



*"Peace on earth will come to stay, when we  
live Christmas every day."*

... Helen Steiner Rice

# SAGE LEAVES

## **Herb Society of America – Wisconsin Unit**

November/December 2022 – Vol XXXXIII #6

### **Unit Meetings**

#### **Saturday, November 19, 9:30 Social, 10:00 am Meeting**

**Program:** Ginger Herb Study (Ginger is International Herb of the Year for 2023) –  
Roundtable Discussion (Everyone should come prepared to talk about  
Ginger)

**Location:** St. Christopher Church

#### **Wednesday, December 7, Holiday Luncheon, 10 a.m. Social, Noon Luncheon**

Donation collection for Repairers of the Breach (see invitation for suggested  
items)

**Location:** The Town Club, 7950 N Santa Monica Blvd., Fox Point, WI 53217

Editor: Diane Kescenovitz, kescenovitz.diane@att.net – if you will be going out of town for an extended period of  
time, please notify Diane of change of address or request e-mail copy – thanks!

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Wisconsin Unit Web: Herb-Society-Wisconsin.org (Editor: Diane Kescenovitz)

Herb Society of America office: Herbs@HerbSociety.org

Herb Society of America web: [www.herbsociety.org](http://www.herbsociety.org) – reminder: password for members is HSA-WI@76

# NEWSBUDS...

## From the Chair:



We're getting a taste of colder temps, so it's time to get cozy! I enjoy curling up in the recliner with my favorite afghan and am currently reading, *Death by Darjeeling –A Tea Shop Mystery* by Laura Child. This is a selected book for the HSA Book Club. I have brought in containers of lemon grass, scented geranium, chives and coleus to winter over in my basement—I'm already planning for next spring. Have you saved herbs for winter cooking?

Our October meeting with Louise and Victorian Fans was delightful. I'm looking forward to our research and recipes on the Herb of the Year---Ginger for the next meeting in November. And of course, we anticipate celebrating the holiday season together at the Town Club in December.

Dates to save for herb events: May 5<sup>th</sup> Madison Herb Fair at Olbrich, April 1 WI Unit Spring Symposium, April 26-29 Ed Con in Baton Rouge, May 20<sup>th</sup> WI Unit Herb Fair at Boerner and July Sunday TBA Herb Day at Boerner.

Do check out the HSA website for information. Also, the blog has information on caraway- November Herb of the Month and indigo that I found very interesting.

<https://herbsocietyblog.wordpress.com/>

As we experience more morning frosts, I hope you find your cozy vibes for fall,

Melody

## **Herb of the Month for November 2022** **CRANBERRY (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*)** (Nino Ridgway)

Cranberry is a staple fruit in the northern United States and Canada. Wisconsin is #1 in cranberry production, far ahead of Massachusetts, Oregon, and Washington. Cranberry is closely related to blueberry and has a similar requirement for acidic soil. Soil pH must be 5 or lower. Since Milwaukee area soils have a pH of about 7, cranberries will not grow here. They love the deep acidic soils found in the natural bogs of Central Wisconsin, in the Wausau area, the heart of cranberry country. Most cranberry bogs are artificially constructed so that water levels may be adjusted to accommodate various agricultural activities. The annual harvest which involves floating the fruits and raking them onto conveyor belts is a much-loved fall spectacle.

Cranberry fruits have been used medicinally for centuries. Many of us have taken cranberry juice at some time to help prevent urinary tract infections. It is also used to treat kidney stones and to prevent the common cold, probably due to its high vitamin C content. The primary use of cranberry, however, is as a tart culinary ingredient in baked goods, juices, desserts, salads, jellies. Cranberry is often paired with apples for pies, cheese for salads, and nuts for baked goods. Cranberry sauce is an important accompaniment for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners.

## Herb of the Month for December 2022

### VANILLA (*Vanilla planifolia*)

(Nino Ridgway)

Vanilla comes from the pods (also called beans) of the vining vanilla orchid, which is native to Mexico. It grows only at lower elevations with high humidity and rainfall. Vanilla orchids do not bloom until the 3<sup>rd</sup> year. In nature, they are pollinated by *Melipona* bees, found only in Mexico. In other countries, and commercially in Mexico, vanilla orchid flowers are pollinated by hand. Since each flower is open for only one day, the entire crop must be inspected daily for open flowers. Once the flower is fertilized, it takes several more months for the pods and seeds to form and mature. Each flower produces one pod, each pod several hundred tiny seeds. When pods are ripe, there is a complicated harvesting, cleaning, and curing procedure, not unlike coffee. This is why your bottle of true vanilla extract is so expensive!

The finest vanilla is grown in the lowland rainforest of Madagascar and nearby islands. Vanilla is such a high-value crop that it is a frequent target of vanilla thieves who steal the pods off the vines in the night. Vanilla plantations hire security guards with dogs to thwart vanilla rustlers. Growers may also harvest the beans before they are completely ripe, resulting in an inferior grade of vanilla.

Much of the world's vanilla crop comes to America for our ice cream. Vanilla is used to flavor coffee, cocoa, cocktails, and other beverages. Where it shines, however, is in baked goods where it not only lends its own flavor but also enhances the taste of eggs, milk, and sugar as well as chocolate, cinnamon, lemon, and other herbs and spices. The culinary world would indeed be boring without vanilla.

An interesting aside: Artificial vanilla flavoring was once obtained from castoreum, a substance milked from the castor glands of beavers. True! And YUCK! Now it is made from petrochemicals in the laboratory, which isn't much of an improvement. Splurge and buy the real thing.

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Hello,



A few words to say how much I've enjoyed sharing with you and that I am sorry to be stepping down as *Out & About* chair, but do feel that you deserve someone who is actually more 'out and about' than I am and who will be able to offer you more to discover and explore.

In closing,

May you enjoy your new journeys, *Out & About* with many or few. Knowing that we hope God's blessings will always follow you.

Joanne

P.S. - 1200 people called WCTC for luncheon reservations and, although I started calling 3 minutes before the scheduled time and kept at it for over an hour, by the time Diane and I got through on a conference call, they were already full. We're on a waiting list for French or Greek lunch. We already have 4 people signed up and as they are only allowing tables for 6, only 2 more will be able to sign up.

# **Recipes**

## **Herbed Mushrooms with White Wine**

(Elaine Wilhelm – 9/22 Mtg - Allrecipes)

1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 ½ pounds fresh mushrooms  
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning  
¼ cup dry white wine  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
salt and pepper to taste  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

Heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat. Place mushrooms in the skillet, season with Italian seasoning, and cook 10 minutes, stirring frequently.

Mix the wine and garlic into the skillet, and continue cooking until most of the wine has evaporated. Season with salt and pepper, and sprinkle with chives. Continue cooking one minute.

## **Chinese Noodle Salad**

(Susan Bigham – 10/22 Mtg)

Crunchy Mix:

2 pkg Ramen noodle soup (discard seasoning pkg) Crush noodles 1/2 stick butter 1 cup slivered almonds 1/2 cup sesame seeds

Saute the above until very brown. Add sesame seeds last because they burn easily. Place on cookie sheet lined with paper towel to absorb extra butter and cool. Can be made days ahead and stored in an air tight container.

Dressing:

1 cup Extra Virgin olive oil 1/2 – 1 cup sugar 1/2 cup Balsamic vinegar 2T soy sauce 1/8 tsp ground ginger 1/8 tsp garlic powder

Dissolve sugar in vinegar, soy sauce, ginger, garlic powder, then add olive oil and mix. Best flavor if made ahead.

1 head Napa (Chinese) cabbage, washed, cored, sliced into bite size thin strips.

(chiffonade) Can be done ahead and kept refrigerated.

5 green onions, washed, roots removed, thinly sliced. Like cabbage, can be prepared ahead.

This salad is best dressed just before serving by tossing everything together. However, if preferred, onions and crunchy mix can be offered separately as toppings.

## **CIAMBELLI (Little Rings)**

The real name for this antique recipe is *Ciambelli al Vino*, as wine is a key ingredient! For centuries this simple (Vegan) cookie/cracker has been enjoyed all over Italy, particularly as it is as easy to make as it is pleasant to eat. There are no end of variations, as each region, village, or family has their own recipe...some for savory rings, some for sweet ones. An old recipe went like this: 1 glass of sugar, 1 glass of oil, 1 glass of red wine, 1 spoon of baking powder and flour. After that you were on your own! This is the requested recipe I used for the *Ciambelli* that many of you tasted at our September meeting.

In a large mixing bowl place 2 cups red wine (white, or marsala work well too),  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups sugar,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup extra virgin olive oil (canola will do too), 2 teaspoons baking powder, and a pinch of salt, and 1 teaspoon ground anise seed.

Whisk for a minute to mix well, then add bit by bit 4 cups of flour. You may need more to make the dough stick together (use your hands) like a soft cookie dough. Cover and let sit for 20 minutes, then take a small piece of dough (about walnut size), roll it on unfloured wooden surface to form a ball. Then roll it between your fingers to make a pencil shape about 6" long. Roll the strip in sugar, place on baking sheet lined with oven paper, and twist it to make a circle, lightly pressing the ends together. Give or take, you will make about 4 dozen rings. Bake at 350 for about 10 minutes, until you can pick up a ring and see the bottom just turning golden. Store in a tin box, and if you hide them well, they should last at least 2 weeks.

For savory rings, eliminate the sugar. Flavor with hot red pepper flakes – or finely chopped rosemary (A sprinkle of salt before these are baked makes them extra good) - or the classic is to use just anise seeds.

NOTE: The alcohol of the wine will bake away, so these rings can be eaten by everyone from 1 to 100. They are good as dipping biscuits too.

*Enjoy..alla salute! Helene Pizzi (9/22 Mtg)*

November and December

11/1 Gail Gabrelian  
11/9 Mary Kay McDevitt  
11/15 Shelly Culea  
11/16 Diane Clark  
11/16 Jean Longenecker  
11/30 Ellen Hayward  
12/1 Maureen Powers-Todt  
12/30 Denise Nelson  
12/31 AJ Star



### **Wintery Reminder**



If Milwaukee Public Schools are closed for inclement weather on a Unit meeting day, our meeting will be cancelled also. If you are out of the closing announcement area, please send me your cell number now and I will send you a text. Melody



**Diane Kescenovitz**  
**2427 W Plum Tree Court**  
**Mequon, WI 53092**  
**(Return Service Requested)**



***The Green Thumb Turns Brown***

*Now I put my plot to rest  
Just as birds desert their nest  
I clear spent stems and turn the soil  
Loathe to end the season's toil.  
But falling leaves in brown and red  
Help craft a patch for winter's bed  
Soon earth will slumber day and night  
Beneath a quilt of snowy white.  
Garden plans await a fresh spring start  
But spend the winter blooming in my heart.*

*... J E Janssen "Under the Leaf"*



If you have an event, article, recipe, etc. in which you feel members might be interested, please send to Diane at [kescenovitz.diane@att.net](mailto:kescenovitz.diane@att.net) and I will try to put it in the next issue of SAGE LEAVES if there is room.

Future SAGE LEAVES will be mailed out to arrive by 1/1/23 and 3/1/23.

