September Herb of the Month: Ginger



Zingiber Officinale, is probably one of the oldest and best remedies for a cold or flu. I often recommend it to my patients with nausea or vomiting associated with morning sickness and motion sickness. It is exceptional for this. Its ability to calm an upset stomach and sooth digestive symptoms is great as well. Warm and satisfying, ginger tea is a natural and inexpensive alternative to over-the-counter medications. Its benefits have been touted for thousands of years, and its active components have been identified and studied in depth.

Ginger has been used for 5,000 years in Chinese medicine and Ayurvedic healing practices. Ginger contains more than a dozen anti-viral components which treat a gamut of common ailments. In fact, its healing properties are so trusted, it's an ingredient in over half of all Chinese herbal medicinal preparations. Its main therapeutic compounds are fatty acids, monoterpenes and sesquiterpenes, which work like modern-day anti-viral drugs and pain relievers. It's used powdered, ground and as an oil, but its most popular form is ginger tea.



Ginger Tea

Ginger tea can be made with raw, grated ginger or dried ginger powder. It's important to make sure ginger powder is minimally processed without additives. Kitchen spice rack ginger is okay to use, but can be low quality. If you use raw ginger, cut up about 5 chunks and add them to a sauce pan. Add about 6 cups of water and cover. Heat to a boil. Vent the lid and let the tea simmer on low for 15 minutes. Drink two to three cups a day or as needed. Another option: Add either one generous teaspoon of grated ginger root or a half teaspoon of high-quality powdered ginger to a mug. Scald it by pouring hot water over it rather than immersing the ginger into the water. This releases more active components. Let the tea steep, covered if possible, for 10 minutes, give a light stir and drink while still warm. Add a soothing teaspoon of honey and a squeeze of lemon for a soothing cold remedy.



Ginger Veggie Stir-Fry

You can use veggies you have on hand, any seasonal veggies may be used. It has a mild ginger flavor that can be enhanced according to taste and is filling but light on the stomach! Tofu may be added. Serve over a bed of steamed jasmine rice.

Ingredients

Recipe makes 6 servings

1 tablespoon corn starch
1 1/2 cloves garlic, crushed
2 teaspoons chopped fresh ginger root, divided
1/4 cup vegetable oil, divided
1 small head broccoli, cut into florets
1/2 cup snow peas
3/4 cup julienned carrots
1/2 cup halved green beans
2 tablespoons soy sauce
2 1/2 tablespoons water
1/4 cup chopped onion
1/2 tsp salt

Directions

1. In a large bowl, blend cornstarch, garlic, 1 teaspoon ginger, and 2 tablespoons vegetable oil until cornstarch is dissolved. Mix in broccoli, snow peas, carrots, and green beans, tossing to lightly coat.
2. Heat remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet or wok over medium heat. Cook vegetables in oil for 2 minutes, stirring constantly to prevent burning. Stir in soy sauce and water. Mix in onion, salt, and remaining 1 teaspoon ginger. Cook until vegetables are tender but still crisp.



Triple Ginger Biscotti

Unlike traditional biscotti, these won't break your teeth. They are more like ginger molasses cookies in biscotti form, with big chunks of chewy, crystallized ginger and toasted almonds.

Ingredients

Makes 16

1/4 cup butter, softened
3/4 cup brown sugar
2 eggs
2 tbsp molasses
270g plain flour
1 1/2 tsp baking powder
1/4 tsp salt
2 tbsp ground ginger
2 tsp fresh ginger, peeled and grated
3/4 cup crystallized ginger, chopped
1/2 cup flaked almonds, toasted

Optional: Vanilla icing, ginger sprinkles

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350F. Cream the butter and brown sugar together until light and fluffy.
2. Add the eggs one by one, beating after each egg, then drizzle in the molasses. Beat together well.
3. In a separate bowl, mix together the flour, baking powder, salt and powdered ground ginger. Add this to the wet ingredients and then stir in the fresh ginger, crystallized ginger and toasted almonds.
4. Form the mixture into two logs of dough (each log should be about 8" long and 2" wide). Place the logs on a lined baking tray and bake for 30 minutes, then leave them to cool for around 5 minutes.
5. Carefully slice the logs into biscotti (the dough might still be a little crumbly), then turn each one over on its side and bake for another 10-12 minutes. Leave to cool.

6. If you choose to, you can dip the ends of the cookies in warm vanilla icing and sprinkle with ginger flex sprinkles. YUM! Great with tea!



Ginger Essential Oil

Botanical name: **zingiber officinale**
Use: Good in preparations for muscular fatigue, rheumatism and arthritis. Helpful for conditions like diarrhea and catarrh... Can irritate the skin...
Perfume Note: Base
Blends well with: Rosewood, Coriander, Benzoin, Ylang Ylang, Rose
Source: root
Production method: steam distillation
Aromatherapy benefits: warms, sharpens, aphrodisiac
Aroma type: sharp, peppery, spicy, pungent
Warning: may be irritating to sensitive skin
Safety Information: "test" patch this oil on the skin (inside of elbow)

5 Fresh Ways to Use Ginger in Homemade Beauty

by Crunchy Betty (http://www.crunchybetty.com)

During the season, my house is never empty of ginger. It's a must-have for cough and cold season, as well as any tummy upsets that might sneak up. Also, it's delicious. And spicylicious.

First, it must be pointed out that because we're working with fresh ginger, these things aren't going to keep as long as you'd probably hope. In fact, most of these, you should use immediately. And I have two great ginger tips for you before we get started:

•To peel ginger, just use the side of a spoon. This is a pretty well-known tip, but it must be mentioned. You don't need a fancy peeler to peel the skin from the ginger – in fact, I often feel that my peeler is too thorough when I use it on ginger. Just tilt your spoon to the side and use the edge to scrape down the ginger. The top layer should peel off easily and quickly.
•Peeled ginger keeps very well for months in the fridge, if you submerge it in a high-quality, high proof alcohol. Just peel the ginger and break it into manageable pieces and then pour vodka or vermouth or even sherry (though vodka is best). If you're planning on using it to cook with, the alcohol will just cook right off when you do. And, bonus: You'll have ginger-infused vodka to make a new, fancy martini with.

Mustard-Ginger Detoxifying and Destressing Foot Soak

A long-famed traditional home remedy for aches, colds, chills, and general fatigue and sickness, mustard foot baths are the bomb for the days or nights where you just don't feel up to snuff. Add a little fresh ground ginger in with it, and you've got yourself a foot bath that will help warm you, relax the muscles in your feet, and detoxify your system straight through the soles.

You don't need a fancy foot bath like I have (in fact, I wouldn't have it if it weren't for someone literally making me take it – it's a little frivolous, to be sure). Just fill your bathtub (or another large foot-sized basin) up with very warm water and add your ingredients. Of note, hot water "deactivates" mustard, making it milder and not as potent. So it's best to do your mustard-ginger foot baths in warm water, not piping hot.

Mustard-Ginger Foot Bath Recipe

- 1-1/2 Tbsp mustard powder (or freshly powdered mustard seeds)
- 2 tsp finely grated peeled fresh ginger

Combine the two in a basin that fits your feet (or your bathtub) with enough hot water to cover the tops of your feet. Stir around and then submerge your feet. Let your feet soak for 15-20 minutes, swishing the water around occasionally (and adding more warm water, if your foot bath becomes too cold). Rinse with warm water and pat dry.

Fresh Ginger for Hypopigmented Scars (or White Scars)

Hypopigmented scars or skin has lost its pigmentation – and is either white or a much lighter color than your actual skin tone. Incredibly enough, ginger will fix this issue.

Here's how you do it: Each day (or even twice a day) cut a VERY small sliver of fresh ginger and dab it on the hypopigmented areas. Don't wash off. Just leave the juice there. According to the forums I've read, most people see a slight improvement within a week or two, and within a few months, their scars are nearly completely back to normal color. The important thing is, do this every day. Without fail.

Rejuvenating Ginger-Lemon Body Scrub

One of ginger's most notable qualities is its invigorating, fresh, and spicy feeling. Add it with a bit of lemon zest in a sugar scrub, and you have a body scrub that will warm you up and wake you up at the same time.
And here's a secret for you: Ginger is highly-regarded as one of nature's best cellulite reducers, so if you do this regularly, you may see a difference in the bumps!

Fresh Ginger-Lemon Body Scrub

- 1/2 c. organic sugar
- 1/4 c. olive oil
- 2 tsp freshly grated, peeled ginger
- Zest from one organic lemon

Combine all ingredients in a small bowl. Stir well. In the shower or bath, scrub your body lightly with the mixture and rinse well. This should keep in the refrigerator (if necessary) for up to a week. But I highly recommend you use it immediately.

Romantic, Warming Ginger-Rose Massage Oil

If you're making it the old-fashioned way, by infusing the oil over time, you might want to use a few drops of rosemary essential oil in the mixture – just to keep it well preserved. Ginger isn't a very watery ingredient, but fresh ginger does contain moisture, so be careful that it doesn't go rancid or start to mold a little. Ginger's also highly antibacterial and antifungal, so you should be okay. BUT, when in doubt, add extra preservatives (or use the less-intense dried ginger).

Rose Ginger Romantic Massage Oil

- 1 inch peeled, completely clean piece of ginger root, cut into thin slices
- 10-12 small dried rosebuds
- 1 c. carrier oil (sweet almond, olive, jojoba, hazelnut, etc.)

In a small glass container, combine all ingredients and shake to combine, knocking on the side of the glass until all the ginger falls to the bottom. Either let this concoction sit for 5-7 days, shaking daily, or heat over very low heat for 30 minutes to an hour. Use as a warming, romantic massage oil. But keep out of delicate places, because ginger is pretty intense.

Cozy Ginger-Cinnamon Bath Salts

For this last idea, you can use either coarsely ground sea salt, like I did, or up the ante for relieving muscle aches by using Epsom salts. Both ginger and cinnamon encourage circulation, which in turn helps relieve some of the aches and pains you may feel after a long day.

- 1/4 c. coarsely ground sea salt or Epsom salts
- 3 tsp peeled, finely ground or grated ginger
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 5 drops sweet orange essential oil (optional, for even more relaxation)

Combine all ingredients in a small container and stir well. Add to your hot bath, and swish around a bit before getting in. Soak for 15-20 minutes. Use immediately.