in the fridge. Just go slow, and be persistent. A rhythm will form, and after a while it will feel like a natural part of your morning (or evening).

Finally, I want to say that I do very little forcing when it comes to food with my children. I have never insisted that they drink infusions, but they have seen me doing it since they were babies. Both kids were drinking infusions for a while, and choosing what herbs they wanted. It was such an exciting period of time. Then, one day Rowan said, "I don't want to drink infusions any more." Well, I didn't push it. Hailey soon followed suit as she most often does with her brother's decisions. Neither of them drank infusions for about 6 months, and I was just thankful that they were still drinking their glass of raw milk at dinner. Then one day, Rowan hurt his foot playing soccer, and he asked, "Dad, is there some kind of infusion I could drink that would help this foot heal?" He started up again, and Hailey followed his example. I'm thankful for each day they drink their nourishing brews, and truly believe that they will carry the habit with them into adulthood, because it hasn't been forced on them, but is something they have chosen to add to their diets for their own health.

Supporting Herbs

The following is a list of herbs you can use in small amounts in your infusions. This short list is meant to give you some ideas about supporting herbs and is by no means the limit of what you can try.

You may want to use supporting herbs for a variety of reasons.

- To improve the flavor of nourishing herbal infusions
- To better formulate the herbs to your individual constitution
- To increase nourishment

We'll explore some of these ideas while discussing the following herbs.

Ginger (*Zingiber officinalis*)

Ginger is a spicy and warming herb that can easily be found fresh at your local grocery store. This supporting herb can improve the flavor of an infusion as well as give it more warmth. I like to add a couple slices of fresh ginger to my infusions in the winter time. If you tend to be colder than everyone in the room, or always seem to have cold hands and feet, consider adding a few slices of ginger to your infusions.

Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*)

A pinch of peppermint is a regular addition to my infusions. It gives infusions a mild minty flavor that can help win over even the most picky of eaters. Peppermint is also high in nutrients, although it is typically taken in too small amounts to be of much nutritional value. Peppermint is mostly used for digestive complaints including nausea, flatulence, heartburn and abdominal cramping.

Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*)

Horsetail is really high in silicon, calcium and magnesium. Susun Weed recommends adding a pinch of horsetail to infusions for added nutrient benefit, especially in regards to bone health. Because it is so high in silicon you only want to add a pinch to infusions and it's also a good idea to take a break from it every couple of weeks. Horsetail is contraindicated during pregnancy.

Slippery elm (*Ulmus fulva*, *U. rubra*)

Slippery elm is primarily made up of mucilage. Adding a pinch or two of this can bring more moistening qualities to your infusion. This is helpful for some of the more drying infusions like nettle, red raspberry, or red clover.

Marshmallow (*Althea officinalis*)

Another mucilaginous plant, marshmallow root can add more demulcent qualities to our infusions. More cooling than slippery elm, it can be a good addition for those tending towards excess hot conditions. (Red face, high blood pressure, pounding pulse, etc.)

Kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana*)

Kelp can be a very nutritious addition to anyone's diet. High in many trace minerals, including iodine, kelp gives us many nutrients we need for optimal health. In our home we like to snack on kelp fronds throughout the day. You can also add a slice of a kelp frond to your infusion. As with all herbs be sure to get your kelp from a good clean source as it can concentrate heavy metals.

Rose Hips (*Rosa* spp.)

Rose hips are best known for their high vitamin C content. Their overall nutritional profile includes many nutrients, including niacin, vitamin A, riboflavin, and selenium. They are cooling and slightly moistening and can be added quite abundantly to nourishing herbal infusions.

Appendix A ~ Vitamins Reference

This appendix gives a very simple overview of our understanding of the role vitamins play in our health. It also lists some foods and herbs where you can find these individual vitamins. If you are interested in learning about vitamins more in-depth please see the resources listed at the end of this ebook.

Vitamin A

Vitamin A is needed to maintain the mucosal tissue (epithelial tissues) that is found throughout the respiratory and digestive tracts, making it an important ally in immune system function. It also promotes connective tissue and bone growth, supports night vision and eye health in general, and acts as an anti-oxidant to protect cells against free radicals.

Animal sources are a good way to ensure adequate vitamin A consumption. Sources include whole milk, liver, eggs, and cod liver oil, as well as carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach and most darkly colored fruit and vegetables. Herbs high in Vitamin A include alfalfa, burdock root, mullein, nettle, kelp, mullein, oat straw, peppermint, red raspberry leaves, red clover, and rose hips.

Vitamin B₁ - (Thiamine)

Thiamine plays a role in the production of HCL (hydrochloric acid) and is important in cognitive function. It enhances circulation and blood formation while also supporting healthy growth.

Thiamine is found in cheese, egg yolks, fish, legumes, liver, meat, spinach, and milk. Herbal sources include alfalfa, burdock root, mullein, nettle, oat straw, peppermint, raspberry leaves, red clover, and rose hips

Vitamin B₂ - Riboflavin

Riboflavin is an important part of our immune system production as it is necessary for red blood cell formation and antibody production. It is used in cell respiration and, along with vitamin A, maintains mucosal tissue health. Riboflavin is important for healthy skin, strong nails, and hair growth.

Sources include liver, kidney, cheese, whole grains, green leafy vegetables, kelp, milk, oily fish, and eggs. Herbal sources include alfalfa, burdock root, horsetail, mullein, nettle, oat straw, peppermint, raspberry leaves, red clover, and rose hips.

VitaminB₃ - Niacin

Niacin facilitates proper circulation and is needed for healthy skin. It is involved in the transformation of food into energy and aids in nervous system function.

Sources of niacin include beef liver and kidney, cheese, eggs, pork, turkey, chicken, veal, oily fish, and beets. Herbal sources include alfalfa, burdock root, mullein, nettle, oat straw, peppermint, raspberry leaf, red clover, slippery elm, and rose hips.

VitaminB₅ - Pantothenic Acid

Pantothenic Acid is needed by every cell in the body and is concentrated in organs. Sometimes called the “anti-stress” hormone it is involved in the production of adrenal hormones. It also helps to form anti-bodies as well as to heal wounds.

Sources of pantothenic acid include beef, liver, nuts, eggs, fresh vegetables, kidney, pork, and saltwater fish. Herbal sources include alfalfa, burdock root, and nettle.

VitaminB₆ - Pyridoxine

Pyridoxine is used in many different bodily functions and has a strong influence for both physical and mental health. It helps to maintain electrolyte balance for proper hydration, promotes red blood cell formation, and is needed for normal brain function. It assists many different enzymes and plays a crucial role in the reproduction of all cells.

It is involved in cancer immunity, preventing kidney stones, and is important for heart health.

Good sources of pyridoxine are brewer's yeast, carrots, chicken, eggs, fish, meat, spinach, sunflower seeds, and walnuts. Herbal sources include alfalfa and oat straw.

Vitamin B₁₂ -

Vitamin B₁₂ primarily serves to maintain a healthy nervous system and to produce red blood cells. It also improves concentration and aids digestion.

Sources include meat, brewer's yeast, clams, mackerel, dairy products, and eggs. Herbal sources include alfalfa and kelp.

Vitamin C -Ascorbic Acid

Vitamin C is widely used in the body for the growth of tissues, repair of tissues, adrenal gland function, and healthy gums. It can aid in respiratory health and reduce symptom of asthma as well as protect against infection and aid immunity. Vitamin C is an anti-oxidant and it promotes calcium and iron formation.

Sources include most berries, fruits and vegetables, especially when served raw. Herbal sources include alfalfa, burdock root, horsetail, kelp, peppermint, mullein, nettle, oat straw, pine needles, raspberry leaves, red clover, rose hips, and violet leaves.

Vitamin D -

Entire books have been written about this powerful vitamin, which is actually a hormone. In the past ten years, our understanding of what it does and how important it is to our health and vitality has increased 100 fold. It plays a strong role in our immune system function and decreases harmful inflammation in the body. Vitamin D is needed along with calcium to maintain and grow strong bones and teeth.

The best source of vitamin D is the sun when it is above 45° in the sky. Food sources include oily fish, cod liver oil, egg yolks, sardines and beef liver. There are no plant or herbal sources of vitamin D₃. It is fat-soluble.

Vitamin E -

Vitamin E is a powerful anti-oxidant that supports heart health and prevents cancer. This nutrient promotes eye health as well as nervous system health. It is needed for tissue repair and improves circulation.

Sources include dark green leafy vegetables, eggs, nuts, seeds, whole grains, and cold pressed vegetable oils like olive oil. It is fat-soluble. Herbal sources include alfalfa, nettle, oat straw, raspberry leaf, and rose hips.

Vitamin K -

This vitamin plays an essential role in regulating the ability of the blood to clot. It also aids in converting glucose into glycogen and promotes healthy liver function.

Sources include egg yolks, liver, blackstrap molasses, dark leafy vegetables. Herbal sources include alfalfa, kelp, nettle, and oat straw.

Appendix B ~ Mineral Reference

This appendix gives a very simple overview of our understanding of the role minerals play in our health. It also lists some foods and herbs where you can find these individual minerals. If you are interested in learning about minerals more in-depth please see the resources list at the end of this ebook.

Calcium

Calcium plays many vital roles, and is most well known for its action in bone and teeth health. Calcium is the most abundant mineral in the body, accounting for up to 2% of a person's bodyweight. Deficiency of calcium can lead to dental cavities, osteoporosis, and muscle spasms.

Sources include dairy foods, sardines, seafood, dark green leafy vegetables, brewer's yeast, and sesame seeds. Herbal sources include alfalfa, burdock root, horsetail, kelp, mullein, nettle, oat straw, peppermint, raspberry leaves, red clover, and rose hips.

Chromium

Chromium is important in maintaining blood sugar levels as it is essential in the function of insulin. It also metabolizes cholesterol, fats, and proteins. It also plays a role in maintaining blood pressure. Many people are deficient in chromium.

Sources of chromium include brewer's yeast, brown rice, green peppers, cheese, meat, and whole grains. Herbal sources include horsetail, nettle, oat straw, and red clover

Cobalt

"The only known physiological use of cobalt is as a component of B₁₂. However, the tissues of plants contain no vitamin B₁₂. The cobalt present in plants is unrelated to vitamin B₁₂ and is poorly absorbed by the digestive tract. This is one reason strict vegetarians often need vitamin B₁₂ supplements. The cobalt levels in the plants of this study probably give a better indication of soil cobalt concentrations and sample cleanliness than anything else." Mark Pederson, Nutritional Herbology

Copper

Copper, along with iron, is essential for hemoglobin production. A deficiency of copper can lead to anemia. Copper is also crucial to maintaining connective tissue health and healthy nerves and joints.

Sources of copper include almonds, garlic, beef liver, millet, rye, salmon, and beans. Herbal sources include horsetail.

Iodine

Iodine is a nutrient needed for thyroid health and physical and mental development. It also helps to metabolize excess fat.

Sources include seafood and seaweed. Sometimes table salt has added iodine.

Iron

Iron is an incredibly important mineral necessary for red blood cell oxygenation and the production of hemoglobin. It is also needed for immune system function and energy production. A deficiency in iron can cause anemia.

Sources of iron include eggs, fish, liver, meat, green leafy vegetables, black strap molasses, dried prunes, and beets. Herbal sources include alfalfa, burdock root, horsetail, kelp, mullein, nettle, oat straw, peppermint, raspberry leaf, and rose hips.

Magnesium

Magnesium plays a large role in activating many different enzymes in the body. It helps the body to absorb calcium and thus plays an important role in the health of bones and teeth. Magnesium is found in high amounts in the heart. It helps to regulate the heartbeat and decrease blood coagulation.

Sources of magnesium include seafood, meat, dairy products, green leafy vegetables, fermented soy, black strap molasses, and apples. Herbal

sources include alfalfa, horsetail, kelp, mullein, nettle, oat straw, peppermint, red raspberry, and red clover.

Manganese

Manganese is needed in very small amounts to metabolize protein and fat, maintain healthy nerves and a healthy immune system, as well as in blood sugar regulation.

Sources of manganese include avocados, nuts, egg yolks, blueberries, seeds, seaweed, and whole grains. Herbal sources include alfalfa, burdock root, horsetail, mullein, peppermint, raspberry leaves, red clover, and rose hips.

Phosphorus

Phosphorus is the second most abundant mineral in our body. Like calcium, it plays a vital role in the health and strength of our bones and teeth. Phosphorus also maintains the integrity of cellular walls, regulating what comes in and out of the cell. A diet high in phosphorous also requires high amounts of calcium. If this isn't achieved through diet then calcium is taken from the bones. Many people's diets are overly high in phosphorous due to its abundance in processed foods.

Sources of phosphorus include most animal products, carbonated soft drinks, nuts, and dried fruit. Herbal sources include nettle, burdock root, peppermint, red raspberry, red clover, and mullein.

Potassium

Potassium is essential for a healthy nervous system and it also helps to maintain a healthy heart beat. Potassium is a part of the electrolyte bunch (along with sodium and chloride) that help to regulate fluids in the body and maintain steady blood pressure.

Sources of potassium include dairy foods, avocados, fish, fruit, meat, poultry, and vegetables. Herbal sources include horsetail, nettle, and red clover.

Selenium

Selenium is a mineral and anti-oxidant that helps to protect the body from harmful substances. It appears to work in conjunction with Vitamin E to prevent heart disease and also plays a role in thyroid health. *The amount of selenium in any given food is dependent on the amount of selenium found in the soil where the food was grown.* If you live in an area known to be naturally deficient in selenium (for example, the Pacific Northwest) and you eat primarily local foods you may want to consider finding a reliable source of selenium.

Sources of selenium include brazil nuts, brewer's yeast, dairy products, meat, poultry, onions, salmon, and seafood. Herbal sources include alfalfa, burdock root, horsetail, nettle, oat straw, peppermint, raspberry leaf, and rose hips.

Silicon

Silicon plays an important role in building strong bones and teeth in the body. The main dietary source for silicon is horsetail.

Sodium

Sodium, along with potassium and chloride, helps to maintain proper water balance within the body. It also helps to maintain blood pH and is necessary for the function of the stomach, nerves, and muscles.

Sodium is found in virtually every food and herbs.

Sulfur

Sulfur is found in almost every tissue of the body and is necessary for the synthesis of collagen, which is important in maintaining the structural integrity of the skin. Sulfur protects cells against toxic substances, including the harmful effects of radiation and pollution.

Sources of sulfur include Brussels sprouts, dried beans, cabbage, eggs, garlic, kale, meat, and fish. Herbal sources include horsetail.

Zinc

Zinc is a vital nutrient with many roles in the human body. It is essential to a healthy immune system and plays an important role in the reproductive organs for both males and females. It also helps with the healing of wounds.

Sources of zinc include brewer's yeast, egg yolks, fish, lamb, liver, meats, pecans, and whole grains. Herbal sources include alfalfa, burdock root, kelp, mullein, nettle, and rose hips.

Frequently Asked Questions

I don't like the taste...

When we find distaste for a particular beverage or food it may be for several different reasons. It may be our bodies adapting to the new tastes and sensations. I am sure we all have memories of initially disliking something and then, after some time, really finding we enjoy it. I distinctly remember the first time I had brie cheese – I thought it was a practical joke! Years later, while living in France, I just couldn't get enough of it.

Disliking a certain taste may also be our body's way of communicating that we don't need this particular nourishment at this time. I think intuitively we know which is true. If you taste a particular NHI and find that every cell in your body is shaking in disgust, I would suggest trying a different herb. However, if you try a NHI and it tastes too "green" or the texture isn't your favorite, you can try the following to help your body's taste buds to adapt.

- Add a pinch of mint.
- A pinch of salt can reduce any bitterness you may be experiencing.
- Try using a lesser amount of herbs. You could start with a ½ ounce and slowly increase the herb material to a full ounce. Or you could make it with the full strength of herbs and dilute it with water.
- Most people seem to prefer their infusions room temperature or colder.
- Add a little honey or stevia.
- You can try mixing different herbs together. Nettle has a very strong taste, while oatstraw is much more mellow. Some find that by mixing the herbs they find wonderful concoctions that are pleasing to the palette as well. (Also see FAQ below, *Can I mix different herbs together?*)

Over time, as our taste buds change or as our nourishment needs change, we may find that a particular NHI that was once unpleasant is now quite pleasing. Also, we may find over time that we need less and less honey, salt, or mixing of herbs to enjoy the NHI. As you travel along your nourishing herbal infusions re-visit different herbs and different preparations.

Can I use fresh herbs?

We typically use dried herbs when making infusions because drying herbs breaks down their cell wall, enabling their nutrients to be extracted into the water with greater ease.

What if I don't drink it in time?

NHIs should be drunk in a 36-hour time period. If you find that you haven't drunk your mix, there are several things you can do besides pouring it down the drain.

- You can use it as a luxurious hair rinse – my best hair days always follow a nettle rinse.
- You can use it to fertilize plants – indoors and out.
- Or simply put it in your compost pile to nourish the soil.

Can I mix different herbs together?

Of course you can. When choosing my NHI herbs I like to “sample” all the options by smelling them, really looking at them, and enjoying the whole experience. In this way I can tune in to what my body is wanting, and sometimes I end up mixing several herbs in my infusion.

That being said, Susun Weed recommends trying just one herb at a time. In this way you can receive the full strength of one particular plant and really learn to recognize and appreciate the way in which your body interacts with individual plants.

Especially when starting out, trying just one herb at a time really helps you to form a relationship with that plant.

Are nourishing herbal infusions safe for children?

Absolutely. Please see Kimberly's section in this ebook for more information about nourishing herbal infusions and children. The herbs used in NHI are chosen because of their gentleness. Rather than thinking of them as medicine we can think of them as super foods that are beneficial to all, from the baby in the womb to the wisest of elders. The only herb I would caution against using with children is comfrey leaf.

Herbal Glossary

adaptogen: a nontoxic substance which helps the body to adapt to stressful situations while also normalizing physiology

alterative: gradually alters the body towards health, also often referred to as a blood cleanser. Alteratives work directly through the metabolism

anodyne: pain relieving

antibacterial: effective against bacteria

anticoagulant: prevents blood from clotting; blood thinner

antidepressant: relieves depression

antifungal: effective against fungal infections

anti-inflammatory: reduces inflammation

antimicrobial: kills or inhibits the growth of microorganisms

antineoplastic: inhibits or prevent the maturation and proliferation of unwanted cell growth that may become malignant

antioxidant: prevents free radical or oxidative damage

anti-pyretic: an herb that has aspirin like effects in the hypothalamus to lower a fever

antiseptic: prevents growth of microbes

antispasmodic: stops spasms

anti-tumor: inhibits growth of tumors

antiviral: inhibits growth of viruses

aphrodisiac: increases libido

aromatic digestant: promotes digestion through aromatic actions of moving energy and relieving stagnation (promoting peristalsis, expelling gas, etc)

astringent: tightens tissues; useful for toning organs, stopping diarrhea and other excessive fluid loss

bitter: a taste that stimulates salivation and the secretion of bile and hydrochloric acid to promote digestion of fats and oils

calmative: promotes calming and relaxing

carminative: expels gas from the intestines (often an aromatic digestive)

cell proliferant: promotes cell growth

cholagogue: stimulates bile flow from the gall bladder

circulatory stimulant: promotes circulation

demulcent: internally soothing; often times a mucilage that coats and protects the mucous membranes of the body

diaphoretic: It is important to recognize the difference between a stimulating and relaxing diaphoretic because they are used in different situations.

Relaxing diaphoretics relax the exterior to allow for heat to leave the body.

Stimulating diaphoretics engage the tissues to help push the heat out through an increase in circulation. A stimulating diaphoretic has an initial warming sensation in the core of the body.

digestant: aids digestion

diuretic: stimulates urination

emetic: promotes vomiting

emmenagogue: promotes menstruation

emollient: soothing and softening to the skin

expectorant: There are two types of expectorants and consideration should be given to the type of expectorant needed.

Soothing expectorant: usually mucilaginous in nature it thins mucous and hydrates mucous membranes.

Stimulating expectorant acts by irritating or stimulating the production of mucous.

hemostatic: stops bleeding

hepatoprotective: protects the liver

hypotensive: lowers blood pressure

immunomodulator: promotes health in the immune system by modulating extremes in hyper or hypo action

laxative: promotes bowel movement

lymphatic: promotes movement in the lymphatic system; an example is reducing enlarged lymph glands

mood elevator: promotes a happier disposition

nervine: acts on the nervous system

Relaxing nervine: relaxes constricted or contracted tissues in the nervous system. .

Stimulating nervine stimulates stagnant or overly relaxed tissues of the nervous system.

nutritive: contains a high amount of vitamins and minerals

phagocytosis: a process in which foreign substances, including pathogens, are removed from the body. An important function of the immune system.

sialagogue: promotes the salivary glands to secrete saliva

styptic: stops bleeding usually through astringent actions

sudorific: causing profuse sweating

tonic: gradually increases organ tone and is often considered invigorating

trophorestorative: a nourishing herb or food that usually has an affinity to a particular organ or system of the body; it acts on the particular system to bring it into balance and can also restore function

vulnerary: heals wounds

Additional Resources

Internet

HerbMentor.com an inspiring website that combines an innovative multimedia herbal education with a community of herbalists

LearningHerbs.com full of free herbal content including a free course on supermarket herbalism

AnimaHealingArts.org a fabulous blog and website by herbalist Kiva Rose. Her beautiful herbal monographs teach me something new no matter how many times I read them. She inspired the supporting herbs section in this ebook.

Herbcraft.org a treasure trove of information for herbalists maintained by jim mcdonald

Books

Nutritional Herbology, Mark Pederson

The Healing Power of Minerals, Special Nutrients and Trace Elements, Paul Bergner

Healing Wise, Susun Weed

Herbal Medicine from the Heart of the Earth, Sharol Tilgner

Opening Our Wild Hearts to the Healing Herbs, Gail Faith Edwards

Buying Herbs

Mountain Rose Herbs www.iwantherbs.com This outstanding company provides high quality organic herbs.

Ancestry Herbals www.ancestryherbals.com This small herb farm in the Methow Valley offers fresh herbs during the growing season. Also look for small herb farms near you.

Oregon's Wild Harvest www.oregonwildharvest.com A fabulous herb farm in Oregon offering a variety of bulk herbs.



About the author

Rosalee de la Forêt is an herbalist and Structural Medicine Specialist who lives on the edge of the wilderness in the Northeastern Cascade Mountains of Washington State. She is an herbal consultant for HerbMentor.com where she enjoys answering questions in the community forums and providing herbal education through articles, videos, and photography.

She and her husband are instructors at [Methow Wilderness School](http://MethowWildernessSchool.com) where they enjoy helping others connect to the natural world.

Rosalee has a private practice located in Twisp, WA where she offers herbal consultations to educate people on how to beneficially use herbs for optimal health.

She also practices Structural Medicine, a type of integrative bodywork to release muscle tension and create freedom of movement by aligning the body in the gravitational field.

You can follow Rosalee's herbal adventures on her blog
MethowValleyHerbs.blogspot.com

Disclaimer:

It is my hope that this article helps you and your loved ones maintain good health. Please keep in mind that although I value our right to take our health in our own hands, I am not a doctor and am not diagnosing, prescribing, or treating in this article. Please consult your family practitioner in the event of serious illness or if you have special considerations when ill or when taking herbs.