

# Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme

by Karen Unruh



With this title, I hope you are thinking of a song from the past. This month I want to share some of the medicinal qualities of four herbs that I know you have in your garden and that you do use in your cooking. What first drew my attention to these four herbs was a recipe titled 'Simon-and-Garfunkel Black Bean Soup'. Now you know which song was going through my mind and your mind as well. I have a wonderful food book called 'Meals that Heal' by Lisa Turner, published in 1996,

so not available new but perhaps you might find one second hand. Every recipe has ingredients for healing our bodies. This 'Simon-and Garfunkel Black Bean Soup' calls for 1/4 cup of each of these four herbs, finely chopped, for a total of 1 cup of herbs for the recipe with 6 to 8 servings. The herbs are added in the last 5 minutes of cooking so they are fresh and vital in taste and purpose.

Our parsley, *Petroselinum crispum*, deserves to be much more than a garnish on the side of the plate. Medicinally, it is an effective diuretic, helping the body to get rid of excess water, and using parsley as an infusion is the easiest way to accomplish this. As with other herbal diuretics, like dandelion leaf, parsley maintains appropriate potassium levels. When using a diuretic, we are in most cases only treating a symptom, and if a person has, say, an ankle that is swollen, it is important to look for the reason that it is swollen and treat the cause as well as the symptom. Using herbal terms, we say that parsley is an emmenagogue – it stimulates the menstrual process. This is why parsley should not be used in medicinal dosage during pregnancy as it may stimulate the womb. As a food herb, the dosage would not be strong enough to cause a problem. Pregnant women can certainly eat parsley safely. And parsley is carminative – it eases flatulence and any pain caused by gas.

The next three herbs have one quality in common; a very important quality in a time of infection prevention with hand washing encouraged. Sage, rosemary and thyme are all antiseptic . . . they kill germs.

Sage, *Salvia officinalis*, is excellent to use as a gargle for mouth and throat conditions, or if gums or the tongue are inflamed. Making an infusion and using it cold would be

how to prepare this gargle. Another reason to have a cup of cold sage infusion regularly is that it really does cut back on hot flashes of menopause. I have been using the tablet form of sage that A. Vogel makes and find that this is especially helpful.

Rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis*, is wonderfully aromatic, and very cleansing. Putting rosemary cuttings in a bowl, filling with boiling water, and leaning over the bowl with a towel over your head capturing the aromas, is a wonderful way to clear the breathing passages. And, being antiseptic, it destroys germs. Rosemary stimulates the circulation, calms and tones digestion, and calms the nerves as well. This ability to stimulate one body system and to calm another, makes rosemary a useful remedy when one is under psychological tension. Another area that rosemary can stimulate is the hair follicles, and a rosemary infusion hair rinse or a rosemary oil can be used to stimulate hair growth for thinning hair. It is also being recognized as a memory aid with its stimulation of blood in the brain.

Thyme, *Thymus vulgaris*, is strongly antiseptic, so thyme can be used like rosemary for respiratory infections. An infusion will come to the aid of any digestive infection and thyme is also a good carminative, which means that it is useful for settling an upset stomach. Keeping a thyme infusion in a spray bottle at the kitchen sink, and using this to antiseptically clean up the food area is an excellent idea which smells good too.

Each of these four herbs is so valuable to use regularly as an infusion. If we can make a habit of putting 4 ounces of fresh herb in a quart canning jar, filling it with boiling water and letting it sit overnight, we have our healing infusion which can be strained, kept in the refrigerator and used as needed.

The soup recipe (Page 5) has a good quantity of these herbs. It truly is a healing soup. It takes some time to collect and chop the herbs, but the result is worth it. Enjoy!

### Karen's Recipe

#### **SIMON-AND-GARFUNKEL BLACK BEAN SOUP** Serves 6 to 8

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 tablespoon olive oil                | 1. Heat oil in a large soup pot and lightly fry onion, salt, and pepper until onion is translucent.   |
| 1 small red onion, chopped            |   |
| 1 teaspoon sea salt                   |   |
| 1/2 teaspoon black pepper             |   |
| 1/2 cup chopped carrots               | 2. Stir in carrots, tomato, celery, and potato, and cook until tomato pieces begin to give up their juices. Add vegetable stock and simmer, covered, until vegetables are tender. |
| 1/2 cup diced tomato                  |   |
| 1/2 cup chopped celery                |   |
| 1/2 cup diced potato, with skins on   |   |
| 3 cups vegetable stock                |   |
| 2 cups cooked black beans             |   |
| 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh parsley  | 3. Add beans, parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme, and heat through until flavours are well blended (about 5 to 10 minutes).   |
| 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh sage     |   |
| 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh rosemary |   |
| 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh thyme    |   |