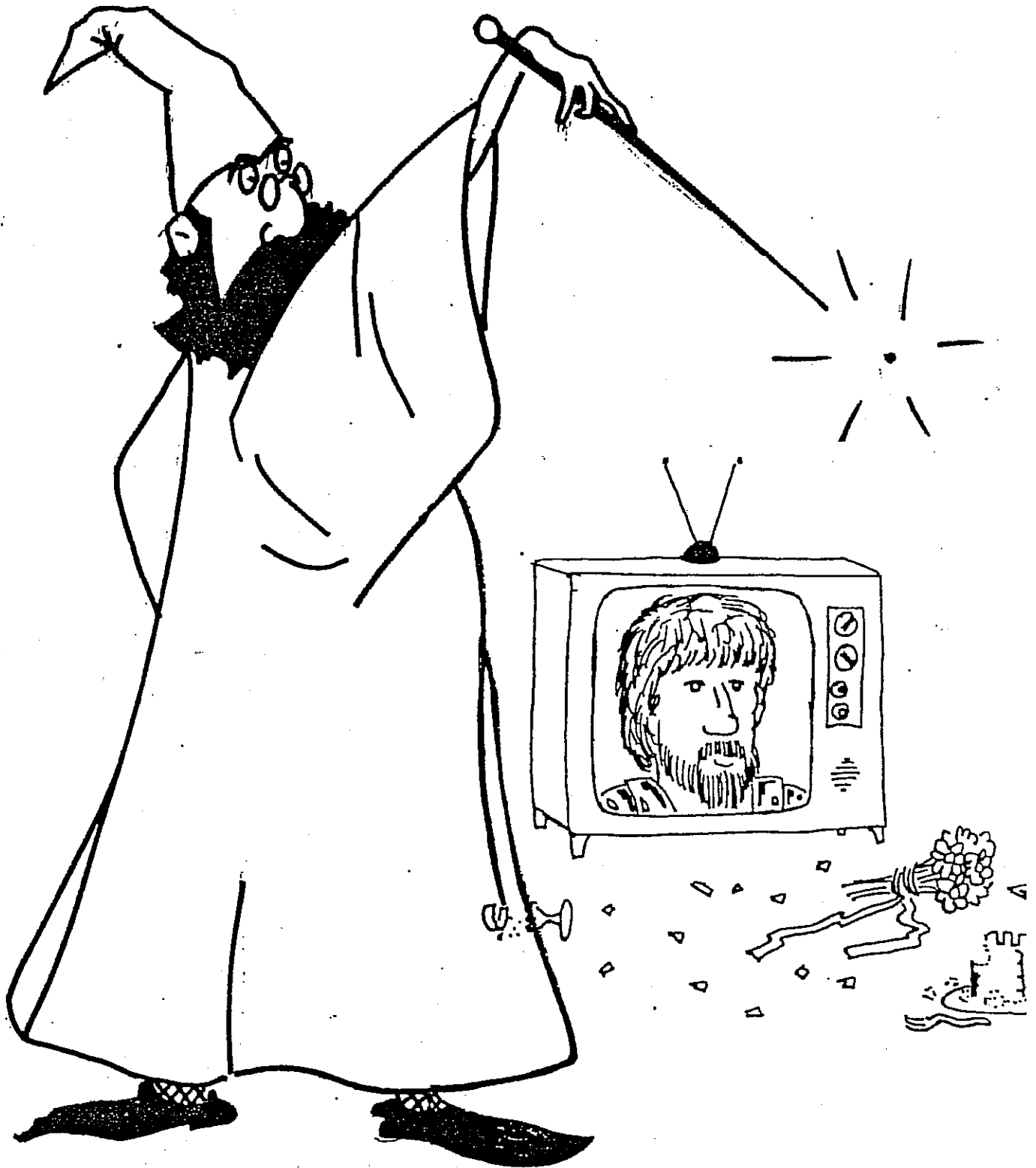


AMT GARD

SUPPLEMENT #3: COOKING AND FEASTING



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 - * Amtgard Camping by Gwynne (Kris Donnelly-Sasser)
- *Art: cover- Gwynne and Aron (Len Nellson), lion man- Sho kia (David Taylor)
lizard man- Morluk (Lee Jackson), candle- Fedora Diane of the Rhogam
(Terri Snoddy), the feast- Gwynne, all other art by the authors



A BEGINNER'S FEAST MANUAL

OR

HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR DIGNITY OR AT LEAST YOUR SANITY

First rule of thumb—don't even think about doing it by yourself. Get as many friends to help you with not only the cooking, but with reservations, setting up the feast hall and the clean-up afterwards.

After many feasts, it is obvious that an indoor feast is the best option. Trying to see by motorcycle headlight because it is too windy for candles is ridiculous. Unless you have the ability to control the weather, forget an outdoor feast. Murphy's Law has struck at every outdoor feast. But even indoor feasts have their problems; open space. Most houses don't have enough room to seat at least 50 people. Crowded conditions are undesirable and outweigh the good factors of having a ready stove, refrigerator, and oven, which many rental halls do not have. There is also the risk of damage to the house and its furnishings to consider. Even with careful consideration, something will be spilled or broken. It just happens.

Selecting a site is hard. Many places charge more than the club can afford at the time of this writing and we cannot rent them. Other halls are less expensive but lack vital equipment such as stoves, refrigerators and ovens. Ice chests, Coleman stoves and microwaves are viable solutions. If you use a Coleman stove, be sure that the area is well ventilated. Unfortunately, even such equipment doesn't serve its purpose as well as could be hoped for.

As stated before, get plenty of help. Don't wait for volunteers but ask around for it. Have at least three people who can be contacted for information about the feast. Have only one person in charge of collecting the money. That way, no one can say that they paid the other person and have confusion everywhere about the funds. Be sure to give out receipts, that way it will be easier to tally up the money earned. Also, save all receipts and write down what cost what so there are no discrepancies.

Let people know specifics about the event at least a month in advance. Set a cut off date for early payment for tickets. Then raise the price slightly for a second time period. Also, set up a limit of how many people will be let in at the door. Make it KNOWN and stick to this limit. If you don't keep to this limit, you run the risk of running out of food. This is not fair to those who paid in advance. During the feast, someone should be at the door to collect the latecomers' money and to watch for gate crashers. BIG people are perfect for this job. If the door can be locked, it helps the gatekeeper sit down and eat. Having more than one person as gatekeeper is also terrific.

No feast is a feast without contributions from everyone. Personal and company flags and banners help decorate the hall and candle illumination helps to create a beautiful setting. Having other people to help with the feast itself is important as well. Servers are a good idea but if you can't find enough, a buffet table can be used instead. Entertainment also helps to liven up a feast. It can be taped medieval music during the feast but after everyone has had a chance to eat, some live entertainment is really special. With the other guilds helping, a program that is varied will be greatly appreciated by all.

Court is always held at formal feasts. It is a perfect chance to give out awards, titles, and badges of office. A feeling of ceremony adds so much atmosphere and class to a feast.

Budgeting a feast is important. You can estimate about 50 people showing up at least and at \$5 per person, you can spend about \$150 on food, saving some of the money for the hall rental. For the 9th Crown Feast, the hall rental was \$50 which was initially loaned by the club. We spent \$162.49 on food. After the feast, we had collected about \$100 and were able to pay back the loan from the club plus the profit. With the food that we bought, we were able to feed around 72 people with some left over. Ariona and I went to bulk food stores and sales to get the food we needed. Here is what we bought and how much it cost:

15 whole chickens	\$33.51
24 pounds of beef	\$34.40
8 pounds of carrots	\$ 3.56
15 pounds of potatoes	\$ 2.28
15 onions	\$ 2.44
12 pounds of Colby cheese	\$21.32
5 pounds of mozzarella cheese	\$ 8.61
1 jar of beef stock	\$ 5.21
12 pounds of rice	\$ 3.88
12 pkgs. of onion soup mix	\$ 4.74
3 very large cans of green beans	\$ 8.34
3 bottles red wine vinegar	\$ 3.33
7 pounds of butter	\$ 2.66
2 watermelons	\$ 3.98
1 pkg. of pudding mix	\$ 3.06
3 cans of pie filling	\$ 6.21
2 boxes of graham cracker crumbs	\$ 2.70
2 pkgs. of foil dessert cups	\$.86
1 small pumpkin	\$.22
1 pkg. of small pie pans	\$ 2.68
100 rolls	\$ 5.90

We pulled the chicken into pieces and served them warm. With the meat, carrots, potatoes, beef stock, and onions, we made a stew. The green beans were topped with a red wine vinegarette. The rice was mixed with the onion soup mix to give the rice an interesting onion flavor. The bread and chesses were placed on the tables ahead of the served food. Also, we had honey butter

and garlic butter for the bread. The garlic butter had paprika in it to help distinguish it from the honey butter and to give it a more appealing appearance. Dessert was watermelon and dessert cups. The foil cups were lined with graham cracker crumbs and then had vanilla pudding and topped with fruit pie filling. All and all it was pretty nice, however, there were complaints about cold food. With what we had to work with, its understandable. Also, there will always be those who complain. You just have to learn to listen to the majority's opinion.

Here are some other tips for a feast:

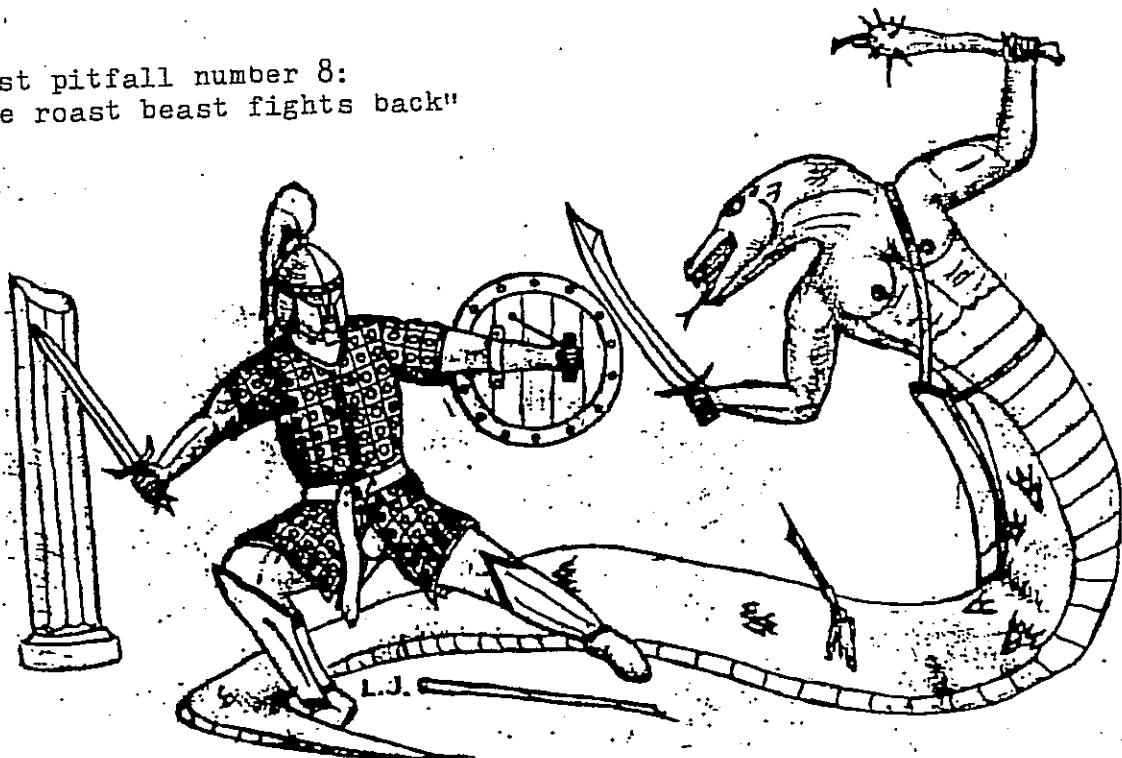
1. Allow a minimum of 1/2 a pound of protein per person, 2/3 of that in meat form. Most people will be hungry from fighting since most feasts are on an event day or from forgetting to eat lunch.
2. Limit the number of exotic foods at your first feast. Exotic covers something as ordinary as fish stuffed with fruit. One dish out of five is plenty. One can be a dessert. Another way is to present familiar food with a different type of sauce.
3. Make sure everything is fresh or at least frozen. Try not to use premade pies and such as they don't taste as good. Try to find sale specials and friends with empty freezers so you can save cash.
4. Unless everyone is a vegetarian, keep the vegetable dishes to a minimum. It just wastes food. Halve the number of expected dinners and allot them a small portion of vegetables. Add maybe a little more to your tally if you wish.
5. A good way to add a different flavor to a dish is to put wine or beer in the sauce. Ham goes well in beer, white wine and apples and beef goes well in red wine as in a stew.
6. Chicken, pork or ham are usually the cheapest meals to serve, usually in a stew form. Allow 1/3 of a pound of chicken per feaster and 1/4 of a pound of denser meat. By this formula you will need 13 pounds of chicken or ten of beef for a stew that serves 40 people.
7. Start the feast on time. If people are late, it's their own fault. Serve the food while its the correct temperature, depending on the dish. Have starter food such as breads, cheeses, maybe fruits and nuts (if you can afford them) on the tables to keep them occupied. Garlic and honey butter taste so much better than plain butter.
8. Start collecting needed materials other than food way ahead of time. Make sure that there will be plenty of chairs and tables. Tablecloths, candles, head table decorations and the like are useful in making the place look better. Make sure you have plenty of serving dishes and bowls, platters for cheese and baskets for bread and fruit. If you have to borrow bowls

and such, either make a complete list of what was borrowed from who or have them mark their stuff with nail polish or plastic tape.

9. Some last minute articles that you might want to bring are: paper towels, salt and pepper, toilet paper, a few extra eating utensils for those who forget (make a list of who borrowed what), garbage bags, dish cloths and/or towels, and aspirin.
10. Have a committee other than yourself procure the tables and set them up in the hall. You can go and watch and give some creative ideas on decorating but don't kill yourself. If you try to do everything, you probably will be so frazzled that you might forget something important. Always have friends to help.
11. If it is possible (it wasn't for us), try to wash up dishes as you go along. This will save on later clean up and you can leave sooner. Maybe having basins of soapy water available for the feastgoers to wash their own dishes in as well would help them out and keep them out of your kitchen.
12. Being able to clean up the next day is fantastic. If some of the food is left out however, it might spoil (it sure did for us). It is easier to clean up in daylight and in mundane clothes. Make sure you have other people to help.
13. Give credit to those who helped you. They deserve recognition as much as you.

Joella

Feast pitfall number 8:
"the roast beast fights back"



Simple Fancy Cooking at Events

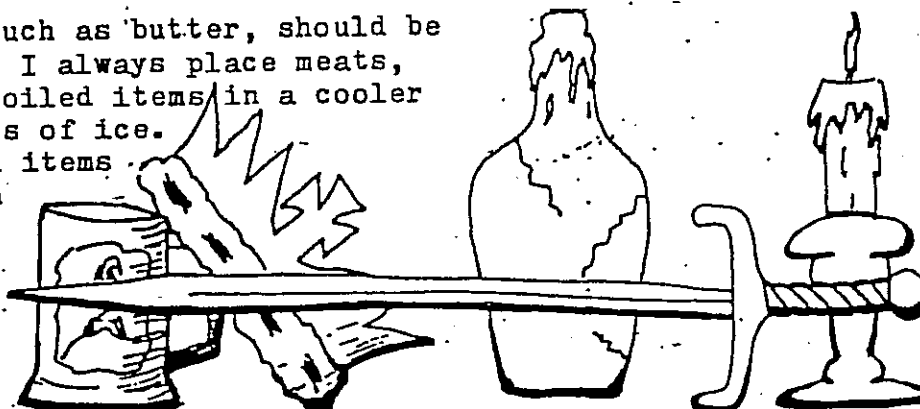
People often go to camping events and eat nothing but hot dogs and canned food. Some do this because their diet feels incomplete without these basic American staples. But others do so because they believe that cooking more complex foods will be difficult and time consuming. They don't want to waste their precious vacation time cooking.

This is certainly understandable. But as long as you are cooking for only four or five people, it is not necessarily true. Selecting the proper dishes and doing much of the preparation in advance at home can bring the actual cooking time to about what more mundane foods would require.

Poultry must be pre-cooked, boned if necessary, and freezer bagged and frozen. Pork and beef should be pre-seasoned, cut or sliced as you plan on cooking it, freezer bagged and frozen. Seafood should be removed from any paper wrappings, freezer bagged and frozen. Seafood bought frozen should be kept frozen till you plan on using it. Ziploc freezer bags are recommended so that water from melting ice won't damage your food. Meats may be prepared a month or more in advance, and will taste better for having basted in the seasonings.

Vegetables, with the exception of mushrooms, potatoes and apples, should be pre-cut to desired sizes, freezer bagged and refrigerated, a day or two in advance. I open and bag canned vegetables and spices as well.

All non-sealing foods, such as butter, should be put in freezer bags as well. I always place meats, dairy products, and easily spoiled items in a cooler called the "freezer" with lots of ice. Cheese, eggs, vegetables, and items not easily spoiled I place in the refrigerator with less ice. This minimizes ice, and prevents the heavy, frozen meats from crushing the vegetables and breaking the eggs.



Soups and stews can be pre-made, frozen in their pans, and taken from your home freezer to your campstove or fire.

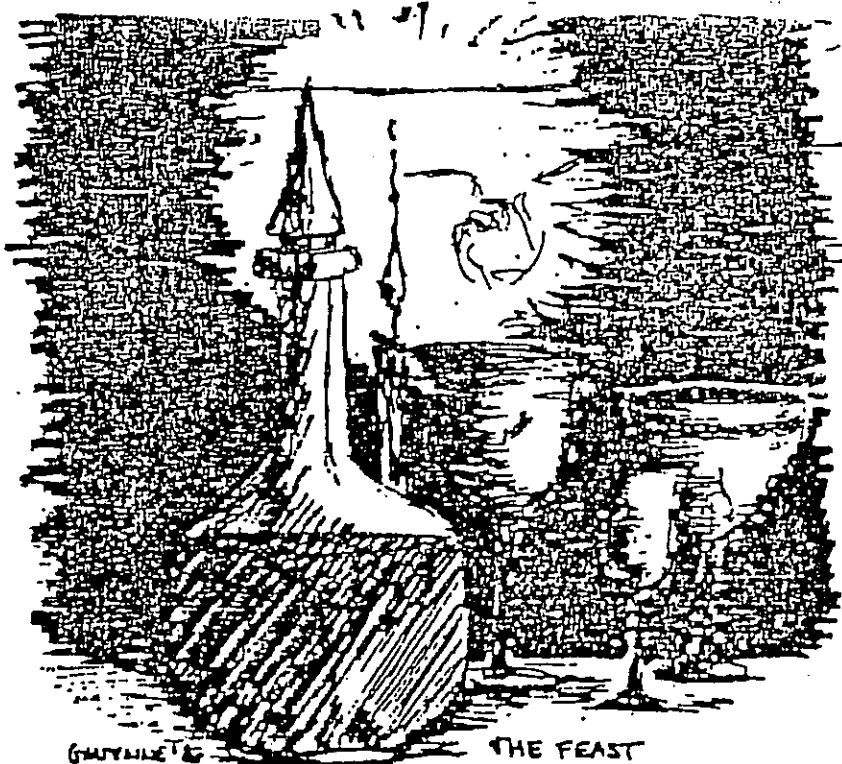
Any meat can be grilled, on the rack or on foil. Corn on the cob and potatoes can be buttered and foiled wrapped, then placed directly in the coals to roast. Entire meals can be wrapped heavily in foil and placed in the coals to roast. Examples include stuffed chickens with vegetables, seasoned beef with potatoes and vegetables, ham with pineapple and yams...

A wok can be used on a coleman, grill, or open fire. You can stir-fry, deep fry, roast, bake, boil, simmer, saute, or just plain cook in it. To prepare basic oriental cuisine; to a mixture of hot oil, melted butter, and soy sauce; add any meat desired. When meat is mostly done, add any assortment of chopped vegetables desired and stir-fry to desired doneness. To make fried rice, follow above instructions using finely cut meat and vegetables. When done, add prepared white rice, stirring vigorously, adding soy sauce for color and flavor. Common spices, such as garlic, oregano, basil, parsley, thyme, and rosemary are complimentary to both dishes, as well as more unusual ones such as fennel, ginger root and sesame seed. For a new twist, try adding lemon juice to your fried rice. You can stir-fry almost anything, don't be conservative.

continued

If your diet is incomplete without hot dogs, try bratwurst. Prepare it just like weiners, grill it or boil, but in beer instead of water. Remember that, unlike weiners, bratwurst is raw, and must be cooked thoroughly. It generally burst open when it's done. Instead of a hot dog bun, use a german roll; brown mustard instead of yellow. You will have a deceptively exotic meal which is really quite familiar.

Almost anything you can cook at home, you can cook at an event. Consider the campstove or grill your stovetop, and the coals your oven. Use your imagination, and don't be afraid to try new things. You can always take along a can of Ravioli in case of true disaster, but I don't think you'll be eating it. Once you realize how easy it is to eat really good food at events, you'll leave your can opener at home.



THE FEAST



AN AMTGARD HERBAL
A Description and Catalog of Uses for those Herbs Most
Readily Available

When we think about herbs, we think about cooking. But this conception of herbs has only recently become popular. For hundreds of years herbs have been used in cooking (mainly to cover up the smells of not quite fresh food) but they also had a much more important role. Many herbs that we use in cooking today were used years ago for one thing only - medicine. For thousands of years, the main use of herbs was to treat illness. It was only after such use by mother - the family home doctor - that many herbs found their way into the kitchen spice rack.

Although I will mention medicinal uses for the herbs in this article, this is definitely not a medicinal text. Many herbalists would recommend some of these herbs to treat illnesses, but medical science has yet (mainly due to lack of trying) found uses for them.

The herbs that I want to concentrate on in this article are those that are readily available to everyone - the kitchen herbs. Most of these herbs can be found in any store, mainly in dried form, but some can be obtained fresh.

The uses of herbs are quite interesting and will be addressed later in this article. However, there are many interesting facets to herbs. This article is set up to explore some of these different areas. First, I have briefly described each plant, then given a short history. Next, is a look at the part of the plant used and what some of those uses are. Lastly, I have listed the meaning traditionally assigned to each herb. All of this is done in a chart-like form so you can easily find the part most interesting to you. The second section of this article will deal with uses of the herbs other than as a spice for a certain dish. This section will include the uses of and how to make teas, butters, vinegars, oils and essential oils.

Common Kitchen Herbs

Basil - Ocimum Basilicum

Type of plant - annual, has a bush-like appearance; native to India, Africa and Asia.

History - In Italy, basil has been and still is considered a sign of love. Traditionally, a pot of basil on a woman's balcony means that she is ready to receive her suitor. It is also said that when a man gives a woman a sprig of basil, she will fall in love with him and never leave him.

In India, basil is considered a sacred herb, dedicated to the gods Vishnu and Krishna. Sprigs of Ocimum Sanctum were laid on the breasts of the dead to protect them from evil and to offer them entrance to paradise.

Part used - leaves

Uses - Basil is related to mint and therefore it is recommended, as are most mints, for digestive complaints. Basil also has a slight sedative action and can be used for nervous headaches and anxiety. Poultices made from basil seeds have exhibited antibacterial effects.

Basil is traditional in Italian, Mediterranean and Thai cooking. Probably the most famous recipes for basil are tomato sauce and pesto.

Basil is also used in lotions, shampoos, and perfumes. It is widely cultivated for use by the cosmetic industry.

Meaning - love, good wishes, hate

Bay Laurel (Bay leaves) - Laurus nobilis

Type of plant - shrub or small tree; slow growing evergreen; native to Mediterranean.

History - Legend has it that Apollo, the Greek god of the sun, was smitten with the nymph Daphne. Due to one of Cupid's arrows (the wrong kind), Daphne wanted nothing to do with Apollo so her father changed her into a bay tree. Apollo fell upon his knees before the tree and declared it ever sacred. From that day on, he wore a wreath of bay laurel on his head to proclaim his undying love for Daphne.

In Greece and Rome, the bay laurel was used to crown the heads of kings, priests and victors of battle and athletic contest. Laurel garlands were presented to the winners of the first Olympics in 776 B.C. To this day, scholars who receive their baccalaureate are winning "berries of the laurel".

Part used - leaves, berries

Uses - Bay is reputed to soothe the stomach when taken as a tea. Bay oil is thought to heal rheumatism and to benefit sprains, bruises and skin rashes.

An infusion of the leaves added to the bath is said to soothe the skin. Bay is also reputed to be an insect repellent and a bay leaf is used by some to keep pests out of dry grains, flours and cereals.

Meaning - achievement and fame

Dill - Anethum graveolens

Type of plant - small bush with one long root, hollow stem and lacy foliage; annual; native of Mediterranean and Asia Minor.

History - The name dill comes from "dilla", Norse for "to lull". Dill garlands were used to crown Greek and Roman war heroes on return home. Dill was once believed to work as a charm against witches and a bag of dried dill carried over the heart could combat the evil eye.

Dill is a highly favored herb in Scandinavian countries. It is used in many fish and vegetable dishes. A traditional Swedish Midsummer meal invariably includes new whole potatoes with dill.

Part used - leaves and seeds

Uses - Herbalists have used dill to increase mother's milk and to treat babies with colic. A tea made of the seeds is said to be relaxing.

Dill can be used to flavor most salads, fresh vegetables and sauces. Dill is also delicious with fish (especially salmon), lamb, pork and poultry.

Meaning - good cheer; survival in the face of odds

Garlic - Allium sativum

Type of plant - onion with compound bulb; origin uncertain but perhaps from southern Siberia, now widely naturalized.

History - The history of garlic is unbelievably long and varied. Garlic was once thought to have magical powers against evil (due to its widespread use and cultivation, vampires have been thought to have removed themselves to remote areas of Antarctica where the herb is not found).

Egyptians swore solemn oaths on a clove of garlic and the Egyptian slaves ate it for strength and endurance while building the pyramids. An Egyptian medical listing from 1550 B.C. recommends garlic as a remedy for 22 ailments.

The Roman scholar Pliny believed that garlic would cure over 60 ailments. The Romans also

associated garlic with Mars, the god of war and it was taken by soldiers to strengthen them in battle.

During the Middle Ages, garlic was used to repel evil and as a disinfectant (regardless of its touted cure-all capabilities, it was probably less than effective against the Medieval plagues).

Part used - the compound bulb

Uses - Claims for garlic's ability to cure most illnesses have been made throughout the ages. It has recently been found that garlic can be used as a disinfectant because it contains allicin, an antibacterial equivalent to 1% penicillin. Modern experiments show garlic to be effective in combating some influenza viruses, fungi, and yeasts. It has also been notably effective in treating Herpes Simplex I and II. Garlic is more effective against typhus than penicillin. Garlic is also believed to be quite effective in the treatment of high blood pressure.

Garlic imparts its distinctive flavor to dishes around the world. It is a staple in most Italian recipes. Garlic goes well with most anything from fish to red meat, vegetables, cheeses, etc. It is also widely used to flavor butters, vinegars and oils.

Meaning - none assigned

Parsley - Petroselinum crispum

Type of plant - biennial; leaves are flat or curly depending on variety; native to Middle East.

History - Hercules chose parsley for his garlands, the Greeks believed, so they gave wreaths of parsley to victorious athletes. The Greeks, however, also associated it with death and oblivion and used it to fashion wreaths for graves. Parsley was also used to deodorize corpses.

The Romans were believed to have used parsley at orgies to cover up the smell of alcohol on their breath.

During the Middle Ages, parsley was used to combat the plague, asthma, dropsy and jaundice. It was believed to cure many illnesses, especially those of the kidneys and liver.

Part used - leaves

Uses - Parsley contains large amounts of Vitamins A and C, several B vitamins, calcium and iron. It has been used to treat bladder problems and the root has laxative properties.

Parsley is used to compliment the flavors of many foods. It is an important part of Middle Eastern tabbouleh, Mexican salsa verde and French persillade, a mince of garlic and parsley added at the last minute to sautes, grilled meats and poultry.

An infusion of parsley added to the bathwater is said to be cleansing and soothing. The oil is used in many cosmetics, shampoos, soaps and lotions.

Meaning - merriment

Sage - Salvia officinalis

Type of plant - small shrub; perennial; native to northern Mediterranean coast.

History - Throughout history, sage has been associated with immortality (or longevity) and increased mental capacity.

The Chinese prized sage so much that they traded their own green tea for it at a ratio of 4 to 1.

The name sage comes from the Latin salvere, meaning to be saved and refers to its healing properties. Sage has been credited with curing epilepsy, insomnia, measles, seasickness and worms.

Part used - leaves

Uses - The volatile oils in sage have been proven to aid in drying perspiration. These oils also have astringent properties that are useful for treating sore throats, mouth irritations and possibly cuts and bruises.

Sage has been used as an ingredient in perfumes, soaps and cosmetics. It makes a good astringent aftershave when mixed with lavender. Sage also stimulates the skin when used as a lotion or herbal bath.

Meaning - long life, wisdom

Rosemary - Rosemarinus officinalis

Type of plant - shrub; perennial evergreen; native to the hills along the Mediterranean, in Portugal and Spain.

History - In the garden where rosemary flourishes, the woman is dominate, or so it was once believed. Who knows how many rosemary plants withered because husbands knew this belief?

In ancient Greece, people wore rosemary entwined in their hair to help improve their memories.

During the Middle Ages, people often slept with a sprig of the plant under their pillows to ward off demons and bad dreams.

For centuries, people believed that the rosemary plant would grow no taller than 6 feet in 33 years so as to be no taller than Christ. Another story tells that the once white flowers of rosemary turned blue when the Virgin Mary hung her cloak on a bush while fleeing Herod's armies with the Christ child.

Part used - flowers and leaves

Uses - Rosemary has been used as a remedy for rheumatism, sores, eczema, bruises and wounds. Rosemary does have antibacterial properties and was once burned in homes and hospitals to kill germs. The large quantities of oil used therapeutically can, however, irritate the stomach, intestines and kidneys.

Rosemary has many culinary uses, especially with pork. Rosemary also works well with bland soups such as potato.

Rosemary has great stimulative properties when used in a bath or lotion, but be careful not to get too carried away in its use. As a rinse for brunettes, rosemary will brighten the hair.

Meaning - remembrance, friendship, love

Thyme - Thymus vulgaris

Type of plant - shrub; perennial; native to western Mediterranean; naturalized and now grows wild in an area of the Catskill Mountains in New York State and in western Massachusetts.

History - The word thyme comes from one or two Greek words. The first "thymus" meaning courage and the second Greek for "to fumigate". Either one could be the source as thyme is quite invigorating to the senses and the herb was once burned to chase stinging insects from houses.

Thyme beds were once thought to be the homes of fairies and gardeners would set aside patches just for this purpose.

Thyme pillows were once used to relieve epilepsy and melancholy. As recently as World War I, thyme oil was used as a battlefield antiseptic.

Part used - leaves

Uses - Thyme has been used for gastrointestinal complaints, as a tea for congested lungs and as an antiseptic poultice. The essential oil of thyme, if taken pure, can cause dizziness, vomiting, headaches, etc. Thyme preparations should only be taken very carefully. Thyme can also be an irritant to sensitive skin so poultices should be applied with great caution.

Thyme can be used with almost any vegetable and works well with veal, lamb, beef, poultry, fish, etc.

Meaning - daring

Each of the herbs that have been discussed are cooking herbs. There are, however, many uses for these herbs (as well as hundreds of others) that do not require putting them in tonight's dinner.

One of the most common uses of herbs is as herbal teas. To make an herbal tea, you can use 2 tablespoons of fresh herbs or 1 tablespoon of dried herbs per cup of water. This can be adjusted to your taste and according to the strength of the herb. Bring fresh, cold water to a boil and then pour it over the herbs. Allow the herbs to steep, covered, for approximately 5 minutes, or according to your taste. Herbal teas are best sweetened with honey as it tends to bring out more of the herb flavor.

Herbal teas should be made in non-metal containers such as glass or crockery. Metal containers can react with the volatile oils in herbs. Stainless steel can be used, but stay away from aluminum pots as the aluminum will leach into the tea and enter your system.

When using herbs for teas, you must remember that many herbs have medicinal properties, some scientifically recognized and some recognized only by herbalists. With most herbs, 2-3 cups of tea a day will do no harm. Most of the herbs discussed here are completely safe when used as teas. It should be noted, however, that large quantities of parsley can cause a decrease in blood pressure and pulse rate, muscle weakness and kidney irritation. This is, of course, very large quantities. Pregnant women should refrain from eating large quantities of parsley, though. Large quantities of rosemary can also cause irritation of the stomach, intestine and kidneys.

There are many culinary uses for herbs other than as seasonings for certain dishes. Many condiments can be made with single herbs or herbs in combination.

Garlic butter is well known but why not try basil butter on your toast instead? Herbal butters are very simple to make and can be used with many different foods. To make herbal butters,

add approximately 1 tablespoon of minced fresh herb to 1/2 cup of softened butter. Mix the herb in, crushing it slightly. Chill the butter for approximately 1 hour to allow the flavors to mix.

Try herbal butters on things other than toast. Use them to flavor cooked vegetables, to saute foods or to add variety to appetizer trays.

Another wonderful use for herbs is to flavor vinegars. Herbal vinegars can be used to add subtle flavor to any recipe that calls for vinegar. Recipes for salad dressings and marinades also benefit from herb vinegars.

To make herb vinegars, you can use white vinegar, cider vinegar, red or white wine vinegar or rice vinegar. Place fresh herbs (or dried, but fresh is better) in a clean glass jar or bottle. Gently heat the vinegar (do not boil) in a stainless steel or a non-metal container. Pour the warm vinegar over the herbs and allow to cool. Cover the container, preferably with a non-metallic lid, and store in a cool, dark place for up to a year. Some good combinations for herb vinegars include: garlic, green onion and chives with white wine vinegar; fennel leaf, parsley and garlic with white wine vinegar; or sage, parsley and shallots with red wine vinegar. Also try adding purple basil to white wine vinegar to make your own red wine vinegar.

Herbal oils can be used in much the same way as herbal vinegars. Oils can be used in salad dressings, marinades, etc., but are especially good when used to cook meats and to saute vegetables.

Herbal oils are made by heating olive, peanut or sunflower oil and adding the oil to a jar or other glass container in which you have placed your herbs. Allow to cool, cover and store in a cool, dark place for up to 6 months. Some good combinations for herbal oils include: oregano, thyme, garlic and olive oil; tarragon, shallots and peanut oil; or dill, garlic and sunflower oil.

As you can see, the culinary uses of herbs are many. However, beyond the culinary the uses of herbs are many times more varied. Herbs can be used in pot pourris, dry flower arrangements, living wreaths, tussie-mussies (bouquets that carry meaning - remember the meaning assigned to the herbs discussed here), scents and cosmetics. The list goes on and on. I cannot possibly discuss all the different uses for just the few herbs mentioned in this article.

There is, however, one herbal craft that I would like to note. By using this one craft, you can expand into most of the other crafts mentioned above. This basic craft is the making of essential oils. Essential oils can be made quite easily, or they can be made through very arduous methods.

The two easiest methods of extracting essential oils is by oil and by alcohol. Both methods are worked in the same manner. Use a non-metallic container such as a ceramic crock. Place fresh herb flowers and leaves in the oil or undenatured ethyl alcohol (vodka can be used if you cannot find undenatured ethyl alcohol). Cover, and set the crock in a cool, dark place for at least 24 hours. Remove the herbs, gently squeezing to save as much of the oil or alcohol as possible. Replace with fresh herbs. Repeat

this process at least 6 times or until the essential oil is as strong as you want it.

The essential oils that result can be used for a variety of purposes. Try wearing an herbal oil as a perfume. This works best with alcohol based oils as oil based essential oils can be quite messy.

Candle wax can be perfumed with essential oils also. Add about 1/2 ounce of oil to each pound of wax. Scent your own soaps with essential oils. Add the oil just before pouring the soap into molds.

Another interesting use for essential oils involves calligraphy. Try scenting calligraphy ink with essential oils or make a strong herbal infusion (a tea, but use a lot more herb) and add 2 to 3 tablespoons to a bottle of ink. The pine scent of rosemary, the licorice scent of fennel, the smell of rose petals, each would be a unique addition to a piece of artistic calligraphy.

Now, I know that there are many unfortunate souls out there who do not have the time or space to have their own herb garden. I am truly sorry. There really is a special feeling invoked when you can walk out into your yard and gather fresh herbs for your evening meal. But don't give up hope! There are alternatives. Almost any Safeway store in El Paso (and some Skaggs stores) carry fresh herbs. The selection is not large, it is usually limited to basil, dill and sage, but some other herbs do pop up. These fresh herbs are found in ziplock-type bags in the produce section of these stores. The most unfortunate problem here is that these herbs are very expensive and you only get a small quantity.

Another alternative is to buy dried herbs. Dried herbs found in stores will work well for teas and herbal butters. They can be used in herbal vinegars and oils but the results are not as visually appealing. The vinegars and oils should be strained when using dried herbs and the taste will probably be just as good as vinegars and oils made with fresh herbs. One note of caution, however, when using dry herbs be careful of the quantity as dried, crushed herbs carry much more flavor per volume than do fresh herbs.

One last alternative is me. I may not always have time for my garden, but I do have one and it is very prolific. If you would like to experiment with some fresh herbs (especially basil - its taking over) or you would like something special planted next year, let me know. I have a lot of room in my garden and would be happy to share space and/or herbs with anyone who is interested. Also, if you are interested in more information about the herbs discussed here or other herbs, the reference books I used for this article were:

Kowalchik, Claire and William H. Hylton, editors. Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Herbs. Rodale Press Inc. Emmaus, Pennsylvania. 1987.

Lathrop, Norma Jean. Herbs, How to Select, Grow and Enjoy. H.P.Books. Tucson, Arizona. 1981.

AMTGARD CAMPING



he article following treats not so much the mundane aspects of camping, i.e., how many hot dogs to feed 42 people or how much toilet paper for the same number of people for 2 1/2 days of camping (By the way, the formula is 42 people times 6 hot dogs each divided by the number of outhouses available and multiplied by the apparent age of the hot dogs. You can run up an enormous toilet paper bill if the hot dogs are more than 9 days old particularly if refrigerated at a temperature of more than 31 degrees celcius.). Likewise we shall not cover how to pitch a tent on a 17 degree slope and still manage to avoid all of your blood pooling either in your head (messy) or in your feet (painfull). As interesting as these subjects are, we are rather illuminating your minds with the really important stuff when camping A La Amtgard.

A REASON TO GO CAMPING: This may sound simplistic but the reason to go camping has a profound effect on the entire trip. You can't "just go camping"; you must have a good reason. A tourney, for instance a plunder tournament is good incentive. Better yet a quest. Now, the quest is more or less up to the organizers of the camping trip. Some noteworthy quests in the past have been 1) Verification that Dursa really does wear Garfield underwear. 2) First person to actually witness Aramithris and Aredhel teleport from one tree to another during a night battle. 3) Crucifixion of late arrivals (usually 4:30 a.m.) who storm through a sleeping camp attacking tents with swords and 4) The most famous quest of all ... Will anyone convince Kalibria to take a four hour walk in the woods without four female companions doing chaperone duty?

WHERE TO CAMP: This is usually predicated on WHEN TO CAMP. If you crave the tall trees of Sleepy Grass in Cloudcroft you are well advised not to plan on a January excursion. If, on the other hand, you find yourself overcome with the urge to do battle with a recalicent Coleman stove in the middle of February resign yourself to making do with the SCA's Estrella War in Phoenix. Not putting down the Estrella mind you - it's great but is just isn't Amtgard.

The most favored camping time for the "Burning Lands" is late June when our lands are really burning, school finals and the resultant depression thereof are past, and the lust to return to the simpler, cleaner, finer things in life, i.e., pillage, plunder, rapine, sacking, looting and etc., consumes you. You are now emotionally prepared to:

ANNOUNCE AN AMTGARD CAMPING TRIP. There are several ways to do this, some more creative than others. You can:

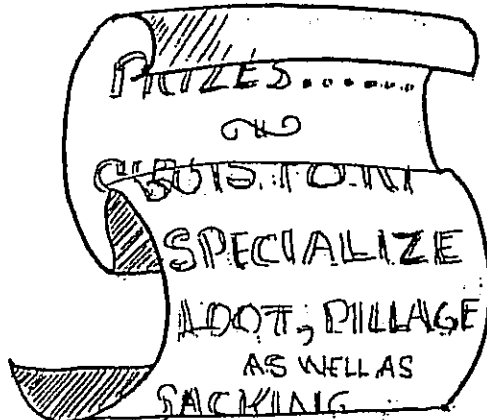
A. Show up at Amtgard 5:00 p.m. the third Saturday in June and announce "Hey, let's go camping next weekend".

ADVANTAGES: You only have a week to spend planning and organizing. Clearly a labor saving plan.

DISADVANTAGES: Fifty percent of the populace have already made a committment for that weekend and you get weak excuses like, "Sorry, I promised my folks I'd go to Europe with them next week", or, "Frank and I are getting married that Saturday", and so on and so forth. I know it sounds ridiculous but some people really consider that sort of stuff as preemptive of a camping trip!

DISADVANTAGES 2 THROUGH 37: Your announcement is so well received that when you arrive at the camping site you discover two families of mundanes, numbering 36 people collectively, were at Memorial Park the day of your announcement and thought you were talking to them.

B. Your second option is to announce about a month in advance with a tasteful flyer designed to titillate the imagination and engender enthusiasm in even the most jaded. The following are some examples of thought provoking flyer announcements:



#1...AMTGARD'S JUNE CAMPING TRIP WITH THE CLAW LEGION'S FAMOUS TRAVELING BATHING PAVILLION.....

ONE ENCLOSURE

ONE GALVANIZED IRON TUB

AND FEATURING THE INFAMOUS KEITH "SANS COULOTTES" DURSA AS BATH ATTENDANT.

#2...ENJOY THE CAMERADERIE OF THE PRIMITIVE WITH YOUR FELLOWS. SEE MORBID PLAY WITH THE PRETTY CAMPFIRE (See Morbid play with his pretty blisters); FIND MORLUK SLEEPING IN YOUR BEER COOLER AT 3:30 A.M.; LISTEN TO THE SCREAMS OF DISPAIR FROM THE NEWEST AMTGARD WARRIOR MAROONED IN A 60 FOOT PINE TREE AT 11:00 P.M.....

ONE THRILL AFTER ANOTHER!!!!!!!

