



*“A spine-tingling, heart-opening, and
pulse-quickenning awakening of all of our senses.”*

— **Regena Thomashauer**, *New York Times* best-selling author

APHRODISIAC

THE HERBAL PATH TO HEALTHY
SEXUAL FULFILLMENT AND VITAL LIVING

KIMBERLY GALLAGHER

CO-FOUNDER OF LEARNINGHERBS

PRAISE FOR *APHRODISIAC*

“Kimberly Gallagher’s life-changing, life-enhancing, and life-expanding book *Aphrodisiac* is quite simply delicious. She takes the reader on a spine-tingling, heart-opening, and pulse-quickenning awakening of all of our senses, leading each of us to experience the expansive wonder of all the sensual delights that life can offer.”

– Regena Thomashauer, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Pussy: A Reclamation* and Creatrix of Mama Gena’s School of Womanly Arts

“*Aphrodisiac* is a sensuous delight and a love letter to life itself. It invites and entices us to engage in the everyday aspects of life as sensuous acts of pleasure, and then goes on to explain in lovely detail exactly how to do so. This is Eros as its finest. Kimberly will help you create new levels of rapture and ecstasy as well as deeper heart connections.”

– Rosemary Gladstar, herbalist and author

“*Aphrodisiac* is the book that I’ve always wanted! It encompasses a truly holistic understanding of sexuality that includes our relationship with the natural world and its healing, life-enhancing, Eros-encouraging plants. Just reading the recipes alone is a huge turn-on! Let Kimberly be your brilliant, wise, and empowering guide to the luscious world of wondrous plants (along with rituals, meditations, and more) that have the power to enhance our erotic connections with ourselves, with others, and with nature.”

– Sheri Winston, wholistic sexuality teacher, author of the award-winning *Women’s Anatomy of Arousal* and *Succulent SexCraft*, founder of the Intimate Arts Center

“In an age characterized by stress and uncertainty, *Aphrodisiac* invites us to remember pleasure and how good life can feel. Imagine all the good things you know you should be doing for yourself and your relationships—connecting with nature, pampering yourself, improving communication, having mind-blowing orgasms . . . the things we aspire to do and rarely find the time for.

Aphrodisiac is a guide to discovering self-care, joy, love, and beauty.”

– Thomas Easley, author of *The Modern Herbal Dispensatory*

“Fifty years after the Sexual Revolution, when we were tossed into the mix with no information, guidelines, or help, Kimberly Gallagher brings us a book to finally fully accept ourselves and enjoy the vital, erotic side of our existence. The world has been waiting for such gentle, pure guidance.”

– Tina Sams, Editor, *Essential Herbal Magazine*

“While plants have been used to enliven our sensuality since time immemorial, the idea of ‘aphrodisiacs’ is too often presented as something spurious, or something coercive. In reality, a person’s sexuality is as important to their wellness as their digestion. Kimberly Gallagher offers us a guidebook to the use of herbs known to connect us to the fullness of our lives’ and bodies’ sensual health.”

– jim mcdonald, herbalist

“Within just a few pages of *Aphrodisiac*, your center of gravity changes in relation to your concepts around sensuality, sexuality, and pleasure. This veritable feast of the senses will rock your world, leading you on a journey of sensory revelry unlike what you have experienced before. Kimberly Gallagher is your artful guide in discovering greater sexual fulfillment and harnessing sexual creativity to fuel all aspects of your life.”

– Kami McBride, author of *The Herbal Kitchen*

“Kimberly Gallagher elevates the path of herbal aphrodisiacs to a higher plane, so that every reader may find steps to liberating deep desire and expressing joy. Plants on the physical plane provide sweet adventures for each of our paths to erotic bliss. *Aphrodisiac* should be given to every person who has loved and wants to love.”

– Amanda McQuade Crawford, MA, MFT, MCPP, RH(AHG), Consulting Medical Herbalist

“Kimberly Gallagher has created a sumptuous feast for the senses, as she not only explores the use of herbal aphrodisiacs, but gently guides the reader towards a resplendent state of self-love and nurturance within relationship. Drawing upon a thorough review of the scientific and sexual literature, she explores aphrodisiac and vitality-enhancing herbs. *Aphrodisiac* is a well-rounded exploration of the sexual potency of herbal medicine.”

– Todd Caldecott, author of *Food as Medicine*

“*Aphrodisiac* is a must-have for all lovers seeking healthy and fun ways to enhance intimacy. The book itself is as beautiful as its content, making reading as pleasurable as implementing its teachings. Whether you’re looking for a little warmup or ready to crank the fire to high, this book will help you get there!”

– Emily Ruff, Director of Sage Mountain Botanical Sanctuary

“*Aphrodisiac* is a beautiful ode to love and healing where healthy sexuality, as a personal exploration, lies at the core of vibrant living. Kimberly offers us an opportunity to slow down and savor this enchanting journey, full of nurturing lifestyle support and herbal treasures to help us fall in love with life, ourselves, and our lovers—if we so choose.”

– Dina Falconi, author of *Earthly Bodies & Heavenly Hair*

“Are you primed and poised to spice up your love life and fully explore your sensuality? Kimberly Gallagher has artfully strewn the botanical path to sexual fulfillment throughout the lush pages of *Aphrodisiac*. You’ll find a refreshing blend of inspiration and guidance for living a richer life, filled with earthly pleasures.”

– Juliet Blankespoor, Director of the Chestnut School of Herbal Medicine

“*Aphrodisiac* is a guide for living with heightened senses, so we can enjoy life. Kimberly Gallagher’s guide blends practical herbal and life strategies with inspiration and beauty. This book is for anyone who is ready to walk a path of erotic fulfillment.”

– Bevin Clare, M.S., R.H., CNS, author of *Spice Apothecary*

“*Aphrodisiac* redefines the word to encompass not just herbal remedies for sexual stimulation, but also using plants to help us heal. Part herbal, part relationship guide, and part cookbook to steam up life in the bedroom, *Aphrodisiac* is an incredible resource to open up an often neglected, but important, aspect of herbal medicine.”

– Sajah Popham, author of *Evolutionary Herbalism*

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KIMBERLY GALLAGHER



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London • Sydney • New Delhi

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Introduction

Take a moment right now to lightly and slowly brush one finger across your lips. Feel the shape of them. Tune in to the exquisite sensation of your own touch. Sink into the joy of sensuality.

Sensual pleasure and healthy sexuality are our birthright. They are sources of deep satisfaction, joy, creativity, self-confidence, and success. They are fundamentally about connection—connection to our bodies, each other, and the world around us.

This book is a journey of exploration into the world of connection and sensation. The path we are stepping onto together is one of curiosity and discovery about our full capacity for pleasure and the deliciousness of living a sensually alive, vital, and even ecstatic life. I am your guide on this journey and the plants are our allies.

I have been working with herbs for the past 20 years. My husband, John, and I began as herbalists just as we were starting our family.

He was apprenticing at RavenCroft Garden when I was pregnant with our son, and the herbs naturally wove themselves in to our lives together. Just after my daughter was born, I also completed a three-year herbal apprenticeship at RavenCroft. The herbs had become a passion for both of us, and we were amazed by how they nourished and healed our family on a daily basis. We wanted to share what we had learned with other families, so we founded LearningHerbs.com. Teaching people about herbs became the heart of our work in the world.

Sensuality and sexuality have also been sources of deep nourishment and vital life energy for me throughout my life. At the heart of my ministry, which I call Trail of Beauty, are ceremonies and practices that celebrate the sacredness of being fully embodied and connected to sensation and the natural world. I delight in helping people fully inhabit their bodies and experience sensation. As I have delved more and more deeply into my own experience of sensuality and exploration of healthy sexuality, it has been natural for me to turn to the plants as allies and to weave these two passions together.

In preparation for writing this book, I gathered a group of friends and we went on a year-long journey together, experimenting with the aphrodisiac qualities of 13 herbs. These were herbs I had become curious about as I had been doing herbal research on aphrodisiacs over the course of the year before the book-writing project began. We experimented with a different herb each month, noticing how it impacted our bodies and our lives. The participants in this Aphrodisiac Circle are characters in this book. (They each chose a pseudonym to protect their privacy.) We'll look in depth at each of the herbs we experimented with, and I will share our experiences

with you in the hopes of enhancing and enlivening your own journey.

I chose to undertake this intimate, vulnerable exploration with a small group of friends who I know and trust. There were 14 of us in the group, ranging in age between 30 and 65. Three couples participated and 10 of us were in committed partnerships, some exploring open relationship as part of that commitment. Several participants identify as bisexual. Nine of us were parents and one became a parent in the midst of the project. Several were going through periods of expansion and exploration in the area of their sexuality, and one was just rekindling the possibility of romantic and sexual exploration after many years of celibacy following the death of her husband. Four were healing from past sexual trauma and abuse, and one was just reeling from the ending of a multi-year partnership. Three of the women were in the midst of their transition through menopause.

Each of us began in a unique place, and each of us made discoveries along the way. Our small circle in no way represents the full diversity of human experience (for more information about each participant, see Appendix A), but what I know is that sexuality is a fundamentally *human* experience, bringing each of us to a naked, vulnerable place, regardless of race, class, gender, or age. Also, the herbs are potent and effective healers that are accessible to us all, and the herbs that we engaged with hold potential benefits for every body.

Just as the Aphrodisiac Circle went on an exploratory journey together seeking herbal support for greater sexual fulfillment and vital living, I have organized this book as a journey of personal exploration for you. Rather than following the Aphrodisiac Circle journey or focusing on

one herb per chapter, I was inspired to take you through a series of experiences. Within the chapters you will find recipes and opportunities for cultivating the flow of erotic energy in your life.

I suggest you find a way to express and reflect on your learnings as you go along. Perhaps you would like to pick out a beautiful journal. Or maybe you would like a pad of drawing paper and some art pens or pencils. You can write or draw about your experiences and add to it as more emerges for you over time. Or perhaps you would like to sculpt with clay or express yourself through body movement or dance, or through song. You could make voice recordings. The important thing is to find a means of expression that resonates for you so you can honor your own unique journey. I encourage you to take time and make space for this in your life.

My herbal teachings are spread throughout the book (sometimes in the form of recipes, sometimes set apart as dedicated sections, and sometimes woven in with the flow of text) so that your herbal knowledge can grow organically, right along with your experience of your sexuality. I spread the teachings out and continually invite you into experiences because that is how I know effective learning happens—*slowly, one experience at a time*.

Each chapter contains a monograph for the herb that we explored in the Aphrodisiac Circle that I feel most aligns with the energy of that chapter. These monographs contain detailed information about each of these 13 herbs. You will find yourself flipping forward and backward in the book to consult these monographs as you consider whether a recipe is right for you. Each experience preparing an herbal recipe and taking herbs into your body will help you gain herbal skills and confidence.

Let's take our first step working with herbs right now by repeating that opening exercise of running a finger over our lips and bringing the plants into it. Let's imagine doing the same thing with a rose petal instead of just your finger. Participants in the Aphrodisiac Circle found this to be an absolutely exquisite sensual experience. In fact, if you happen to be reading this book at a time when you can pick yourself a rose (chemical free), I recommend this as your first step onto the herbal path to sexual fulfillment and vital living.

Go and pick yourself a rose. Place it in a vase or jar in a special place just for you, dedicated to your journey of sensual, sexual exploration. Place your journal, drawing paper, or clay here in this special place too. Once your rose is in its place, enjoy its delicate beauty, the evocative scent of it. Feel the softness of its petals. Now, pick just one petal. Choose your favorite one. Lightly and slowly brush the petal across your lips. Close your eyes and allow yourself to feel the sensation as fully and deeply as possible.

If it is not the right time of year to pick yourself a fresh rose, I invite you to enjoy the anticipation. Anticipation is, after all, another one of the delights of erotic experience. Our minds are one of our main sexual organs, our imaginations one of our most lovely erotic tools.

Over the course of this journey together, I am going to highlight and gift you with many tools to help bring more erotic, vital energy to your life. The recipes for herbal preparations and activities will help you deepen into sensation and connection with your own body, with your lover(s), with the plants, and with the natural world. Just as we are all at different places in our sexual journeys, different activities will resonate more deeply for each of you, and your level of wanting to engage

with the plants will also vary. Whether you want to dip your toe in lightly or dive in as deeply as possible, you are welcome on this path.

Stepping onto the herbal path can be as simple as picking that rose, placing it in a special place, and running a petal over your lips. In the pages that follow, I will suggest other simple steps you can take. In order to prepare the recipes, you will need to gather some herbs. Some you may buy from a local herb shop or an online source. Others may grow right around you, and you will have the opportunity to be in direct relationship with them as you harvest the flowers, leaves, roots, bark, or seeds. I highly recommend engaging with the plants in these ways if it is possible for you. These experiences harvesting and preparing herbal creations are sensual experiences in themselves and can be a powerful part of the healing and nourishment available on this herbal path.

Over the course of reading this book, you will have the opportunity to explore what herbs are right for you at each moment of your personal journey, whether you need to heal and nourish your body or you are seeking to enhance your experience. There is a science and an art to discovering your perfect herb and preparation. The process has many parts, and we will be exploring them organically together, getting to know the plants and learning through sensual exploration and play. We will ask ourselves questions and listen deeply for answers. Our bodies are a great source of information about what tools, preparations, and activities are just right for us right now, so we will continually come back to a place of embodied sensation.

Here is a meditation to help you come into embodied sensation. You can use it anytime you want to bring yourself fully present and sensually alive:

Close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths, fully filling your lungs with air and feeling the resulting expansion in your body. Exhale completely so that your belly button naturally pulls inward. Allow your breath to return to a normal rhythm and begin to notice your body sensations. Feel the air on your skin. Is it warm or cool, still or breezy? Feel the places where your clothes or your hair brush against your skin. Feel those places where one body part is resting on another. Tune in to your internal landscape. Are there places in your body that are tight or tender? Breathe some loving energy into those places. Are there areas that feel expansive or soft? Tune in to your genital area. Notice what sensations you feel there in those private, tender places. How is your belly feeling? Is it in knots today or at ease? Your heart? Head?

Notice any scents that are present in the air today. I'm writing outside by a beautiful river in Twisp, Washington. I smell an earthy forest smell. And in the background I hear the gentle flow of river water over rocks, a constant, soothing lullaby. What are the sounds you hear around you? Do these scents or sounds lead to body sensations for you? Bring your awareness to those sensations. Breathe into them. Give yourself space and time to feel them.

When you are ready, open your eyes. Look around you, and find something beautiful in your environment. Rest your eyes there. Sink into the colors and textures, the pleasing shapes and patterns. Curl the corners of your mouth up into a smile and breathe into your heart as you rest in the beauty.

From this place, I invite you to reflect for a moment on what led you to pick up this book. The answer to this question will be different for each of you, and what I want you to know is that your unique answer is the absolutely perfect answer for you right now. Wherever you are on your journey of sensual and sexual empowerment is the perfect place for us to begin. Maybe you are heartbroken, scared, or shut down in some way. Maybe you are turned off and your turn-on feels very far away. Or . . . maybe you are ecstatic most of the time and just curious if this book can expand your pleasure even further.

I know, for me, living through this global pandemic has changed my daily experience of sensuality with others. Many more of us are suffering some degree of touch deprivation as we stay socially distant to protect each other's health. I know the lack of friendly hugs is impacting my nervous system. Going through a challenging time without being able to physically hold each other is something I hope we need never face again. The initial draft of this book was written before COVID-19 became widespread. Revisions are happening within the first year of social dis-

tancing, and I find myself wondering if this book will serve as a reminder of the pre-COVID-19 world and help us remember the importance of touch and find our way back to ease and comfort with one another.

Whatever your reason, thank you for picking up this book, for stepping onto this path with me, for daring to prioritize pleasure—sensual, sexual pleasure—as a source of energy and joy in your life. The further I go down this road of seeking healthy sexual experience, the more convinced I become that this is a bold act. Bold because it challenges what our culture teaches us about our bodies and our very lives. Bold because it takes us to a core place—a place of tenderness and vulnerability. A place where we can no longer hide behind masks. This is the place where I want to meet you. In that tender, raw place where your heart is open. Where you can barely breathe because you are feeling *soooooo much!*

The pages that follow are me opening my heart and extending my hand to you, inviting you to revel in sensation and expand your capacity to feel and dwell in pleasure, joy, and gratitude.



ONE



SLOWING DOWN
TO ENJOY
THE EROTIC
ENERGY
OF LIFE



Ah! That glorious, coveted feeling of falling in love! You know it, right? The boost of energy, the feeling that all is right with the world, the renewed confidence in ourselves. How about the nervous, excited anticipation about the next phone call? The tingling, electric energy that runs through our whole bodies at the slightest touch from our love.

What if we could consciously cultivate that feeling in our lives whether or not there is a person who is the object of our desire? I've been experimenting with that idea. I've been playing with ways to increase pleasure and sensual, erotic energy in my life. This energy is a precious resource. It is source energy that can be channeled not only into sexual expression but also into creative endeavors, like writing this book, dancing, or tending my garden. I've come to rely on having a healthy flow of erotic energy in my life.

Now, if you look up the word *erotic* in the dictionary, it will give you a definition like “arousing sexual desire.” When I talk about this erotic flow, I am talking about something broader. It can, at times, feel sexual—when it centers in our pelvis—but it may also be more of a tingling sensation, a feeling of *aliveness* throughout our body. Cultivating this sensual aliveness is a key to finding sexual fulfillment and to overall vibrant living. When we have this flow of erotic energy in our lives, we feel more confident, more in our personal power, more able to face life challenges, and more able to bring our own unique gifts to the world.

So how do we cultivate it? That is the heart of what we will be exploring together in the pages that follow. I’ve collected many possibilities for you to explore and enjoy so that each of you can discover your own unique ways. One universal secret is to *slow down*. Slow down and consciously seek and create pleasurable experiences for yourself, and take the time to sink into sensation over and over again throughout each day.

You may feel like this is selfish or a frivolous use of time. On the contrary, I believe that people who are sexually fulfilled and sensually enlivened are peaceful, creative, and vital. Because of this, they naturally make important, positive contributions within their families and communities.

Intrigued? Then let’s cultivate this flow of erotic energy together. Come, dare with my participants and me to act on the belief that sensuality and healthy sexuality are essential components of a life well lived. The first step is to set an intention for yourself, an intention that

will encourage you to make space and time in your life to cultivate erotic energy. Taking time to set an intention is one way that we can slow down the relentless pace of modern life. Engaging in any exploration with intention will encourage us to be more fully present and tapped into the sensual, erotic energy of our experience.

Your intention will reflect where you are in your life right now. For example, Michelle, from the Aphrodisiac Circle, is menopausal and a survivor of childhood abuse. She is currently in a partnership that invites exploration of sensuality and sexuality. Her intention is to continue to open her heart and experience the strength and creativity she can gain through engaging vulnerably with a loving, strong, powerful male partner. Christina is a dancer who is enjoying her connection with the earth and is curious about herbs. She is also on a journey of healing from past sexual trauma. She is looking for ways to continue her healing and to make her life juicier. Joe feels like his connection with his wife, Cassie, is waning after 14 years of marriage. His intention is to “learn how and why I’m feeling less connected and find creative ways to hopefully rekindle our fire.” Rachel has just ended an eight-year partnership and is looking to intentionally find pleasure again.

Whether you have a lover in your life or not, this book is about *you* and your journey of cultivating a healthy flow of erotic energy in *your* life for *yourself*, and your unique experience of what unfolds as a result. So take a moment right now and formulate an intention for yourself as you step onto this path.

Creating a Personal Intention

Rather than coming up with this intention from your mind, let's play with letting this intention arise from a sensually embodied place. Perhaps you will want to sit where you placed your rose or create a special place for yourself now.

- 1** Once you are settled, take some deep breaths, feeling the expansion and contraction in your body as you do so.
- 2** Let your breathing return to a natural rhythm and practice the meditation from the introduction, or run your finger over your lips to bring yourself to the present and into sensual awareness.
- 3** Ask out loud or in your mind, "What is my intention right now as I step onto this herbal path of sexual fulfillment and vital living? What am I cultivating in my life right now?"
- 4** Sit quietly and listen to what answers arise. I have found that my body is wise and allowing answers to rise up from this sensually embodied place is an insightful practice.
- 5** Write the intention(s) that arises and place it in the space you have made for yourself, a space dedicated to your own journey of sensual and sexual exploration and empowerment.

Let your intention be different from a goal. Be playful with it, holding it gently and without attachment, allowing it to take you on a journey. There is no pressure to make it happen. Just as the rose you pick(ed) will open, so much is about to open for you!

Aphrodi-Tea



INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon dried tulsi leaf
- 2 tablespoons dried rose petals
- Honey, to taste

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ Teas are very basic herbal preparations. I loved the result of this recipe, and you can vary the taste and effects of herbal teas by varying the amounts of the herbs used and /or the steeping time. You may also get a different result using fresh herbs rather than dried. Experimenting and noticing subtle differences will help you grow your herbal knowledge and confidence.
- ◆ Generally, longer steeping times will increase the amount of herbal constituents being drawn into the water. This affects both the taste and effectiveness of the tea. Longer is not always better. Tulsi, for example, becomes bitter when steeped too long.

PREPARATION

- 1 Pour 1½ cups boiling water over the tulsi and rose petals (loose or using a mesh tea strainer).
- 2 Cover and steep 10 minutes.
- 3 Strain the herbs from the hot tea.
- 4 Add honey to taste.



HERBAL SUPPORT

WHAT IS AN APHRODISIAC?



As I began to look at ways the herbs could support us in our quest for healthy sexual fulfillment, this question came to the forefront. When I thought about what I would like an aphrodisiac to be, I thought perhaps there were herbs that would somehow heighten my sensual experiences during sex, opening up doorways to more pleasure. In the course of my exploration, I also realized that some people are seeking exotic herbs or substances as aphrodisiacs to increase their own libido, or as love or sex potions to encourage less-interested partners to have sex with them or to help address their partner's "sexual issues."

Looking up the word *aphrodisiac* through Google gives us a definition like "foods, drinks, or drugs that stimulate sexual desire." Reading through the book *Herbal Aphrodisiacs from World Sources*, it seems that all sorts of things have been considered aphrodisiacs throughout time—from sweet potatoes to sunflowers to artichokes and apples. Why? What are these foods or herbs actually doing in our bodies to be considered aphrodisiacs?

Many herbal books will include *aphrodisiac* in their lists of herbal actions, but this does not tell us much about what the herb actually does in our bodies to stimulate sexual desire. It does not give us information about why we might choose this herb over another that is also listed as an aphrodisiac at this particular time in our lives. To gain more clarity about that, we can look more deeply into herbal actions and at the key constituents in the herbs. (An example of this is the phenylethylamine compound found in cacao. This is also a natural compound in the brain, which is released

when we are in love and during orgasm. So ingesting cacao can create similar feelings to those experiences.)

Let's take a deeper look at herbal actions that might stimulate sexual desire. Herbs that increase circulation or widen blood vessels can result in more blood being pumped to our pelvis, brain, and heart. Herbs can also be nourishing for our heart or our reproductive organs. They can be stimulating, restorative, or help to improve our mood. Perhaps the herb is demulcent and this slippery quality will help support our juiciness. Just the smells and textures of different herbs can help stimulate our senses.

It also may be that many herbs can support our quest for healthy sexual fulfillment without "stimulating sexual desire." Perhaps we just need an herb to help us relax after a busy, pressure-filled day. Or maybe we can call on an herb to help us heal so we are not distracted by pain or illness. There was one point during the study when perimenopause had me bleeding for weeks at a time. Taking vitex (a tincture of chasteberries) regulated my cycle, and that felt like an amazing aphrodisiac at that moment because it allowed me to come back to my sensual/sexual self.

Understanding just what you are hoping the herb will do for you is one key to choosing the right herb for your situation. Considering the actions of the herbs and looking at the constituents can provide valuable information. The experiences of others can help inform us as well. Ultimately, though, working with the herb yourself, making a preparation from a recipe and actually trying the herb in

your own body, will give you the most information and help you develop your unique relationship with the plants. One thing that stood out for us in the Aphrodisiac Circle was that each of us had personal experiences with the herbs that varied significantly from those of other participants.

As you begin to work with the herbs, there are a few basic guidelines to keep in mind. An herb is a plant with edible or healing qualities, and they are powerful. It's important to treat them with respect.

❖ **Consider safety.**

The information in this book or any other book is no substitute for consulting with your health care provider if you are experiencing troublesome symptoms or have any special circumstances (like being pregnant, taking medication, or dealing with a chronic illness).

Always check dosage recommendations so you get a sense of how much of a particular herb to take to get the maximum benefit.

Read the plant monographs and especially the "Special Considerations" section to be sure the plant is safe for you at this time.

❖ **If you are picking herbs in the wild:**

Be 100 percent sure you have identified the plant correctly. This may mean using a field guide or online resource for plant identification and checking what you find with a knowledgeable herbalist.

Learn about sustainable harvesting techniques like taking only as much as you need and only the part of the plant you need and perhaps leaving the roots (or at least some of them) in the ground so the plant can continue to grow.

Make sure you are harvesting from a healthy area where pesticides are not sprayed.

❖ **If you are buying dried plant material from a retail source, be sure it was ethically wildcrafted or cultivated and has not been grown with the use of pesticides.**

There is lots of latitude for play and experimentation within these guidelines, and in my experience, interacting with the plants is easier than a lot of people think.

Cardamom Chocolate Mousse Torte

Rosalee de la Forêt

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces bittersweet chocolate
½ cup coconut oil
½ cup honey
½ cup cocoa powder
1 (13.5-ounce) can coconut milk
2 eggs
1 tablespoon cardamom powder
2 tablespoons vanilla extract
sliced almonds and cocoa powder for the topping

PREPARATION

- 1 Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
- 2 Melt the chocolate and coconut oil in the top of a double boiler.
- 3 Remove from the heat. Add the honey and cocoa powder. Mix well.
- 4 Add the coconut milk and mix well.
- 5 Whisk the eggs in a small bowl.
- 6 Add the whisked eggs, cardamom, and vanilla extract to the chocolate mixture. Mix well.
- 7 Pour the mixture into a slightly oiled 9-inch pie pan.
- 8 Bake for 30 minutes.
- 9 When the torte is done, the top should be cracked but the middle should still be soft and wiggly.
- 10 Cool overnight in the refrigerator to allow it to set.
- 11 Sprinkle with slivered almonds and cocoa powder before serving.

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ We may not really think of mixing up a dessert as making an herbal preparation, but herbalism can actually be that simple. Our food can be some of the best medicine if we consciously choose our ingredients and which foods we ingest.
- ◆ You might read through the cacao monograph in Chapter 12 to learn a little more about how cacao affects our bodies. Making it is also an opportunity to learn about cardamom and vanilla as herbs and why they may or may not be good allies for you.
- ◆ After eating it, take time to notice how you feel in your body. What experiences does it lead to? This is how you build your herbal knowledge—one experience at a time.



THE POWER OF INTENTION AND ATTENTION

Both setting intentions and bringing our full attention to an experience are key aspects of slowing down and enjoying the presence of erotic energy. Let's explore this idea as we engage in our first herbal preparation, the making of a cardamom chocolate mousse torte. The torte itself is delicious, and creating it can also be what I've come to talk about as an aphrodisiac experience. Let me explain.

Say you are making this torte for you and your lover to enjoy after a candlelit dinner together. Well, what if, instead of squeezing in making the torte between finishing up work, running errands, and perhaps talking on the phone with your mom while you do it, you actually set aside time for the torte creation process? Make an afternoon of it. Gather your ingredients together and set an intention for your time enjoying the torte with your beloved. Perhaps you would like it to be a sensual prelude to an evening of lovemaking, or perhaps you are making this torte just for you and want it to be a symbol of allowing yourself to really indulge in pleasurable experiences. Hold that intention as you create the torte. Make the intention an ingredient in your recipe. As you mix the ingredients, let yourself anticipate the fulfillment of your intention. The anticipation can be as delicious as the torte.

Bring yourself fully present and into your senses. Give the making of the torte your full attention. Smell the chocolate and the coconut oil as you melt them together. Enjoy the smooth

richness of the combination. Taste a little bit of the honey before you add it to the mixture. Feel it on your finger; fully enjoy the sweetness on your tongue. Smell and taste the coconut milk. Enjoy the colors mixing together (I find the mixing of this torte to be beautiful). Smell the cardamom and the vanilla extract before you mix them with the eggs. Allow your senses to be fully stimulated by the torte ingredients. Again, enjoy the beauty as you mix the eggs with the chocolate mixture. While the torte bakes, put on some of your favorite sensual music and sit quietly and listen, or move your body to the music. Allow yourself to revel in your heightened sensations.

This torte needs to cool overnight to fully set.

Imagine the rich, smooth taste on your tongue, in your mouth, sliding down your throat.

Lots of time to let the anticipation build. Let your sensual excitement smolder or grow. Perhaps

call your lover and let them in on your secret; bring them into the experience of anticipation. Share your intention for the evening to come. Or write or find a poem or song to share with them or to read yourself as you enjoy the torte. Imagine the rich, smooth taste on your tongue, in your mouth, sliding down your throat.

Before serving the torte, bring yourself back into delicious sensation by enjoying the taste and feel of the slivered almonds and cocoa powder as you add this final touch to your masterpiece. Remind yourself of your intention. And take your time serving it. Build up to eating it. Enjoying its beauty. Taking in its scent. Taking that first bite,

slowly, sensually onto your tongue. Feel it melt and fill your mouth with flavor.

Now you understand the power of bringing yourself fully present, tuning in to and heightening your senses, setting intention, and building anticipation. The experience of creating and enjoying this torte, as I have described it, is what

I mean by an aphrodisiac experience. I invite you to slow down and bring yourself into these kinds of experiences throughout your reading of this book, and into as many areas of your life as possible. They are a primary secret for fully reveling in the presence of sensual, erotic energy and living a vital life.



Tasting dark chocolate
a ripe apricot
A luscious elixir—
Savor the expanding joy in your body.
Nature is offering herself to you.
How astonishing
To realize this world can taste so good.

When sipping some ambrosia,
Raise your glass,
Close your eyes,
Toast the universe.
The Sun and Moon and Earth
Danced together
To bring you this delight.
Receive the nectar on your tongue
As a kiss of the divine

— from *The Radiance Sutras* by Lorin Roche



WEAVING PLEASURE INTO DAILY LIFE

Bringing heightened sensual experiences into our daily life helps increase vital energy by cultivating a flow of erotic energy. One of my favorite ways to weave in pleasure is through simple rituals. Simple rituals are created through intention and attention. There is a quality of reverence and honoring to them, and yet they are simple in that they do not take a lot of time and energy for preparation. Michelle and Robert, a retired couple in a passionate love affair, created a simple ritual during our month when we focused on tulsi. Each morning Robert brought a cup of tulsi rose tea (Aphrodi-Tea, page 21) to Michelle's bedside. Taking the cup from him, she would feel the warmth on her hands and breathe in the luscious fragrance of the herbs, bathing herself in the calm support she felt them offering to her. Michelle and Robert consciously set aside time in their day for this ritual with the intention of creating a nourishing, sensual experience and connecting with the herbs. Michelle brought her full attention to her enjoyment of being gifted and enjoyment of the tea itself, reveling in each sensation.

Gabrielle created a simple ritual for herself during her exploration of cacao. Gabrielle's husband died in an accident when her two girls were still very young. The relationship had been a difficult one for her, and when he was gone, she chose to put her energy fully into her mothering, setting aside eroticism. Her girls are now grown women, and she came to the Aphrodisiac Circle as a way of reengaging with the sensual, sexual aspects of herself. She bought herself a big bar of 100 percent cacao chocolate and set aside time to savor a piece of it every day in February. She

describes taking time to play with it in her mouth, letting it become warm and thick and smooth, slowly releasing itself on her tongue. She said, "It felt private and special and fun to come to know this dark beauty. It woke me up. I felt more in touch with my body than I have in some time. I started an exercise program with a weekly walk in the mountains and paying closer attention to the other things I put into my body. The cacao was the bar of wholeness and intentionality."

Artemis wove cacao in to her life by creating a simple trail mix blend of cacao nibs with dried goji berry and almonds. Artemis is a single mom parenting three boys and is also diving deep into an exploration of sacred sexuality. This was a treat she could share with her boys, which also reminded her each time she ate it of her intention to live a sensual, vibrant life.

Simple pleasure rituals can look all sorts of ways, involving the herbs or not. I swim in the cold Pacific Northwest ocean three mornings a week. For me, this is an absolute sensual delight. I love feeling the sand under my feet, the breathtaking cold of the water on my skin, and then the warmth of the sun or my towel when I emerge. Engaging in ecstatic dance is a regular simple pleasure ritual for me as well. I love the feeling of simply allowing the music to move my body.

Even ordinary daily activities like doing the dishes can be places of heightened sensation and pleasure. Try it. Focus on the feel of the warm water and soap against your skin as you wash and rinse. Put on your favorite music and move your body while washing. Oh, and if the rose bush outside the window is blooming or the clouds are turning pink or the moon is up, then your sense of sight can be delighted as well.

Interacting with the plants can be another way of weaving pleasure in to daily life. Let's talk for a minute about the roses blooming outside the window while you were doing the dishes. Rose month was one of our favorite months. It was especially wonderful because wild roses are abundant where we live in the northwest. Everyone in the Aphrodisiac Circle agreed that being able to interact with the living, growing plants really increased our sensual connection with the herbs and helped them to feel like friends and allies.

Cassie found herself burying her nose in rose blossoms, harvesting petals to carry the scent

home, and breathing in the aroma of rose tea. She loved how the scent helped awaken her senses and her feeling of play and joy in life. For Angela, the month was filled with stress, but she found delight in the blooming of the various rose bushes in her yard. She used cardamom rose oil on her skin every day and enjoyed the delicious taste of rose-infused honey (page 14) on a daily basis.

There are so many ways to add a little extra sensual delight to anything you do. The keys are slowing down, intention, and attention.

OPPORTUNITY FOR CULTIVATING EROTIC ENERGY FLOW

Daily Pleasure

Take a moment to consider how you might weave pleasure in to your own life.

- 1 Settle in and take a few deep breaths, feeling the expansion and contraction in your body as you do so.
- 2 Let your breathing return to a natural rhythm and practice the meditation from the introduction, or run your finger over your lips to bring yourself present and into sensual awareness.
- 3 From this place of embodied sensation, ask yourself if there is a simple ritual you would like to engage in regularly or if there is a daily activity that you can do while focusing on pleasurable physical sensation. Consider the answers that arise and choose one. Write it down if you like.
- 4 Choose a time to follow through with this idea, gather any materials you need, and do it daily for a week or more.
- 5 Reflect on the experience and express your insights so you integrate them. (Use the journal or drawing paper or clay you have set aside in your special place with your rose.)

Rose Honey

INGREDIENTS

Enough fresh rose petals to loosely fill an 8-ounce jar

8 ounces honey

PREPARATION

1. Chop fresh rose petals into small pieces.
- 2 Fill an 8-ounce jar (loosely packed) with fresh rose petal pieces.
- 3 Pour enough honey over the petals to fill the jar.
- 4 Stir to release any air bubbles (I like to use a wooden chopstick to stir).
- 5 Add more honey if needed to fill the jar. Cap with a lid.
- 6 Let sit on your kitchen counter for 2 weeks, stirring once or twice a day at least for the first week.
- 7 Enjoy as you would plain honey (the rose petals are edible, so no need to strain them out).

HERBAL TIPS

- ◆ You can use this same method to infuse honey with any number of edible flowers, including hawthorn, lilac, monarda, or lavender (you may only want to fill your jar $\frac{1}{2}$ full with lavender flowers as they can be quite strong tasting). The honey draws constituents from the herbs while also taking on their aroma and taste, so you get herbal goodness in several ways while enjoying this treat.
- ◆ Honeys work well with aromatic and fruity herbs as the honey really takes on the smell and taste of the plants. Other herbs featured in this book that make delicious infused honeys include rose hips (remove seeds and fuzz from inside hips before infusing), hawthorn berries (strain the berries out before enjoying the honey; they have a large seed inside that is not edible), schisandra berries, and ginger root (grated). I recommend only filling the jar $\frac{1}{2}$ full with each of these herbs.
- ◆ This is definitely one of my favorite herbal treats, and honeys are a beautiful way to infuse sensual herbal experience into your daily life. You can infuse the honeys and then just have them ready to add to your tea, spread on crackers or toast, or just eat by the fingerful any time you desire a sensual treat. You can have fun with licking it from your finger as well.







ROSE



Rosa spp., R. canina, R. rugosa, R. multiflora, R. nutkana



I love roses. Their intoxicating scent is one of my absolute favorite things about life on earth. I love their delicate beauty and the softness of their petals.

Roses have been seducing humans for thousands of years, stimulating our senses in powerful ways. We cultivate them for their beauty and gift them to one another to express our love and affection.

In her book *The Sexual Herbal*, Brigitte Mars calls roses the “supreme heart opener” and shares that “the open rose is a symbol for the opening heart and vulva.”

How Do Roses Act as an Aphrodisiac in Our Bodies?

Roses calm our nerves and uplift our spirits. The aromatic quality of roses has the power to relax and restore us, easing anxiety and depression. In addition rose works as a neuro-protective, helping to protect our nerve cells from damage.¹ Two of the main constituents found in rose oil, citronellol and geraniol, interact with the AMPA receptors in our brain to help calm and protect the central nervous system.² The flavonoids found in roses interact with the GABA receptors in our brain to help relieve anxiety.³

A rose petal or rose hip infusion can help tone and regulate both the feminine and masculine reproductive systems. For women in particular, it can help strengthen our uteruses, regulate our menstrual cycles, and help relieve cramps.⁴ Infusions also may help regulate hormones during menopause.⁵

Rose hips are a heart and circulatory system tonic, with powerful, risk-reducing antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects.⁶ Rose hips are also nourishing, with high vitamin and mineral content. They are especially high in vitamin C. Fresh rose hips contain about eight times more vitamin C than oranges (per 100 grams), and rose hips made into syrup or jam are equivalent to oranges in vitamin C content.⁷

Roses are also nourishing, soothing, and healing for our skin, both taken internally and applied externally.⁸ Rosebuds, blossoms, and hips are moisturizing for irritated, sun-damaged, or aging skin, and rose water is an astringent skin toner with a beautiful scent and a wonderful addition to lotions, creams, and body oils.⁹ Rose oils are nourishing for breast tissue and can help minimize stretch marks and wrinkles. Rose petal vinegar can be used as a douche, an after-bath splash, or a facial rinse. A rose petal facial or genital steam is both softening and moisturizing.

Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: aromatic, emotionally uplifting, nervine, neuroprotective, nutritive, reproductive system tonic, restorative, soothing and healing for skin

HIPS: heart and circulatory system tonic, hormone regulator, nutritive

OTHER ACTIONS: analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, astringent

ENERGETICS: cooling, drying **TASTES:** sweet, sour

NOTABLE APHRODISIAC CONSTITUENTS: volatile oils, flavonoids, citronellol and geraniol / hips: vitamin C

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: Rose is a nourishing herb; both petals and hips are safe to consume as you would any other healthy food.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: Avoid using roses that have been sprayed with pesticides, including those from florist shops.

Cheap rose essential oils are likely diluted or adulterated. It takes a huge quantity of roses to make a single ounce of essential oil, and it can cost hundreds of dollars an ounce. Rose Otto, which is rose essential oil diluted in good quality jojoba oil, can be a reasonably priced, high quality alternative.

A Bit about Rose Plants

There are over 150 species of roses around the world. When searching for roses to use in your recipes, be sure the ones you choose are fragrant. That makes all the difference! Rugosa rose is a beautiful wild rose with a glorious scent. This species, native to east Asia, has made its way around the world, so you may well be able to find some not far from your own doorstep.



As with all roses, be mindful of the thorns when you go to harvest the petals. Thorns are how rose bushes wisely protect their precious bee-attracting flowers, just as our clear boundaries help us protect our own precious bodies.

Leave some flowers for the bees and when you come back to harvest in the fall or winter you will find the rose bush full with luscious rose hips, the fruit of the rose plant.

How to Use Rose

PARTS USED: *Petals, Fruits (hips)*

MAKE ROSE DRINKS: *Rose petal tea or infusion, fermented rose petal soda, rose juleps (rose petals steeped in cold water with lemon and honey), rose-petal infused tequila. Food-quality rose water can be added to smoothies or hot chocolate.*

Use rose water to enhance lotions and creams.

Use candied rose petals to decorate cakes.

Infuse rose petals in honey or vinegar.

Make a rose petal tincture.

Make a rose petal facial or genital steam.

Make a rose syrup.

Add dried rose petals to a potpourri mix.

Sprinkle rose petals on the bed or in the bedroom to create a beautiful, sacred, romantic space.



Participant Experiences

This month experimenting with roses was one of our most potent months. Most all of us got out and harvested rose petals, and several of us tended rose bushes in our yards. Being able to see and touch the growing plant and then make aphrodisiac preparations from the petals we harvested had us really falling in love with roses. Joe and Cassie played with rose drinks, infusing petals into tequila, brandy, and rum. Sarah and Artemis drank rose petal tea daily.

Sarah used rose petal powder in her body-care blends, enjoying a rose and oat powder body rub and rose honey skin masks. Lisa, Rachel, and Gabrielle all really enjoyed rose petal massage oil, and Christina noticed that rose petals in her bath made her feel “really special, like a goddess or queen.”

Roses filled up our senses, bringing softness, gentleness, and ease and also igniting a sense of joy and play. The roses brought us into openhearted, loving connection with others. A rose oil massage offered loving comfort for Rachel even through the pain and grief she was feeling around ending her multiyear partnership. For Christina, roses brought unresolved grief to the surface for healing, allowing her to be more available for connection.





HERBAL SUPPORT

READING A MONOGRAPH



I have included plant monographs for 13 herbs in this book (one in each chapter). Monographs are commonly used by herbalists to convey detailed information about a plant in a way that is easy to access. As you learn to read a monograph, they become a valuable source of information when considering which herbs are right for you. Let's look at some of the key pieces of information they provide.

First, they include both the common and scientific name of the plant. Common names will vary from area to area, so identifying a plant by its scientific name is a way to be sure we are talking about the same plant. Looking up the plant in a field guide by the scientific name will give you the identifying characteristics of the plant and information about where you can find it growing.

Monographs will also tell you about the actions associated with the plant and about the plant constituents. Both of these pieces of information will help you understand how the herbs are likely to affect your body. In each of my monographs, I have highlighted the actions that seem to me to indicate how this herb can support healthy sexuality. I have taken a rather broad view, including actions like adaptogen (works in a general way to help normalize our metabolic processes, which increases our resilience in stressful times), nervine (calming for our nerves), and restorative. I have chosen actions that support our overall health and vitality, those that help to relax or enliven us, and those that specifically support our reproductive systems, heart, and circulatory systems.

Each herb has a number of active constituents that contribute to the effects it has on our bodies. In my monographs, I have highlighted a few constituents in each plant that contribute to healthy sexuality in some way. This book is in no way a comprehensive study of herbal constituents, but rather provides examples of how growing our understanding of plant constituents can provide a window into a plant's effectiveness. It is important to remember that when we are working with a whole plant, we are working with a combination of constituents, so any study of a single constituent provides only a partial understanding of the plant's effectiveness. Constituents may also have different effects in combinations than they have on their own. One beautiful thing about life on this planet is that life supports other life. Plants in their whole form often provide combinations of constituents for nourishing and healing other beings and in a form that our bodies can easily assimilate.

Monographs also provide an overview of how an herb is generally used. I researched my monographs by looking at herbal information from herbalists I trust like Rosemary Gladstar, K. P. Khalsa, Rosalee de la Forêt, and Jim McDonald. I also hired researchers who are more familiar with the realm of scientific studies to find scientific backing for the information I had compiled. I have summarized this information for you. I also included a section about how participants in my Aphrodisiac Circle experienced these herbs. Reading about others' discoveries and experiences can give you a sense of what you might experience yourself.

Considering your own constitution in relation to an herb's energetics is another good way to help narrow down which herbs might be perfect for you. For example, if you are someone who runs hot and dry, you will likely want to work with herbs that are cooling and moistening. You might also consider the nature of the situation you are working with in relation to the herb's energetics. If you are feeling cold and sluggish and are wanting more energy and vitality, look to herbs that are warming. If your sexual juices aren't flowing, moistening herbs may be particularly helpful.

Monographs also give information about why an herb may not be right for you. In my monographs you will find some of that information in the "Special Considerations" section. Some herbs are not appropriate to take during pregnancy or if you have a certain illness or are currently taking other medications. The energetics of an herb can also be an indicator that this herb is not a good choice for you. For example, if you are someone who runs hot, you may not want to add an herb like ginger to your diet on a regular basis as it could raise your body heat to uncomfortable levels. Herbal actions can also be a good source of information about why you might not want to choose a particular herb. For example, an herb like oatstraw can be blissfully

relaxing, but it is also a diuretic, so drinking a quart of infusion just before sex may not be your best choice since you will likely have to get up to pee more than once during your sexual experience.

As you are making your choices, please also consider issues of sustainability. An herb like maca may be supportive for you, and you may choose to call on it for a period of time, but if you don't live high in the mountains of Peru, it is likely not the most sustainable choice. Is there an herb that grows right outside your door that can support you in similar ways? That one will be a better choice for long-term support. Monographs often provide information about where an herb grows so you can take elements like this into consideration.

Dosage and preparation suggestions are also included in monographs, giving you a sense of how to integrate this herb into your life. As you begin to do that, the real learning begins. There is no better source of information than your own personal experience with an herb. As you decide on a dose and preparation and take the herb into your body, take time to notice the effects you feel. Participants in the Aphrodisiac Circle were delighted by how empowering it felt to gain this body knowledge and develop a personal relationship with the various herbs.

BEING EMBODIED AND INCREASING OUR CAPACITY FOR SENSATION

As you begin to slow down and notice sensual experiences throughout your day, you may find the focus on your body to be uncomfortable at first. Many of us spend the majority of our time in our heads and disconnected from our body sensations. We may find that we have been ignoring our physical sensations so we don't have to listen to what they have been trying to tell us. For instance, we may feel compelled to stay up in our heads so that we can continue to work in an unsustainable way, not allowing our bodies the rest they need. Give yourself time to integrate this new way of being. Start with one conscious experience and gradually increase the time you spend in sensation from there.

That simple sensory meditation from the introduction is a good beginning. Let's come back to a version of it now. It is a practice to return to time and time again. Sit quietly with your eyes closed and notice the places where your body is touching your chair or the floor. Notice any places where your body is touching something else. Notice the places where one body part is resting on another body part. Notice the feel of your clothes and hair against your skin. Is there a breeze? Is it hot or cold? Are there any smells in the air? Take a moment to sniff and notice what arises in you as you smell the air. Can you hear any sounds? What are they? How do they make you feel? Notice places in your body that are tight or stiff. Bring some breath or gentle movement to those areas. Stillness, deep breathing, and allowing are perfect tools to use any time uncom-

fortable feelings or sensations arise for you. Simply giving space for them to exist can allow these feelings to pass or can allow you to get in touch with what actions you can choose to take to alleviate them.

Practicing a meditation like this will help you tune in more and more to the subtle sensations in your body. Our bodies are an invaluable source of information and wisdom for us. We all know the feeling of nervous knots in our stomach. As we begin to tune in to the subtle sensations of our bodies, we can gain more insights into what our bodies are telling us about what we do and don't want to do, what makes us feel happy or nervous. I recommend beginning to listen to this wisdom. Just listen, at first. Notice what your body is telling you. Over time, you may find yourself making different choices, allowing yourself more rest and pleasure.

The herbs can also help us become more embodied and increase our capacity for sensation. Sarah found this in her use of kava tincture. During our year together, Sarah was in a time of expanding and deepening her relationship with her own sensuality and sexuality, exploring her own arousal and personal pleasure. She found kava to be an ally for this opening. Kava brought her into a slower pace of life and helped create ease and flow, as well as giving her a tingly feeling, a softness in her breasts, and an aliveness in her yoni. (*Yoni* is a Sanskrit word referring to the female genitalia.)

Lisa really noticed how participating in cacao ceremonies that included music and vocalizing helped her feel embodied and increased her capacity for feeling sensation. The ceremonies were held with intention and time and space to really sink into the effects of the cacao drink. The cacao plant and the hands that grew it were honored,

Ceremonial Cacao

Prepare this cacao drink for use with intention in a ceremony or ritual.

INGREDIENTS

3½ tablespoons ceremonial-grade cacao

Honey, cinnamon, and cayenne, to taste (optional)

PREPARATION

- 1 Shave the cacao into small pieces with a knife or blender.
- 2 Bring 1 cup of water to near boiling (do not overheat because it will cause the oils in the cacao to separate).
- 3 Put the cacao in a blender and pour hot water over the cacao. Blend until fully melted and integrated.
- 4 Add honey, cinnamon, and/or cayenne to taste.
- 5 Pour it into your favorite mug and drink slowly, savoring each mouthful.



and the cacao was sipped slowly, savoring each mouthful. Lisa said the experiences led to “a beautiful opening in my heart and mind. During one, I was overcome with love for my grown son and reveled in the memories of so many shared moments of deep connection with him over the years. In each ceremony, I felt deeply connected

to my loved ones and open to fresh perspectives and insights. At the same time, I felt deeply connected to my body and to sensation.” Following the ceremony, her mind continued to feel relaxed and both movement and touch felt exquisite for hours on end.

OUR GENITALS: What’s in a Name?

Choosing the words we use to refer to our genitals is both empowering and important. The words we learned growing up may very well reflect the culture of sexual repression and shame our parents and their parents grew up within. Consider for a moment the words that you have heard to refer to the male and female genitals. Make a list of all of them. What words did you grow up using? What words do you use now? Do you use different words with your lover than you do with your doctor?

Let’s do a little exercise:

- 1 Using the sensory meditation or another technique, bring yourself into a sensual, embodied state.
- 2 Pick one of the words from your list. Say it out loud.
- 3 Notice any sensations that arise in your body. Notice any emotions that arise as well. Are these the sensations and emotions you would like to feel in relation to your genitals?
- 4 Explore other words on your list in the same way. Notice if there are some that you would like to use more than others. Some you would like to use in certain circumstances. One that feels most right for how you want to think about your own genitals.

For the past 20 years, I have been primarily using the word *yoni* to reference my genitals. I am a lover of words, and I have loved this word since the first time I heard it. I love the way it feels in my mouth and how it resonates in my mind. My limited understanding

of the word is that it is a Sanskrit word with a sacred element to it that refers to the vagina and vulva together. I have loved those feelings of wholeness and sacredness. As I have used the word *yonis*, those have become the main elements I feel in relation to my genitals. This word has grounded me in a reverent way of connecting with my body and my sexuality.

The word *yonis* came to the West with the early translations of the Kama Sutra into English. It is one of the words I have chosen to use for the female genitalia in my text because of these feelings of wholeness and sacredness. I do want to acknowledge that there is more to this word than I know, since it comes from sacred cultural traditions in India. I am using it here only in the limited way it is used in the West.

I also use the words *pussy*, *vulva*, and *vagina* in my text. Regena Thomashauer's book *Pussy: A Reclamation* reclaims the use of the word *pussy* as a positive and powerful word for female genitalia. *Vulva* and *vagina* are the commonly accepted Western scientific words for the genitalia, so I've included those too.

For men, the Sanskrit word *lingam* is the companion to *yonis* to refer to the male genitalia, with *penis* being the Western, more scientific option. *Cock* is another commonly used term for this feature of the male anatomy. I use both *penis* and *cock* in my text but have chosen not to use *lingam* since it is so much less common in Western literature at this time.

I encourage you to choose words to reference your genitals that encompass the way you most want to feel about your body and your sexuality. For me, I like the feelings of reverence and wholeness I associate with the words *yonis* and *lingam*. I like the playfulness and adventurousness I associate with the words *cock* and *pussy*, and I like the ease of the commonly accepted terms *vagina*, *vulva*, and *penis*. The important thing, I think, is to become comfortable using words to refer to our genitals so we can talk with ease and share and learn about our sexuality.

NATURE CONNECTION

As you slow down and sink more into sensation, it is likely you will also be increasingly drawn to the natural beauty that surrounds you. You may find yourself pausing to really take in the stunning colors of a sunset or the delightful fragrance of a wild rose. Your connection to the plants and the natural world will begin to deepen, and you may find yourself slowing down even more and your senses becoming increasingly heightened. This is a beautiful feedback loop that I have noticed in my own life.

Joe's experiences with roses provide a wonderful example of this. He and Cassie visited me during that month, and we went out and harvested rose petals together. We spent a good hour out with the rose bushes, gathering and talking, listening to the birds, taking in the beauty around us. Back at home we made necklaces from rose buds, and Joe remarked on how relaxing and nourishing it was to spend that time creating beauty. Over the course of the month, he felt a sense of ease in his life, a coming into a gentler part of himself. He enjoyed opening to the complexity of roses in all the varieties around him. He found roses to be a great excuse for getting out and feeling sensual.

Christina and Gabrielle were also drawn outside by the roses. Christina was drawn to start taking care of a rose bush, really cultivating a relationship with this plant and rose energy. She loved that roses were so abundant and freely available. Gabrielle didn't think she liked roses much, but it turned out that, like cacao, roses offered her another portal into reconnecting with

her sensuality. After her month of connecting with the bush in her yard, she wrote:

I know my rose bush now and her blooms are the color of coral, reddish, orangish, salmon, and terra-cotta. A vibrant color of ocean life, sun, and autumn. She brought me unmistakable expressions of love, admiration, purity, mysticism, longing, regret, devotion, whimsy, hope, focus, and fun. I look forward to playing with her again when her hips are set and when she blooms again next year.

Whether you're currently with a partner or not, a sensual connection to the natural world can be a beautiful aspect of a vibrant life. One man I

spoke with described a practice he calls "earthing," which involves simply lying naked on the earth. This gives him a feeling of being grounded and anchored

As you love and accept your natural sensual and sexual nature, truly healthy sexual expression will begin to unfold.

and helps him tap into a resonance with the earth. "We are nature," he said, "and our inherent natural essence is to be sensual/sexual beings." Perhaps it will be the roses that draw you outside, or your tulsi or lavender plants. Perhaps just the softness of the fresh, green grass at the end of a stressful day. Pleasurable sensation can draw you out, and from there your connection to nature and acceptance of your natural self will begin to grow. As you love and accept your natural sensual and sexual nature, truly healthy sexual expression will begin to unfold.

List of Sensual Delights

Let's wrap up this chapter by making a list of things you *love*, things that bring you immediately back into pleasurable sensation and gratitude for being alive in a human body.

- 1 Take out your journal or a beautiful piece of paper, and find your favorite pen.
- 2 Settle in and take a few deep breaths, feeling the expansion and contraction in your body as you do so.
- 3 Let your breathing return to a natural rhythm and practice the meditation from the introduction, or run your finger over your lips to bring yourself present and into sensual awareness.
- 4 Ask yourself, "What sensory experiences (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, etc.) absolutely delight me?"
- 5 As the answers arise, write them down.

Post your list somewhere you will see it every day. Even if you don't directly experience something from the list, the act of reading it over can help reconnect you with your intention to live a more pleasure-filled, vibrant life!

This is my list: the smell of roses, ocean waves / smell of salt in the air, warm sand, feeling of sun on my body, tree leaves against blue sky, flowers, warm chai, soft blankets, taste of halibut, sensual touch, sunsets, being naked outside, knitting with beautiful yarn, gardening, rocking chairs, porch swings, window seats, and good stories.



TWELVE



SHARING
DELICIOUS
DELICACIES



Over the course of this aphrodisiac journey together, we have explored many ways that herbs can help support our sexual healing, empowerment, and enjoyment. We've explored the power of loving ourselves, being tuned in to our bodies, and being in healthy relationship with each other. Now, let's just drop into pure pleasure. Preparing, serving, and enjoying delicious herbal delicacies can allow us to spoil ourselves and our lovers while delighting all of our senses.

Imagine getting a call from your sweetheart, inviting you to an evening of sensual decadence. Their rose wine is ready, and they would like to share it with you on their cozy couch in front of the fire. Or perhaps it is summer, and they entice you with homemade coconut rose ice cream drizzled in Berry Decadence Syrup (page 238). What about an evening of feeding each other chocolate-covered strawberries?

Holy moly, just reading these words makes my mouth water with anticipation. Imagining the night that could follow makes my pussy juices flow. Add to that all that we have learned about how these herbs act in our bodies and about healthy sexual interactions, and the true potential of aphrodisiac treats begins to become clear. The treats on the pages that follow are more than the love potion libido boosters you may have imagined aphrodisiacs to be when you picked up this book. They are herbal support for decadent pleasure and deep sexual fulfillment.

You can engage with the recipes on the pages that follow to create aphrodisiac treats for yourself or to share with a lover. Either way, you will be increasing the flow of erotic energy in your life, especially if you engage as we did in Chapter 1, making the preparation an aphrodisiac experience. Remember to center yourself with an erotic intention that you add as an ingredient, stirring it in with the herbs. Bring your full attention to the process of making the treat, engaging your senses so that you enjoy maximum sensual stimulation from working with the different ingredients. If it is possible to gather the herbs yourself, enjoy the stimulation of being out in nature—the warmth of the sun on your skin; the smell of the earth, flowers, and leaves around you; the sound of birdsong. Move slowly, drinking in the sensation. Each ingredient is worthy of your attention. Smell, taste, feel, listen, and fully enjoy the visual beauty of each one, the mix of them together, and the finished delicacy you create.

Perhaps there is an added thrill to be working with an herb or ingredient that you don't know well, one that feels exotic. In general, I am an

herbalist who allies mostly with the plants that grow around me, but when it comes to sexuality and pleasure, I do think there is also turn-on and allure in trying something exotic. I encourage you to be playful and experiment. Let yourself get to know and enjoy an herb or ingredient from a faraway land. Savor the use of them as the gifts they are, giving thanks for the faraway hands that tended the plants and the resources involved in bringing them to your doorstep.

Seductive serving of your treats can add to their aphrodisiac quality as well. Use your skills developed in Chapters 2 and 4 to create an erotic environment. Bring in elements that you know will add pleasure to the experience. Candlelight? Flowers? Consider what you want to wear. What can you put on that arouses you and/or your partner? What scents do you want to add on your body or in the room? It is equally wonderful to treat your partner and/or yourself. Either way, set aside time so you can go slow and be fully present. If you are inviting your lover, consider what stages you want to share with them. Do you want them to come for just the dipping of the strawberries or for the mixing of the chocolate sauce? Perhaps you will gather the hawthorn flowers for the soda together and share in the anticipation during the fermentation process. Anticipation, delighting in sensual experiences, and seductive flirtation throughout the process all build erotic energy, keeping the flow strong in your life. Remember this flow can be source energy for confidence and creativity. My wish for you is that creating and enjoying these treats tap you in and bring you fully *alive*.



Hawthorn Flower Soda



INGREDIENTS

3 cups hawthorn flowers (Use fresh flowers if possible. You can include some leaves as well)

1 cup granulated sugar

1/8 teaspoon champagne yeast



PREPARATION

- 1** Bring 5 cups of water to a boil in a saucepan, then remove it from the heat.
- 2** Dissolve the sugar in the hot water.
- 3** Add hawthorn flowers to the water. Stir, then cover and let it steep for 4 hours.
- 4** Strain the liquid into a half-gallon jar, and add enough water to fill the jar. Compost the flowers.
- 5** When the mixture is at room temperature, add 1/8 teaspoon champagne yeast, and stir well.
- 6** Cover the jar with cheesecloth or a dish towel.
- 7** Leave the jar on the counter for 2 days, stirring daily.
- 8** Pour the liquid into clean plastic soda bottles with screw-on lids or clean glass swing-top bottles.
- 9** Store bottles at room temperature for 1 to 3 days. (Warning: if the pressure builds too much, glass bottles can explode—I like to put mine in a cooler so they are out of direct sunlight and are also in a contained space. Plastic bottles will become firm as pressure builds and can act as tester bottles in this way. You can also release the top from a swing-top bottle daily to check for fizz.)
- 10** When the soda is fizzy, transfer the bottle(s) to the refrigerator.
- 11** Drink the soda within 2 weeks. (Fermentation will continue, though slower, when the sodas are chilled. To prevent exploding bottles, do not forget your soda in the back of the fridge!)

Rose Petal Wine

Emily Han

INGREDIENTS

2 cups fresh rose petals
(or 1 cup dried)

¼ cup Cognac or Cognac-
style brandy

1 bottle (3 ¼ cups) dry white wine

¼ cup mild honey

PREPARATION

- 1** If using fresh rose petals, pat them with a clean, dry towel to remove any moisture.
- 2** Put petals in a quart jar, and pour the Cognac and wine over top of them.
- 3** Cover the jar tightly, and give it a good shake to combine.
- 4** Refrigerate the jar for 1 week.
- 5** Strain the mixture through a fine mesh strainer, and discard the solids.
- 6** Put the strained wine and honey in a clean jar. Cover the jar tightly, and give it a good shake.
- 7** Age the strained wine for at least one more week before serving. Serve chilled.



Sweetheart Shrub



INGREDIENTS

1 cup fresh rose petals
(or ½ cup dried)

1 cup fresh hawthorn flowers
(or ½ cup dried)

1 cup fresh or frozen strawberries

½ cup honey

About 1½ cups white wine vinegar

PREPARATION

- 1** Put flowers into a pint jar.
- 2** Add ½ cup honey to the jar.
- 3** Pour vinegar over the flowers to fill the jar and stir.
- 4** Cap with a plastic lid (vinegar will corrode a metal canning jar lid and destroy the drink).
- 5** Let this infuse on the counter for a week, stirring daily.
- 6** Strain, reserving the liquid and composting the flowers.
- 7** Add 1 cup of chopped strawberries to the infused vinegar and allow the mixture to infuse on the counter for another week, stirring daily.
- 8** Strain, reserving the liquid and composting the strawberries.
- 9** To serve, add 1 to 2 tablespoons of shrub to 8 ounces of water or sparkling water.
- 10** Store the shrub in the refrigerator for up to 6 months.



Love Drunk Drinking Chocolate

This is a super thick drinking chocolate. You can adjust the thickness according to your taste by adding more or less water or adding half-and-half instead of cream.

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons coconut oil

3 ounces dark chocolate
(your favorite chocolate bar,
70% or higher)

½ cup heavy whipping cream,
coconut cream, or nondairy creamer

Pinch of salt

Pinch of cinnamon or cayenne
(optional)

PREPARATION

- 1** In a heavy-bottomed saucepan, melt the coconut oil and chocolate on low heat, whisking periodically until it is well combined and smooth.
- 2** Add ¼ cup of water, ½ cup of creamer, and a pinch of salt.
- 3** Stir the mixture until combined and even. If at any point the chocolate is sticking to the bottom of the pan, remove the pan from the heat immediately and keep whisking.
- 4** For some added flavor or spice, try adding a pinch of cinnamon or cayenne.





Coconut Rose Bark

Hanna Nicole



INGREDIENTS

- Coconut oil to grease the pan
- 1 cup melted cacao butter (roughly 1½ cups unmelted)
- ½ cup maple syrup
- 1 cup cashew butter (roughly 2 cups raw cashews, blended till smooth)
- 1 teaspoon ground cardamom
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons cacao nibs
- 3 tablespoons dried rose petals, lightly crushed
- 3 tablespoons coconut flakes

PREPARATION

- 1** Grease an 8 x 8-inch or 8 x 9-inch baking dish with a little coconut oil, then press a piece of parchment paper down onto the oil to hold it in place.
- 2** Melt cacao butter using a double boiler or low heat on the stovetop. Remove the double boiler from the heat.
- 3** Add maple syrup, cashew butter, cardamom, and salt to the cacao butter and whisk together.
- 4** Add cacao nibs, rose petals, and coconut flakes. Stir to evenly distribute them through the mix.
- 5** Pour the mixture into the parchment-lined baking dish, and spread it evenly across the bottom. You can vary the thickness of your bark by pouring in just the amount you would like, using a larger pan or multiple pans for a thinner bark.
- 6** Transfer the dish into the freezer for 40 minutes, until hardened.
- 7** Cut the bark with a knife or break into pieces for serving.



Golden Sunrise Cake

Hanna Nicole

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons fenugreek seeds
(grind 1 tablespoon into powder in
a coffee grinder)

1 to 2 tablespoons of tahini
(enough to grease the inside of the
cake pan well)

1 cup coconut sugar

Juice from half a lemon (straining
seeds out) (2 tablespoons)

Zest of one lemon

¼ teaspoon almond extract

¼ teaspoon vanilla extract

3 cups almond flour

1 tablespoon turmeric powder

1 ½ teaspoons baking powder

¼ teaspoon salt (or a touch more)

½ cup coconut oil (melted)

½ cup butter (melted)

¼ cup pistachios, chopped

PREPARATION

- 1** Boil ¾ cup of water, and then place 2 tablespoons of the fenugreek seeds in a bowl and pour the boiling water over top. Let the seeds soak for 10 minutes.
- 2** While the seeds are soaking, grease a 9-inch cake pan, or a parchment-lined springform pan with tahini.
- 3** Once the fenugreek has finished soaking, strain the water into a bowl, and compost seeds.
- 4** Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
- 5** Add coconut sugar, lemon juice and zest, almond extract, and vanilla extract to the boiled fenugreek water, then whisk until completely dissolved, and set aside.
- 6** If you haven't already, place the final tablespoon of fenugreek seeds in a coffee grinder and blend until powdery.
- 7** Mix almond flour, turmeric, baking powder, fenugreek powder, and salt in a bowl until well blended. Use a fork to press out any clumps.
- 8** Create a hole in the center of the dry ingredients and pour in your melted butter and oil. Mix well.
- 9** Once oil and dry ingredients are completely combined, slowly add the water mixture, ¼ cup at a time, and whisk until the consistency resembles yogurt (loose but not runny).
- 10** Pour the batter into your tahini-greased cake pan, and sprinkle with pistachios.
- 11** Bake for 30 to 35 minutes until the top is browned and a toothpick poked into the center comes out clean. (Pulling out the cake as soon as it's done and then letting it cool will give you a moist texture that is ideal for this recipe.)
- 12** Allow the cake to cool almost entirely, and serve with chilled whipped cream or drizzle with honey for added sweetness.



Dusty Rose Petal Truffles

Rosalee de la Forêt

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces dark chocolate
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon nutmeg
⅔ cup full-fat coconut milk
powdered cacao and powdered roses
for rolling

PREPARATION

- 1 Begin by chopping or pounding the chocolate into pea-sized pieces.
- 2 Place pieces into a medium-sized bowl along with the vanilla, powdered cinnamon, and nutmeg.
- 3 Warm the coconut milk slowly until it just starts to simmer.
- 4 Pour this immediately into the bowl with the chocolate.
- 5 Let this mixture stand for one minute, and stir with a whisk until the chocolate is melted and has a smooth consistency. (Note: Most of the time this process works great. If the chocolate does not melt fully, place the mixture in a double boiler and heat slowly until melted.)
- 6 Cool the truffle sauce to a semi-hard consistency in the fridge or freezer and check it frequently. It needs to be soft enough to form into balls, yet hard enough to roll without falling apart.
- 7 Scoop the mixture into bite-sized pieces and roll it into balls.
- 8 Roll the balls in powdered cacao or rose petals.



Chocolate-Covered Strawberries

INGREDIENTS

24 strawberries (approximately)

1 cup cacao butter

5 drops liquid monk fruit or
¼ cup honey

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

½ cup cacao powder

2 teaspoons coconut oil

Cacao nibs and/or coarse sea salt
for sprinkling (optional)



PREPARATION

1 Place the strawberries in the freezer while you complete the next couple of steps.

2 Melt the cacao butter slowly in a double boiler.

3 When melted completely, add the monk fruit or honey and vanilla, and whisk until evenly combined.

4 Pour 2-3 tablespoons of this mixture out into a small pot, and set aside for later.

5 Add the cacao powder and coconut oil to the double boiler, remove it from the heat, and stir until melted and combined.

6 Let the mixture cool in the double boiler, off the heat for 5 to 10 minutes so the cacao can thicken.

7 Pull the strawberries from the freezer and dip them one at a time into the melted chocolate.

8 Place the dipped strawberries neatly on a flat surface (plate or board) and return them to the freezer. If you like a thin layer of chocolate on your berries, then one dip should be fine. If you like the chocolate layer to be nice and thick, repeat this process a couple of times, making sure to freeze your berries for about 10 minutes between dipping so the previous chocolate layer is nice and hard before adding the next.

8 When you have finished layering with dark chocolate and you have returned the berries to the freezer for their final 10 minutes, warm the melted cacao butter that you saved from earlier on the stove, until it is just melted again.

9 When the cacao butter is melted, scoop some of the butter up using a spoon and drizzle your dark chocolate-covered strawberries with diagonal lines.

10 Sprinkle with cacao nibs and/or salt, or enjoy as they are.

Eros Cream

Hanna Nicole

INGREDIENTS

2 cans full-fat coconut milk
½ cup honey (or ½ cup rose honey)
¼ cup rose water
Pinch of salt
10 drops liquid (or ¼ teaspoon powdered) monk fruit (optional)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 teaspoons orange extract
1 small handful of fresh or dried rose petals
¼ cup chocolate sauce (see recipe for Chocolate Body Drizzle, page 173)

PREPARATION

- 1** First, if you are using an ice cream machine, make sure you have frozen the inner basket for at least 24 hours (ideally 2 days) beforehand.
- 2** In a medium-sized bowl, empty both cans of coconut milk and stir gently until evenly combined.
- 3** Combine honey and rose water in a saucepan over low heat. As soon as the honey is loose and the rose water is well combined, remove from heat.
- 4** Add salt, monk fruit, vanilla extract, and orange extract to the honey mixture. Whisk until combined and set aside to cool slightly.
- 5** When the honey is cool but not stiff, add it to the coconut milk, stirring it in slowly.
- 6** Place the mixture of coconut milk and honey into the fridge for 2 hours or freezer for 40 minutes.
- 7** Get your ice cream machine ready to go. Turn it on and get it spinning before you pour your honey and coconut mixture in. When you do, pour slowly and use a spatula to get everything out of the bowl.
- 8** Let the mixture churn for 30 to 40 minutes or until your ice cream has set. Once the ice cream begins to harden, slowly drop your rose petals into the mixture (and if you would rather have your chocolate ribboned throughout the ice cream instead of on top, now is the time to add it. The chocolate should be loose but not hot. And poured in slowly).
- 9** When the ice cream is very thick and your machine is working hard to keep turning, turn it off and serve.
- 10** Store any leftover ice cream in a glass container with a secure lid and keep it in the freezer.
- 11** If you didn't opt for ribboning your chocolate drizzle throughout the ice cream, serving it warm and on top is a great addition.



Schisandra Mocha Truffles

Hanna Nicole

INGREDIENTS

¼ cup dried schisandra berries

8 ounces plain dark chocolate
(60 to 70%)

1 single-serving packet
of instant coffee
(caffeinated or decaf)

⅔ cup full-fat coconut milk
(13.5 ounces)

½ teaspoon cinnamon

Pinch of salt

½ cup cacao powder

8 ounces plain dark chocolate
(80 to 90%)

2 tablespoons coconut oil

Cinnamon, coarse salt, or
shaved chocolate for sprinkling
(optional)

PREPARATION

- 1 Soak the dried schisandra berries for 6 hours or overnight.
- 2 Strain well and smash the fruit with the back of a spoon to remove as many of the seeds as you have the patience to. (This is an optional step that creates a smoother center.) Place mashed berries in a strainer and press to remove as much moisture as possible. Set aside.
- 3 Chop the 8 ounces of dark (60 to 70%) chocolate into pea-sized pieces and place it in a bowl with the instant coffee.
- 4 In a heavy-bottomed pot, heat the coconut milk until it just begins to boil.
- 5 Pour coconut milk over the coffee and chocolate. Let the hot milk melt the chocolate, and when the chocolate is silky enough, whisk it all with a fork until smooth.
- 6 Mix in mashed schisandra berries, cinnamon, and salt with a fork until well combined.
- 7 Place this mixture in the fridge for 1 to 2 hours until creamy and solid.
- 8 Put the cacao powder into a bowl.
- 9 Pull your creamy chocolate mixture out of the fridge and, using a mini ice cream scoop or spoon, create a small bite-sized ball by rolling it briefly between your palms.
- 10 Roll each ball in the cacao powder until lightly dusted. Transfer these onto a parchment-covered tray or plate and put it in the freezer.
- 11 While the truffle centers are firming in the freezer, melt 8 ounces of the darker chocolate with the coconut oil in a small pot. Whisk until well combined.
- 12 When this chocolate is silky and loose, remove it from the heat, before it sticks to the bottom. Set this chocolate to the side, and let it cool on the counter for 5 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until thick but runny.



13 Pull your truffle centers from the freezer. Dip the truffle centers into the warm chocolate using 2 small spoons for a thick coating and set them back down on the parchment tray.

14 Sprinkle the top with a little cinnamon, coarse salt, or shaved chocolate for aesthetics, and transfer into the refrigerator to set.

15 These truffles will take up to 10 minutes in the refrigerator to firmly set. You can test them by lightly touching their outer shell for solidity.

16 Store the truffles in the refrigerator to prevent melting.

17 Enjoy!





Maca Butter Barz

Hanna Nicole



INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup almond flour
- ½ cup powdered maca root
- 1 cup coarsely chopped almonds
- 2 tablespoons chia seeds
- 1 heaping tablespoon cinnamon
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons coconut oil
- 1 cup almond butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ cup maple syrup

PREPARATION

- 1** Combine all the dry ingredients in a medium-sized bowl.
- 2** Melt coconut oil over low heat and pour into another small bowl with the almond butter, vanilla extract, and maple syrup.
- 3** Combine the wet and dry ingredients, and stir until well combined, with the chopped almonds and chia seeds evenly distributed in the batter.
- 4** Pour this into a parchment-lined 9 x 9-inch baking dish, and using a spatula, smooth out the edges until it is even.
- 5** Place the mixture into the fridge for 1 to 2 hours until set.
- 6** Use a clean, sharp knife to cut the bars into whatever size suits you.
- 7** Store the bars in the fridge for up to 10 days.



Maple Oat Squares

Hanna Nicole

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup shredded coconut flakes
- 1 cup sesame seeds
- 2 cups chocolate chips (optional)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon ground cardamom
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup melted coconut oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup maple syrup
- 1 cup tahini (room temperature)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chia seeds (blended with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water into a slurry)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup canned coconut fat (just the fat)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 banana

PREPARATION

- 1** Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
- 2** In a medium-sized bowl, combine all of the dry ingredients.
- 3** Melt coconut oil over low heat, and pour it into a bowl with the other wet ingredients.
- 4** Whisk wet ingredients together until smooth, smashing the ripe banana into the mix.
- 5** Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients, and mix until all the oats are well coated.
- 6** Lightly grease a 9 x 13-inch baking dish, then press a piece of parchment down until it sticks to the bottom and sides of the dish evenly.
- 7** Pour the oat bar mixture into the baking dish, and press down evenly.
- 8** Bake the mixture for 20 to 25 minutes, until lightly browned on top.
- 9** Pull the dish out of the oven, and allow it to cool for 10 minutes.
- 10** Slice the mixture into bars and store them in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Variation: *These bars can be made into Bitter Maple Squares by substituting $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of ground fenugreek seeds and $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon of powdered monk fruit (or 5 drops liquid) for the chocolate chips. This is a lovely way to incorporate fenugreek into your diet.*



Schisandra Jelly



INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup dried schisandra berries
- 1 small red apple, chopped
- ½ cup granulated sugar

PREPARATION

- 1** Place schisandra berries, chopped apple, and 1½ cups of water in a small saucepan.
- 2** Bring the water to a boil. Turn the heat down to low, and simmer for 20 minutes.
- 3** Strain the mixture through a cheesecloth or jelly bag, reserving the liquid and composting the fruit.
- 4** Add the sugar to the liquid and return it to the saucepan.
- 5** Heat the liquid until the sugar is fully dissolved, then bring it to a rolling boil. Boil for 5 minutes.
- 6** Check for set point by putting a small amount of the liquid on a spoon and putting it in the freezer for a few minutes to see if it gels. If it does not, boil the liquid for a few more minutes, and check again.
- 7** When the liquid reaches set point, place it in a jar and refrigerate until it sets.
- 8** Store the jelly in the refrigerator and serve it on Maple Oat Squares, muffins, or toast.







CACAO



Theobroma cacao



“Food of the Gods.” This is the translation for cacao’s genus name, *Theobroma*. As thick, rich, creamy chocolate, cacao becomes an absolute delight for our senses. If you are a chocolate lover like me, just the smell of chocolate can be intoxicating. The dark, creamy smoothness of melted chocolate or seeing it baked into or drizzled on treats is a feast for our eyes. And the taste, so utterly, irresistibly delicious . . .

How Does Cacao Work in Our Bodies?

When we eat chocolate, we feel energized and uplifted. This is partly due to the caffeine in cacao, especially in combination with theobromine,¹ but it also nourishes our bodies with minerals like potassium, magnesium, phosphorus, and calcium.² The synergistic effects of these and other constituents like anandamides and phenylethylamine likely contribute to its mood-elevating effects as well.³ The phenylethylamine compound is also natural in the brain, and research shows that trace amounts of it are released when we are in love and during orgasm.⁴

These compounds also act to protect the cardiovascular system, which may contribute to the heart-opening sensations some experience in the consumption of chocolate. Cacao is both heart opening and an excellent ally for physical heart health. It has been shown to protect the cardiovascular system and reduce the risk of heart disease by favorably influencing vasodilation, reducing inflammation, decreasing platelet aggregation, reducing lipid

oxidation, and reducing insulin resistance.⁵ It also can lower high blood pressure, and the theobromine in cacao dilates the coronary arteries and improves blood flow to the brain.⁶

It is both cardio- and neuroprotective, meaning it helps tone and protect our hearts and nervous systems while also providing endocrine, immunological, respiratory, reproductive, and dermatological health benefits.⁷ Cacao is a stimulating nervine, and both the caffeine and theobromine within it have neuroprotective properties, nourishing and strengthening our nerve cells.⁸

Herbal Shorthand

APHRODISIAC ACTIONS: cardioprotective, energizing, nervine, neuroprotective, nutritive

OTHER ACTIONS: antioxidant, inflammatory modulator

ENERGETICS: warming, moistening

TASTES: bitter

CONSTITUENTS: anandamides, calcium, caffeine, flavonoids, phenylethylamine, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, theobromine

DOSAGE SUGGESTIONS: Cacao is a tonic-level herb and should be consumed in medium dosages (2.5 grams of high-flavonoid cocoa powder or 10 grams of high-flavonoid dark chocolate per day). I recommend developing a taste for dark chocolate to minimize your sugar intake.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: Cacao may lead to insomnia, nervousness, or anxiousness in some people due to its stimulating effects.



A Bit about Cacao Plants

Cacao plants are native to the deep tropical regions of Central and South America, and yet chocolate is consumed in countries across the globe. When we unwrap our favorite chocolate treats, we do not often think about the cacao plant, trees that grow 20 to 30 feet tall, have glossy, bright green leaves that droop from the branches, and small pink flowers that blossom throughout the year. The trees produce fruits called cacao pods that can be up to a foot long and three inches in diameter. They can be green, red, yellow, or yellow-brown when they are ripe, depending on the variety. Inside the pods are the cacao beans (seeds) surrounded by a mucilaginous, white pulp that has a flavor that is both sweet and sour.

In order to make chocolate, the cacao pods are harvested and split open. The beans are removed from the pods and fermented. During the fermentation process, the white pulp turns into liquid and drains off, and the unique chocolate flavor develops in the beans. The beans are then dried and sorted. The nibs are removed from the seed shells and roasted. As they roast, they darken in color and their flavor deepens. The roasted nibs are ground in stone mills where friction and heat turn them to a thick liquid, which is the basis for chocolate and cocoa products. This liquid mass is pressed to extract cocoa butter and then either powdered or used to make various chocolate products.



How to Use Cacao

PARTS USED: fermented seeds

Cacao can be enjoyed in a myriad of ways. Generally chocolate treats are made with added ingredients, especially sweeteners, since it is quite bitter in 100 percent cacao form.

CACAO VS. COCOA: *The main difference between the two is that cacao butter and powder are made in processes using lower heating methods so they are more nutrient rich than cocoa butter and powder, but either type will be effective for recipes in this book:*

As an ingredient in sweet treats like candy bars, truffles, cakes, and cookies

In liquid form as a drink ingredient or as a syrup to be poured over other treats or as a body drizzle

As an ingredient in body-care products like lip balms or body butters



Participant Experiences

Cacao was the first herb we played with in the Aphrodisiac Circle, and it brought a sense of inspiration, joy, and pleasure right away. For a few participants, it was overly stimulating, and several people remarked about what a powerful herb they found it to be. Chocolate is a regular part of many of our lives, and our circle agreed that they would engage with cacao in a more conscious, respectful way going forward. Participants particularly noted feeling increased body and sensual awareness and arousal. We also felt more open hearted and comfortable in our vulnerability with greater intake of cacao.

There was a quality of indulgence and delight in our cacao experiments. We tried various cacao drinks, truffles, mousse tortes, chocolate pancakes, and body drizzles. Angela added cacao nibs to a bath salt blend. Gabrielle made a simple, private, daily ritual for herself of eating and savoring bites of a 100 percent cacao bar. Artemis made a ritual of a nightly cacao drink with cinnamon, cayenne, almond milk, and maple syrup, smelling, stirring, and slowly sipping by candlelight. We noticed a grounding quality in the earthy, exotic flavor and enjoyed the increased eroticism flowing in our lives throughout the month.

Delicious Delicacy Date Night

- 1** Plan a date night for you and your lover or all for yourself.
- 2** Choose some recipes from this chapter to prepare for the date.
- 3** Check the length of time needed for preparation (include time for gathering the ingredients as well as preparing the treats).
- 4** Choose a date and invite your lover, enticing them with the names and/or descriptions of the delicacies you will prepare.
- 5** Put the date on your calendar so you can enjoy anticipating it.
- 6** Enjoy the process of gathering your ingredients, especially if you get to harvest some yourself.
- 7** Make the preparation of the delicacies an aphrodisiac experience, delighting your senses and heightening the anticipation.
- 8** Fully revel in the sensual delight on the night of your date!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Kimberly Gallagher is an herbalist who has been working with healing plants for over 20 years. She is co-founder with her husband, John Gallagher, of LearningHerbs, one of the most respected online herbal education websites. She is the creator of the *Wildcraft!* board game, which has sold more than 100,000 copies worldwide, and author of the *Herb Fairies* children's books. Kimberly and John have two grown-up children and are into their third decade of marriage. For many years, Kimberly has been actively exploring healthy sexuality, which involves the power of sexuality for healing and erotic energy as source energy for creative, vital living. Kimberly is an ordained minister at her Trail of Beauty ministry, where sacred sensuality is at the heart of her work.

Website: learningherbs.com



How to make sure your lotion comes out perfect every time.



Kimberly invites you into her kitchen to show you the subtle secrets to making one of her most popular recipes in this book. You'll learn, step by step, how to make your first luscious batch of "Love Your Body Lotion."

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