

**West Kingdom Brewers' Guild
Newsletter**



Purgatorio AS XLV

Chronicler's Corner: Greetings and welcome to Purgatorio! Many thanks to those who have been contacting me with their submissions, and questions. I always welcome your thoughts, articles, recipes, et al. Lord Alfred of Greyvale taught an ale class recently in Province of Silver Desert, have there been other classes or brewing gathers in our fair kingdom? Please let me know so I can pass the word.

A Message from our Chancellor:

I managed somehow to miss Beltane, but I understand we had a highly successful meeting regardless—which begs the question whether I'm a help or a hindrance to the Guild, I suppose, but be that as it may... Last month I attended Cynagua Coronet, where Johann held his first meeting as Cynagua representative. He's decided to hold meetings instead of competitions at coronet events, the idea being that it's easier to get attendance than entries. I think it's a good idea, and from what I saw at Coronet, it's a successful one. I'd be pleased to have that kind of attendance at a kingdom-level meeting! We had many people there, and many samples passed around, and a good time was had by all. Keep up the good work, Johann!

Our Charter is Lost!

Yes, it's true sometime between then and now, where it was and where it should be, it's gone missing. If you are experienced in wording a Charter, or would enjoy the challenge, please contact our Chancellor.

Contacts

Guild Chancellor

Peyre de Barat

Cynaguan Representative

Baron Johann von Drachenfels

Mists Representative

Godric

Oerthan Representative

Vacant

Chronicler (and Webmistress)

Aeschine Colquhoun

Bibliography

A Modern Herbal, Mrs. M. Grieve, Dover Publications Inc., New York 1971 (this herbal is available online at www.botanical.com)

Herbs for the Mediaeval Household for Cooking, Healing and Divers Uses, Margaret B. Freeman, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1943

Competitions for 2006

Purgatorio - non-alcoholic “refreshing” drinks.

October Crown – A period German beer.

REMEMBER: There is always an “open” brewing category at every brewing competition. This is an excellent opportunity for brewers of all levels to have someone knowledgeable taste their brews and give them feedback. Our goal with the “open” category is to allow people to get feedback on their brews when they want and need it, without having to wait for a specific category to arrive on the schedule. Submission rules are located at our website.

Who am I?

I am valuable to men, found far and wide,
brought from groves and mountain slopes,
from hills and dales. By day wings
carried me aloft, conveyed me skillfully
under a roof's cover. Afterwards men
bathed me in a vat. Now I am a binder
and a flogger, quickly throw a young
man to the ground and sometimes an old peasant.

He who grapples with me and contends
against my strength soon finds
that he must seek out the earth with his back
unless he first gives up his folly.

Robbed of strength yet strong in speech,
bereft of might, he has no control of his mind,
of his feet or hands. Find out what I'm called,
who thus binds foolish young men on the earth
after the fight by the light of day.

Riddle #25, Exeter Book, England, circa AD 950

Answer: Honey

Gruit Herbs by Katira al-Maghrebiyya

Peyre de Barat taught a class on Gruit at the A&S Tourney, AS XLI. I determined to find and grow various herbs he documented. While he also documents roses, heather, lavender, mace, pepper, juniper, ginger and “spices” as being used to flavor gruit, I am only interested in the herbs. All the flowers and spices are available in stores or online.

He lists some common Gruit herbs:

ground ivy (not regular ivy)
 bog myrtle, aka sweet gale or myrica
 yarrow
 heather
 mugwort

One recipe calls for sweet gale, marsh rosemary and yarrow. Another recipe calls for rosemary, sage, thyme, chamomile, marjoram, mint, fennel, avens, dill, pellitory, lavender, hyssop, roses and “spices”.

A list for church herb gardens includes rosemary, alecost, yarrow, hyssop, coriander, fennel, dill, marjoram, nettle, ivy, mace, betony, comfrey, alehoof, and costmary.

<p>Thymus Vulgaris Yarrow Achillea millefolium</p>	<p>Parts used: whole herb which is harvested in August while in bloom. It was also called old man's pepper and was used in snuff because of the pungency of its foliage which has a "bitterish, astringent, pungent taste.... In Sweden it is called 'Field Hop' and has been used in the manufacture of beer. Linnaeus considered beer thus brewed more intoxicating than when hops were used."</p>
	<p>milfoil, old man's pepper, soldier's woundwort, knight's milfoil, herbe militaris, thousand weed, nose bleed, carpenter's weed, bloodwort, staunchweed, sanguinary, devil's nettle, devil's plaything, bad man's plaything, yarroway</p>

Name/Botanical	Synonyms	Parts Used/Notes
Rosemary Rosemarinus officinalis	polar plant, compass-weed, compass plant	Parts used: herb and root. It "was one of the cordial herbs used to flavor ale and wine."
Sage Salvia officinalis	sawge, garden sage, red sage, broad-leaved white sage, narrow-leaved white sage	Parts used: leaves, whole herb. It was used to flavor foods, wines, cheese and was made into a tea that the Chinese loved. Gerard (?) said "No man need doubt of the wholesomeness of Sage Ale, being brewed as it should be with Sage, Betony, Scabious, Spikenard, Squinnette (Squinancywort and Fennell seed."
Sweet Gale Myrica gale	Bayberry, english bog myrtle, dutch myrtle	Parts used: leaves and branches. The fragrant leaves can be used to perfume linen. The branches can be used to replace hops in beer.
Thyme Thymus serpyllum Or	wild thyme – mother of thyme Or garden thyme – common thyme	Parts used: herb. The Romans used it to give an aromatic flavor to cheese and liqueurs.

He also notes that "pretty much any Old World herb you can think of, and then some, were used in gruits."

Below I have compiled information for all the herbs listed above. The scientific names are generally from the work of Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1708) as listed in A

Modern Herbal. All quotes are from the same work. I've tried to extract all period historical and flavor information so that one might better choose the herbs for a gruit. You will notice that some of the descriptions below contain the names of herbs not specifically mention by Peyre. I hope to add them to the table sometime in the future.

Please see tables on following pages...

Name/Botanical Synonyms Parts Used/Notes

Avens Geum urbanum	colewort, herb bennet, city avens, wild rye, way bennet, goldy star, clove root	Parts used: herb and root. In the 14 th C it was also known as Assarabaccara, Pesleporis, or Harefoot, and Minarta. The freshly dug root (this is done in the spring) has a clove like aroma. The taste of the dried root is astringent, slightly bitter and clove-like. Roots boiled in wine was used as a cordial against the Plague. Seeds available at www.sandmountainherbs.com
Alecost		See costmary
Alehoof		See ground ivy
Betony	Bishopwort	Parts used: herb.
Betonica officinalis Chamomile, Common Or Anthemis nobilis Or Chamomile, German	Manzanilla (Spanish), Maythen (Saxon) Or Wild chamomile	Parts used: flowers and herb. While it smells of apples, the taste is bitter. The flowers are used for a tea, but the whole herb is used for making herb beers. Only the flowers of the German variety are used for medicinal purposes.
Marsh Rosemary	More properly known as American Sea Lavender.	Parts used: root. It is "large, heavy, blackish, inodorous, and with a bitter, saltish and very astringent taste."
Statice Limonium	garden mint,, mackerel mint, our lady's mint, green mint, spire mint, sage of Bethelhem, fish mint...lamb mint	Parts used: herb. The ancient herb spearmint was introduced to Britain by the Romans. There is doubt that modern Peppermint was the one used by the Greeks and Romans and it wasn't identified as a distinct species until late in the 17 th C.
Mint Mentha viridis	common nettle, stinging nettle	Parts used: herb and seed. Of the 500 species, "two genera are represented in the British Isles, Urtica (stinging nettles) and Parietaria (pellitory – see next entry) The Herbal has a recipe for Nettle Beer that also calls for dandelion, clivers (goosegrass), whole ginger. It says that other herbs such as burdock, meadowsweet, avens, and horehound were often added to the nettles and it made a refreshing summer drink.
Nettle Urtica urens Or Urtica dioica	Lichwort	Parts used: herb. It belongs "to the same group as Stinging Nettle and the Hop. It is the only representative of its genus in Britain" and therefore the one I assume was meant in the period references.

Name/Botanical	Synonyms	Parts Used/Notes
Fennel Foeniculum vulgare	fenkel, sweet fennel, wild fennel	Parts used: seeds, leaves, roots. The various parts are use so many ways in period and today, that I would guess that you could any part for a gruit.
Ground Ivy Glechoma hederacea	alehoof, gill-go-over-the-ground, haymaids, tun-hoof, hedge-maids, lizzy-run-up-the-hedge, gill-go-by-hedge, catsfoot, robin-run-in-hedge	Parts used: herb. Before hops were available, the Saxons used it to clarify their beer. They steeped the leaves in the hot liquor. This process was used until the time of Henry VIII. Persian ground ivy (Nepeta mussinii) is available from JL Hudson Seeds.
Hyssop Hyssopus officinalis		Parts used: herb. A strong flavor and its essential oil is of greater value to perfumers than oil of lavender. It is used today in Chartreuse.
Marjoram, Wild Origanum vulgare		Parts used: herb. "The whole has a strong, peculiar, fragrant, balsamic odour with a warm, bitterish, aromatic taste.... The tops are also sometimes put into table beer, to give it an aromatic flavour and preserve it, and before the introduction of hops they were nearly as much in demand for ale-brewing as the ground ivy or wood sage." It is in French recipes for hippocras.
Matricaria chamomilla		
Comfrey Symphytum officinal	Common comfrey, knitbone, knitback, consound, blackwort, bruisewort, slippery root, bone-set, yalluc (Saxon), gum plant, consolida, ass ear	Parts used: roots and leaves. Related to borage and forget-me-not.
Coriander Coriandrum sativum		Parts used: fruits and leaves. This ancient herb was brought to England by the Romans.
Costmary Tanacetum balsamita	alecost, balsam herb, costmarie, mace, balsamita	Parts used: leaves. Its soft balsamic odor is softer than its relative Tansy. Mentioned in The Countrie Farmer, 1616 along with avens as giving ale 'savour'.
Dill Anethum graveolens		Parts used: seeds. The taste resembles caraway and have a pleasant aromatic odor. The bruised seeds "impart their virtues to alcohol". The use of the leaves (dill weed) was mentioned in a minor way for cookery and I assume that the seeds would be use for gruit as they are for vinegar.