

“Tending to plants changing throughout the seasons is a delicious meditation for me. It’s deeply satisfying to harvest, prepare, and eat food that you’ve grown yourself.”

SUBCHAPTERS

Use Every Part of the Plant

Grow the Essential Herbs Yourself

Flavoring With Strong Herbs

CHAPTER REVIEW

Alice always looks for ways to use the whole plant. Backyard trees like Meyer lemon, Kaffir lime, bay, and fig can be used for both their fruit and leaves. Alice uses the leaves of her lime tree for curries, wraps fish in fig leaves and cooks them over the fire or in the oven, and wraps goat cheese in fig leaves and bakes them in the oven. At Chez Panisse, peach leaves are used to make ice cream and bay leaves are used to infuse panna cotta.

Alice maintains a small garden—only 10 feet by 10 feet—and grows what she wants close at hand, such as tender lettuces, greens, and herbs. Alice grows tender herbs such as chives, parsley, chervil, cilantro, mint, and lemon verbena for salads, salsa verde, and tisanes. Tisane is an almost-nightly, post-meal ritual at home and at Chez Panisse. Alice’s first choice is lemon verbena, and mint is a close second; but she adjusts the herbs she uses for tisane depending on what is available in the garden.

Stronger herbs like rosemary, thyme, and savory will grow throughout the winter, and Alice loves to use these herbs in meat dishes. Thyme works well in marinades and stocks. Savory is a traditional seasoning for a pot of beans in the south of France. The woody stems of rosemary can be used as skewers for cooking over the fire, and the leaves roasted with almonds. Frying stronger herbs like rosemary and sage mellows their flavor. They can be crumbled over a dish to heighten flavor at the last moment.



RECIPES

TISANE

FROM *The Art of Simple Food*, PAGE 387



Tisane is a fresh tea, an infusion of fragrant herbs, or flowers and spices, steeped in boiling water. It is a soothing and refreshing finish to a meal, is complementary to most desserts, and offers a mild alternative to coffee. Tisane can be made from such flavorings as lemon verbena, mint, lemon thyme, lemon balm, hyssop, chamomile, citrus rind, and ginger—alone or in combination. It is very beautiful made in a glass teapot so you can see the brilliant green leaves. Rinse several branches of fresh herbs, put them in a teapot (or saucepan), and pour boiling water over them. Let the tisane steep for several minutes and serve. I like to use small clear tea glasses, as they do in Morocco, so the lovely pale green color is visible.

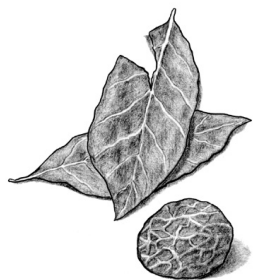
FRIED ROSEMARY

FROM *The Art of Simple Food II*, PAGE 27

Alice finishes many dishes with fried herbs, on their own or mixed with bread crumbs. She loves the crunch and flavor that they add. Rosemary and sage are especially good.

Remove the leaves from a medium sprig of rosemary. Discard the stem. Heat a small heavy-bottomed pan over medium-high heat. Pour in about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch olive oil. When the oil is hot, add the leaves. Don't be surprised: the oil will bubble up when the leaves are added. Let them fry for 1 minute and then scoop out with a slotted spoon or fine strainer before they turn brown. Drain on absorbent paper or towel. Sprinkle with salt and a tiny pinch of cayenne, if desired. They will stay crisp for a few hours.





BAY LEAF PANNA COTTA

ADAPTED FROM *The Art of Simple Food*, PAGE 373

Almond oil or a flavorless vegetable oil

3 tablespoons water

One ¼-ounce package gelatin

3 cups heavy cream

1 cup milk

¼ cup sugar

3 strips of lemon zest

2 or 3 bay leaves

½ vanilla bean

Brush eight 4-ounce ramekins lightly with oil. Chill the ramekins until ready to use. Measure 3 tablespoons water into a small bowl and sprinkle over the gelatin. Set aside until the gelatin has softened. Combine the cream, milk, sugar, lemon zest, and bay leaves in a heavy saucepan. Split the vanilla bean in half and scrape the seeds into the cream mixture, and add the bean. Heat just to a simmer; do not boil. Remove from the heat. Pour 1 cup of the hot cream over the gelatin and stir to dissolve. Pour the gelatin mixture back into the cream mixture and let it cool until just warm to the touch, about 110°F. Remove the vanilla bean and squeeze all the seeds and liquid from it back into the cream mixture. Strain the mixture and pour into the ramekins. Cover and chill for at least 6 hours.

To serve, run a small knife around the inside of each ramekin. Turn each ramekin over onto a small serving plate, shake gently, and lift off the ramekin. Serve with fresh berries or strawberries or with a fruit compote or sauce.

LEARN MORE

♦ Read the chapter “Fragrant and Beautiful” in *The Art of Simple Food II*, pages 7–33.