

Tisane



ti-sane ti-'zan, -'zän, n.

Etymology: Middle English, from Middle French, from Latin *ptisana*, from Greek *ptisanē*, literally, crushed barley, from *ptissein* to crush -
Date: 14th century : an infusion (as of dried herbs) used as a beverage or for medicinal effects

HEADLINES

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Mission Statement:

The goal of the Eastern Kingdom Herbalists' and Apothecaries' Guild is to encourage study, teaching and practice of medieval herb uses, as well as study of medieval apothecary and pharmacy practice, in the East Kingdom. The Guild should serve as a conduit for herbalists and apothecaries in the kingdom to communicate with and learn from each other, and to disseminate knowledge about medieval herbalism and pharmacy to others.

From the Chronicler

Greetings!

It's the eternal Cry of the Chronicler — I need material!

Please — if you have a good class handout, if you've been doing some book research, if you have an experiment whose results can be shared, send it in! If you or your local group has a photo or two, send it in, too. (We haven't had any pictures to share for quite a while — surely someone has a camera?)

There's plenty going on, see page three for some ideas about what members are doing.

And there are always classes, for ourselves and for others. Consider teaching an "introduction to herbs" class at your next event. If there are two or three of you nearby, schedule and advertise a "local guild" meeting at your next event and see

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To get on our mailing list, e-mail to joanne@jafath.com or drop an old-fashioned note to the return address on the mailer.

If you are on line, join us on the *sca-herbalist* mailing list (go to www.yahogroups.com/subscribe/sca-herbalist to sign up) or the *East-specific EK-Herb* (sign up from our website at www.eastkingdom.org/guilds/herb).

Do you have a favorite herb, gardening tip, historical tidbit, or recipe? Maybe a review of a book you think the world should share? That's perfect for this newsletter — send it to the Chronicler!

Will the real Celandine please stand up?



Celandine (Greater) *Chelidonium majus*

Chelidonium, garden celandine, tetterwort, kill-wart, wart flower, wartweed, wartwort, felonwort, cockfoot, devil's-milk, Jacob's ladder, swallow-wort, wretweed

Celandine (Lesser) *Ranunculus ficaria*

Pilewort, fogwort, smallwort

They're not even related! (And neither of them is the buttercup, although the Lesser Celandine belongs to the same botanical family as that third bright yellow flower). But they look enough alike to have caused confusion — Gerard being a good example. Mrs. Grieve, in fact, illustrates her section on the Lesser Celandine with a picture of the Greater Celandine.

For our purposes, *Chelidonium majus* has up to ten petals and blooms all summer, while *Ranunculus ficaria* has only five and is a spring flower.

The Lesser Celandine appears in a 1533 German herbal.

Culpeper was familiar with both plants; he recommends the Greater as eye medicine, tooth-

ache, jaundice, and ulcers, the Lesser against hemorrhoids, the king's evil, and tumors in general.

On the other hand, the *Herbal PDR* only recognizes *Chelidonium majus*, listing both the root and the aerial parts. The herb has "mild analgesic, choleric, antimicrobial, oncostatic and central-sedative effects. It's possible effects on blood pressure are under investigation. It is approved by the German "commission E" for liver and gall-bladder complaints, while Chinese medicine uses it for many of the same purposes as did Culpeper. The root has not been as fully tested. Overall, the *PDR* lists no health hazards or side effects, but warns that contact with the eyes is not recommended.

Mrs. Grieve passes along the following "old-time" recipe for use against sore throats:

Take a pinte of whitewine, A good handfull of Sallendine, and boile them well together; put to it A piece of the best Roach Allome, sweeten it with English honey, and use it.

SOURCES

www.botanical.com, (*A Modern Herbal* online)
<http://info.med.yale.edu/library/historical/culpeper/culpeper.htm> (Culpeper on line, Yale University)
PDR for Herbal Medicine



What Have We Been Doing?

Recently, on the e-mail list EKHerbs, our Guildmistress/Agitator asked what members have done over the past year. Here's a sampling of the reports:

- ☐ ... LOTS of dye projects - right now I have quite a few Snapple bottles stuffed with bone beads and various dyes in various liquids (tap water, vodka, rubbing alcohol), and I won't open them till September! We had two Dye Days in this area as well, and we used things like indigo, mullein, Queen Anne's lace, logwood, cochineal, turmeric, weld.
- ☐ ... some bergamot-scented Castile soap via rebatching.
- ☐ Lots of anti-bug mix was used this year (equal parts pennyroyal and lavender), it kept the local flea infestation out of my house!
- ☐ I just dyed 10 yds of silk habotai a lovely pale pink using safflower.
- ☐ I have a walnut dye bath out in the garage with a piece of leather gradually getting it's color changed, and a jar of turmeric dye bath with pearls in it. Both will probably be opened just before Pennsic.
- ☐ I have been continuing my ongoing research in period herbal medicinals and cosmetics.
- ☐ ... experimenting with "distilling" rose water using pre-still technology, with rather miserable results.

And finally, developing new recipes:

Sorren's Elder Syrup

1 cup Dried Elder Berries
1/4 cup Dried Elder Flowers
1/4 cup of Dried Echinacea Purpurea
1 tablespoon of Shaved Licorice Root
2 cups Purified Water
1/2 cup honey

Simmer; all the herbs in two cups of water on low heat; for 30 minutes. About halfway through the cooking process, mash all the ingredients; until the elderberries come apart. Allow the mixture to cool to room temperature then strain through a cheesecloth or strainer (compost or dispose of herbs at this point). Stir the half cup of honey into the mixture, pour into a sealable container(s) and let it sit for 24 hours in a cold environment (the refrigerator if you are mundaning it, a bowl of covered ice if you are going period) before using.

Dosage is two tablespoons every four hours for adults, one teaspoon every four for small children. Don't use it for babies, as it has uncooked honey in the mix.

I have been keeping my supply refrigerated just to be on the safe side, and using it up almost immediately, so I cannot report on the shelf-life. You really cannot overdose on this. Children love the taste. It is good for soothing coughs, fevers, and usual cold symptoms without making you drowsy or tipsy like OTC cough syrups. For those that prefer the tipsy stuff, mixing this syrup in with your favorite hot toddy recipe is very yummy! Hope you enjoy!

Sorren the Red; AKA: Sorren Rau
I would ask that if anyone uses it,
they do me the honor of giving
me credit for it in some way.

Cinnamon Varieties

by Francesco Sirene

There are a wide variety of types of cinnamon that have been used. In present international trade, there are three main varieties available. 1] Ceylon cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*) 2] Indonesian cinnamon/cassia (*Cinnamomum burmanii*, usually) and 3] Chinese cassia (*Cinnamomum cassia*). If you live in the United States or Canada, what you will find in your stores as "Cinnamon" is the Indonesian variety; in most of the world the word "cinnamon" today is reserved for Ceylon cinnamon, and the other varieties are called "cassia" (and are sold separately). In China the indigenous variety is used, but is unlikely to be called cinnamon -- rather it is known under the Chinese name of "kwei".

Ceylon cinnamon is a pale tan color, and comes in rolled quills made up of many paper-thin layers of the bark rolled up in one another. It is quite fragile, cinnamon-y but quite sweet. My experience is that many of my customers like to eat it straight.

Indonesian cinnamon/cassia is more of a red-brown color. It also comes in quills, but each quill is a single roll of a bark the thickness of heavy cardboard. The cinnamon-y flavor is stronger and almost pungent, and the wood is harder.



Bark of the cinnamon tree

Chinese cassia is usually quite dark brown. It normally comes not in rolled quills but rather as irregular pieces of thick bark, some of which may be partially curved and others flat. It has a very strong cinnamon-y flavor, but little sweetness.

Which of these would you use in your recipe? Aha — here is where the historical argumentation comes in. At this time, I won't go into the issue of whether the materials the Ancient Egyptians imported from Punt were actually cinnamon, nor the issue of where the cinnamon and cassia the Greeks and Romans imported via the Red Sea came from. These highly-contentious issues are not actually relevant to the subject, since the earliest reference to cinnamon or cassia being used in European cookery do not come until the eighth century (the monks of St. Gall put it in fish dishes). Before that time in Europe cinnamon and cassia were used only in medicine and perfumery.

The name met with in European recipes is usually "cannell" or some variation, based on description of the sticks (cannell - channel - canal . . . all convey the idea of the grooved shape of the bark). Sometimes "synamone" or some

variant form carries over the idea of a superior variety, as that was used by the Romans to distinguish the best.

In Arabic sources the confusion can catch up with you. "Darchini" is the term most often used, for the more desired variety. The name is usually taken to mean "wood of China" (thus, for example, in various translations of Arabic cookbooks where the translators put "Chinese cinnamon" for this word). However, the word was borrowed by the Arabs from Persian or India, and probably the "chini" means "sweet" rather than "Chinese", so the actual meaning would be

"sweet-wood" (so the origin is less definite). The other word commonly used, for a less expensive variety, was "kirfah", meaning "bark". (A third term, "salikeh", denoted a clove-flavored bark).

And what was the actual variety used in period? Almost certainly the usual cinnamon available to users in early medieval Europe and the Middle East was various sorts coming from north and western India, particularly *Cinnamomum tamala* (tej) and *Cinnamomum iners*, nei-



ther of which are offered in international trade today. There is no evidence to suggest Indonesian cinnamon was coming west at that time, and the common assumption that Chinese cassia was the "darchini" of the Arabs is also highly unlikely, since the extensive Chinese records give not the slightest hint of a westward export of kwei in this era. The various grades of cannell/synamon and kirfah/darchini would be simply an empirical assessment of the pungency, sweetness, and palatability (both *Cinnamomum tamala* and *Cinnamomum iners* are extremely variable in flavor, depending on where and in what conditions they grow). [Probably, in practical terms, at least until I line up a supplier in India to get the two obscure varieties, your best substitute in terms of flavor would be Indonesian cinnamon/cassia.]

All this changed in the late thirteenth century, when Ceylon first began to export its variety of cinnamon (there is quite a story to why Ceylon cinnamon only began to be exported at this time, involving the kings of Ceylon needing to find a use for the tribute labor of a group of immigrants who had been granted land, but I won't go into it here -- ask me if you want the details). This new cinnamon from Ceylon was so much more desirable in flavor that it quickly took over the darchini/synamon name used for the "best" quality. This Ceylon cinnamon quickly became the desired variety, at a cost several times that of ordinary cinnamon from India (so much so that an English recipe for hypocras says to use synamome for lords, but that cannell is good enough for commoners). So for recipes after the thirteenth century, Ceylon cinnamon would be the choice of cooks if they could afford it.

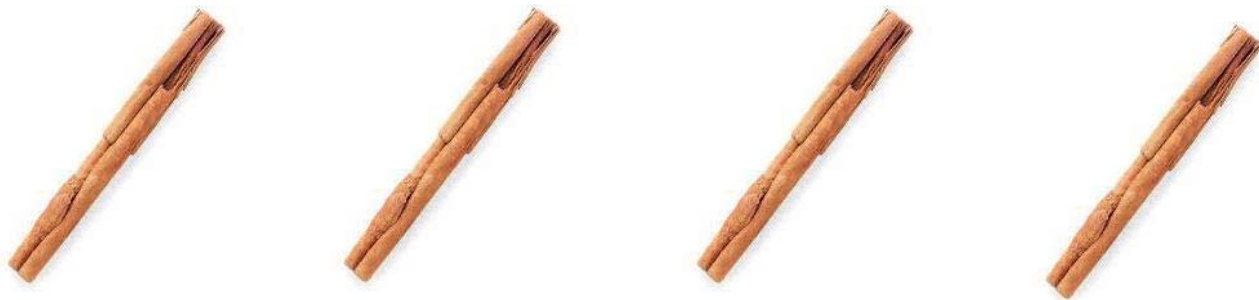
Moving out of period, but still interesting, is the explanation for why the usual North American spice is cassia, while Europe and most of the world uses Ceylon cinnamon. This is a result of the American Revolution. The newly-independent Americans quickly started their own trading ventures to Asia in search of spices, but they could not get access to Indian and Ceylonese supplies because India and Ceylon were in British hands (and the British didn't allow foreign traders). Instead the Americans got their pepper and other spices in the Indonesian islands, which were under rather looser Dutch control -- and the cinnamon available there was the Indonesian cinnamon/cassia variety. (The Americans also purchased some Chinese cassia.)

Yours garrulously, Francesco Sirene

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Visit our Website at <http://www.silk.net/sirene/>

Thanks to Stefan's Florilegium, www.florilegium.com, for making this article available.



From the Chronicler

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who shows up to talk about herbs, gardening, stillroom skills, apothecary practice, and/or herbs. (There will be such a gathering at K&Q Bardic Championships in Nordenhall, for instance.)

Our website, www.eastkingdom.org/guilds/herb, has been cleaned up and reorganized, thanks to Corwyn Silveroak. All the past issues of *Tisane* are now available there!



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