Herb of the Month: Peppermint



Mentha piperita, is not only a favorite herb and extract around the holidays, but it has wonderful medicinal properites as well. Peppermint has been used for centuries to relieve pain, muscle spasms, reduces inflammation, fight infection, clear congestion and open sinuses. It can regulate oiliness on skin, help in digestion, stimulate the brain, promote nerve health and cools fever.



Try this recipe for **amazing Peppy Peppermint Cake Balls. Learn about how to make this delicious and fun cake balls for Christmas or for any occasion**. Good for parties, as well as dessert! Rich in peppermint flavor with a cool after taste!

1. Chocolate Cake Recipe: A box mix would work well OR:

3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
3/4 teaspoon baking powder
3/4 teaspoon salt
2 large eggs
3/4 cup warm water
3/4 cup buttermilk
3 tablespoons safflower oil
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
8 drops peppermint essential oil

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Sift together cocoa powder, flour, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt into a large bowl. Add eggs, warm water, buttermilk, oil, and vanilla, essential oil and mix until smooth, about 3 minutes. Scrape down the sides and bottom of bowl to assure batter is well mixed.

Make cake in a 9x13 pan. Once cake cools cut into large chunks and grind up in food processor to fine crumbs. Pour cake crumbs into large bowl.

2. Peppermint Buttercream

1 1/2 sticks unsalted butter, softened
4 cups confectioner's sugar
1/4 cup milk
10 drops of peppermint essential oil
1 teaspoon peppermint extract
6 candy canes, crushed for garnish

In bowl of electric mixer cream butter on medium speed.
Gradually add confectioner's sugar, oil and milk and mix well.
Mix in peppermint extract.

3.White Chocolate Candy Melts: 2 bags, you can buy them at your local craft store
4.Candy Canes: 6-8 crushed for garnish

Add about 1 - 1 1/2 cups peppermint buttercream to cake crumbs and mix with spatula until cake will form into a ball. Roll cake balls and place onto wax paper lined cookie

sheet.
Melt 2 bags of candy melts in microwave per package directions.
Using a spoon gently place cake ball into melted chocolate and roll around to cover completely. Remove cake ball with spoon, lightly tapping off excess chocolate back into the bowl and placing ball on cookie sheet. Garnish with crushed candy cane.
Makes about 50 cake balls.



Here is a soothing Tummy Tea Remedy and helpful digestive tea. Whether it is the cold/winter season or the warm/summer time, peppermint can care for your upset stomach, refresh your body when you are dehydrated and it can help cool fever.

Creating the perfect pot of tea is not difficult. All it takes are some easy to follow, common sense steps and you have a great tasting, healthy pot of tea.

The water you use, makes a difference. Clear spring water makes the best tea. If you use tap water, run the faucet to clear the water sitting in the pipes. Colder and fresher makes a tastier, livelier infusion.

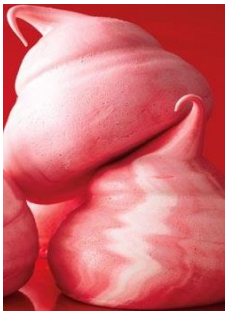
Warm the steeping pot. Run the pot under hot water in order to warm up the pot Choose your pot with care. Most metal pots (stainless steel is acceptable), can impart flavor to the water; aluminum and unlined copper are the worst offenders. Glass and enamel are preferred.

Pour the measured, fresh water into the saucepan and place over medium heat. Heat the water until it just comes to a rolling boil. Over-boiling removes too much oxygen, imparting a flat taste to the tea.

Add the tea leaves to the warmed steeping pot (one teaspoon per cup, plus one "for the pot"). Immediately pour the boiled water over the loose leaves; cover the pot.

If available, place the tea cozy over the pot. This will keep the pot warm during the steeping, which helps extract as much flavor as possible. A thick towel, while not as traditional, will do as well.

Steep three to five minutes for most teas; longer, to taste. Also be sure and steep the herbs longer for the teas made from sticks, twigs, roots or berries, as well as, herbal infusions.



Delight in these delectable Peppermint Meringues! These little lovelies are great for vegetarians, are gluten free and make about 60 meringues. A light and airy, peppermint treat!

Refrigerated
3 Egg whites, large
6 drops peppermint essential oil
12 drops food coloring, red
1/8 tsp Kosher salt
1/8 tsp Peppermint extract
1/2 cup Powdered sugar
1/3 cup Sugar

Preheat oven to 200°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Using an electric mixer, beat egg whites and salt on medium-high speed until white and foamy, about 1 minute. With mixer running, gradually add sugar in 3 additions, beating for 2 minutes between each addition. Beat until firm peaks form, about 2 minutes longer. Add powdered sugar and peppermint extract; beat to blend, about 1 minute.

Dot coloring over surface of meringue; do not stir (the coloring will form swirls when piped). Spoon meringue into a pastry bag fitted with a 1/2" tip. (alternatively, spoon into a plastic freezer bag, then cut 1/2" off 1 corner.) Twist top; pipe 1" rounds onto prepared sheet, spacing 1" apart.

Bake meringues until dry, about 2 1/2 hours. Let cool completely, about 1 hour (meringues will crisp as they cool). DO AHEAD: Can be made 2 days ahead. Store airtight at room temperature between sheets of parchment or waxed paper.



Angel's Mist Peppermint Essential Oil is used in aromatherapy for stimulating the digestive tract, relieving pain, combating muscle spasms, reducing inflammation, fighting infection, clearing congestion and open sinuses. Peppermint can regulate oiliness on skin, stimulate the brain, promote nerve health and cools fever. Inhale this oil to open sinus and clear congestion Massage it on the back of your neck and into your temples to sooth a head or migraine. Rub into stomach, over abdomen on sore muscles or muscles that are in spasm to calm the massages or relieve pain. Add several drops to recipes (see above).

Peppermint (Mentha piperita) essential oil Peppermint oil has a high concentration of natural pesticides, mainly pulegone (Found mainly in Mentha arvensis var. piperascens Cornmint, Field Mint, Japanese Mint and to a lesser extent. The chemical composition of the essential oil from peppermint (Mentha x piperita L.) has main constituents were menthol (40.7%) and menthone (23.4%). Further components were (+/-)-menthyl acetate, 1,8-cineole, limonene, beta-pinene and beta-caryophyllene.



Peppermint (Mentha piperita), also known as M. balsamea Wild is a hybrid mint, a cross between watermint and spearmint. The plant, indigenous to Europe and the Middle East, is now widespread in cultivation in many regions of the world. It is found wild occasionally with its parent species. Peppermint was first described in 1753 by Carl Linnaeus from specimens that had been collected in England; he treated it as a species, but it is now universally agreed to be a hybrid. Peppermint generally grows best in moist, shaded locations,

and expands by underground rhizomes. Young shoots are taken from old stocks and dibbled into the ground about 1.5 feet apart. They grow quickly and cover the ground with runners if it is permanently moist. For the home gardener, it is often grown in containers to restrict rapid spreading. It grows best with a good supply of water, without being water-logged, and planted in areas with part-sun to shade.

The leaves and flowering tops are used; they are collected as soon as the flowers begin to open and can be dried. The wild form of the plant is less suitable for this purpose, with cultivated plants having been selected for more and better oil content. They may be allowed to lie and wilt a little before distillation, or they may be taken directly to the still.

Chemical constituents

Peppermint has a high menthol content. The oil also contains menthone and menthyl esters, particularly menthyl acetate. Dried peppermint typically has 0.3-0.4% of volatile oil containing menthol (7-48%), menthone (20-46%), menthyl acetate (3-10%), menthofuran (1-17%) and 1,8-cineol (3-6%). Peppermint oil also contains small amounts of many additional compounds including limonene, pulegone, caryophyllene and pinene.

Culinary and other uses

Pliny the elder, 79 AD, an ancient Roman author, natural philosopher and naval and military commander wrote Naturalis Historia, it tells us that the Greeks and Romans crowned themselves with peppermint at their feasts and adorned their tables with its sprays, and that their cooks flavored both their sauces and their wines with its essence.

It is the oldest and most popular flavour of mint flavored confectionery and is often used in tea and for flavouring ice cream, confectionery, chewing gum, and toothpaste. Peppermint can also be found in some shampoos, soaps and skin care products.

Menthol activates cold-sensitive TRPM8 receptors in the skin and mucosal tissues, and is the primary source of the cooling sensation that follows the topical application of peppermint oil.

Peppermint flowers are large nectar producers and honey bees as well as other nectar harvesting organisms forage them heavily. A mild, pleasant varietal honey can be produced if there is a sufficient area of plants.

Peppermint oil in Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) with Constipation

Peppermint oil has also been shown to be effective for IBS with constipation. Peppermint has a long tradition of use in folk medicine and aromatherapy. Peppermint is commonly thought to soothe or treat symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, indigestion, irritable bowel, and bloating, although most of these effects have not been adequately demonstrated in human research.

The aroma of peppermint has been studied for its possible effect to enhance memory and alertness, although other research contests this. Peppermint oil ingestion by capsules for four weeks may relieve irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) symptoms via an effect on pain sensing fibers.

According to the German Commission E monographs, peppermint oil (as well as peppermint leaf) has been used internally as an antispasmodic (upper gastrointestinal tract and bile ducts) and to treat irritable bowel syndrome, catarrh of the respiratory tract, and inflammation of the oral mucosa. Externally, peppermint oil has been used for myalgia and neuralgia. According to Commission E, peppermint oil may also act as a carminative, cholagogue, antibacterial, and secretolytic, and it has a cooling action.

Enteric-coated peppermint oil capsules (Colpermin) have been used as an orally administered antispasmodic premedication in colonoscopy. The capsules were found beneficial in reducing total procedure time, reducing colonic spasm, increasing endoscopist satisfaction and decreasing pain in patients during colonoscopy.

When peppermint oil antacid products dissolve too quickly, they can sometimes cause heartburn and nausea.

Due to the menthol constituent, topical use of peppermint oil around the facial or chest areas of infants and young children, especially around the nose, can induce apnea, laryngeal and bronchial spasm, acute respiratory distress with cyanosis, or respiratory arrest.

Peppermint oil is also used in construction and plumbing to test for the tightness of pipes and disclose leaks by its odor.