

Lavender! It's about time Dixie Burmeister

Wednesday, September 02, 2009 | The Daily Sentinel

The question: How many times does it take to hit Dixie in the head before she writes a culinary LAVENDER column?

July 31 — received a note from Kathy Kimbrough via Laurena Davis: Re: the Lavender Society and a recipe incorporating and lavender and peaches.

Aug. 7 — discovered 2007 notes regarding lavender as an up-and-coming cash crop in Colorado.

Aug. 16 — friend Jill gave me a Lavender Bouquet at Palisade Sunday Market (Lavender Lady).

Aug. 20 — Our Downtown Farmers Market Booth was next to “The Lavender Lady” (Carol Mueller) — tasted her lavender cookies made from her lavender crop and had a chat.

Jim of Paula and Jim's Gelato Junction gave me a sample of their new “Lavender Gelato” with local lavender.

Following Sunday, Daily Sentinel article – local lavender crops.

Aug. 25 — Peach Festival wrap meeting — Carol with Z's Orchard handed me an apricot and lavender recipe. She's carrying culinary lavender from Susan Metzger.

Finally, it hit me. I made contacts to learn about this pretty and tasteful herb. I learned we have a Lavender Society, many are growing it, cooking with it and mixing up great lotions, soaps and more. This scratches the surface but it's a start. I've been told:

- ✓ Use only culinary lavender stating it's raised for that purpose and is safe for human consumption.
- ✓ Can use fresh or dried buds and flowers, that need to be finely ground for some recipes, steeped in simmering/boiling water to use the liquid, etc. Spikes and stems can be used like rosemary.
- ✓ If planting, purchase only plants that have been labeled for food crops and are free of pesticides.
- ✓ Flavor increases with drying.
- ✓ Less is more — start with small amounts, then adjust to taste.
- ✓ Experiment with various types of the herb. The Lavender Lady sells “Celebrate Lavender Festival Cookbook” thelavenderlady@yahoo.com or 800-554-1570.

The next Lavender Association meeting that is free and open to the public is Sept. 12, 10 a.m. at Sage Creations Organic farm, 3555 E Road on East Orchard Mesa. They'll be touring Paola Legarre's lavender farm and demonstrating the harvesting and de-budding techniques. For more info, contact Kathy Kimbrough at info@coloradolavender.org

Chunky Peach & Lavender Jam

From Kim Haas, member of Lavender Society, Master Gardener and lavender grower

3 tablespoons dried lavender flowers

3/4 cup of boiling water

6 cups of peeled and chopped peaches (8 to 9 medium peaches)

2 lemons

7 1/2 cups of sugar

Place the lavender flowers in a small glass bowl. Pour the boiling water over flowers; allow to steep 30 minutes. Strain and discard flowers. Juice the lemons. Combine juice and lemon halves in a large stainless steel pot. Add lavender water, peaches and sugar. Stir mixture over a medium heat until sugar dissolves. Bring to a full boil over high heat. Boil hard until jam sets, about 15 minutes, depending on your altitude. Test for set. Once set, remove from heat and allow fruit to settle through the jam. Discard lemon halves; ladle jam into hot, sterilized jars and seal. Process in boiling water for 10 minutes. Makes 8 half-pint (8 ounce) jars.

Rhubarb Lavender Crisp

Carol Mueller is at Palisade Sunday Market and Grand Junction Downtown Farmers Market (taste her cookies and get a sample of her soap). Found rhubarb at Alidas

5 cups fresh rhubarb cut in 1/4 inch chunks

1 tablespoon lavender finely ground (she says to look like ground sage)

1 cup sugar

3 tablespoon flour

1 tablespoon orange zest – fresh grated

Topping:

1/2 cup old fashioned rolled oats
1/2 cup brown sugar (packed)
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
14 cups butter (room temp)
14 cups chopped almonds or walnuts

Mix filling ingredients; pack down in 8 inch by 8 inch baking dish. Combine oats, sugar and spices; cut butter in until coarse and crumbly. Mix in nuts; sprinkle over rhubarb mixture. Bake 375° F for 35 to 40 minutes until topping is lightly browned. Top with vanilla ice cream or whipped topping.

Pound Cake

Add 1 teaspoon finely ground lavender dried buds to pound cake mix.

Relaxing tea

1/4 teaspoon lavender buds (culinary)
1/4 teaspoon chamomile flowers
1/2 teaspoon lemon balm Put all the dried herbs together in a tea infuser. Add to hot cup of water and let sit for 5 minutes. Then add honey or sugar to taste.

Lavender Lemonade

1 quart lemonade
1 tablespoon dried lavender (culinary)
1 cup boiling water

Pour boiling water over lavender, steep 20 minutes, strain, add to lemonade, serve chilled. Garnish with lemon slices and lavender.