

RECIPES THAT CELEBRATE TARRAGON FROM...
THE HERB SOCIETY OF DUBUQUE AND THE DUBUQUE ARBORETUM & BOTANICAL GARDENS
Fran Hedeman

ARTEMISIA: 2014 HERB OF THE YEAR

Artemisia /*arti'mi:ziə*/ is a large, diverse genus of plants with between 200 and 400 species belonging to the daisy family Asteraceae. Common names for various species in the genus include mugwort, wormwood, and sagebrush. Artemisia comprises hardy herbaceous plants and shrubs, which are known for the powerful chemical constituents in their essential oils. Artemisia species grow in temperate climates of both hemispheres, usually in dry or semiarid habitats. Notable species include *A. vulgaris* (common mugwort), *A. tridentata* (big sagebrush), *A. annua* (sagewort), *A. absinthum* (wormwood), *A. dracunculus* (tarragon), and *A. abrotanum* (southernwood). The leaves of many species are covered with white hairs.

Most species have strong aromas and bitter tastes from terpenoids and sesquiterpene lactones, which discourage herbivory, and may have had a selective advantage. The small flowers are wind-pollinated. Artemisia species are used as food plants by the larvae of a number of Lepidoptera species.



Some botanists split the genus into several genera, but DNA analysis does not support the maintenance of the genera *Crossostephium*, *Filifolium*, *Neopallasia*, *Seriphidium*, and *Sphaeromeria*; three other segregate genera *Stilnolepis*, *Elachanthemum*, and *Kaschgaria*, are maintained by this evidence. Occasionally, some of the species are called sages, causing confusion with the *Salvia* sages in the family Lamiaceae.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artemisia_\(genus\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artemisia_(genus))

Tarragon. In the reign of Henry VIII, tarragon made its way into English gardens. The following rhyme is thought to refer to tarragon and Henry VIII:

**There is certain people, and certain herbs,
That good digestion disturbs.**

Now on to the recipes ...

TARRAGON CHICKEN TRIANGLES

Ingredients:

1/2 cup chopped walnuts
3 cups water
1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed of all fat
1/2 cup sour cream
2 tablespoons fresh tarragon, chopped
2 tablespoons chopped shallot
1 tablespoon fresh Italian or curly parsley
1 tablespoon chopped chives
1 tablespoon Dijon-style mustard
3/4 teaspoon salt
Pinch fresh ground pepper
1 pound whole wheat or white phyllo pastry, thawed (21 sheets)
3 sticks unsalted butter, melted

Directions:

- Toast walnuts in a 350 degree oven for 10-15 minutes. Cool to room temperature.
- Poach chicken until cooked through, 10-15 minutes. Cool to room temperature, chop and place in mixing bowl.
- Stir walnuts, sour cream, herbs, shallot, mustard, salt and pepper into chicken. Taste for seasoning.
- Place one sheet of phyllo on a work surface and brush generously with melted butter. Repeat with two more sheets, buttering each. Cut pastry into 8 long strips (long side of dough facing you). Place a generous teaspoon of filling at the top of each strip. Fold the pastry corner across the filling, and continue folding like a flag to form a triangle. Do not fold too tightly, as filling will expand as it bakes. Place triangles on a baking sheet. Repeat with remaining pastry and filling.
- Bake phyllo triangles in a preheated 400 degree oven until golden brown, 15-20 minutes. Drain on paper towels and let cool about 5 minutes before serving as the filling will be very hot.

Note: I place these in a single layer on a cookie sheet and freeze before baking. After they are frozen they can be placed in a freezer box. I suggest having a friend join you to make these as the process is quite time consuming. Be sure to follow the directions on the phyllo box for thawing and handling the dough.

HERBED CREAM CHEESE AND WATERCRESS SANDWICHES

Ingredients:

1 pound cream cheese, softened
1 tablespoon milk or half-and-half
1 large clove garlic
1/4 cup basil leaves or dill sprigs, loosely packed
1/4 cup parsley and/or watercress leaves, tightly packed
1 1/2 tablespoons fresh tarragon and 1 1/2 tsp. tarragon vinegar
2 dashes Angostura bitters, opt.
Pinch cayenne pepper and salt to taste

Combine first 3 ingredients in food processor and process until smooth. Add the rest of the ingredients and process, stopping to scrape down the sides, until blended. Refrigerate the mixture for at least an hour so the flavors can develop, it will keep for 5 to 7 days in the fridge if tightly wrapped. Allow to stand at room temperature for 15-20 minutes before spreading.

1 miniature loaf pumpernickel
1 bunch of watercress, washed and picked over
1-2 large cucumbers, peeled and thinly sliced

Spread each slice of bread with cream cheese mixture. Place 2 sprigs of water cress on each sandwich, cover with a slice of cucumber. Sandwiches can be made a few hours ahead of time, layered with waxed paper and kept tightly wrapped in the refrigerator.

TARRAGON DRESSING

Ingredients:

2 tsp to 1T brown sugar
1/2 tsp fresh tarragon
1/4 tsp salt
1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper
1/2 tsp paprika
1/4 tsp dry mustard
1/4 cup white wine vinegar
1/2 cup olive oil
Stir together herbs, spices, and vinegar. Whisk in oil until dressing emulsifies and appears creamy.

VINAIGRETTE

2 shallots, finely minced
3 T fresh French tarragon, finely chopped
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp pepper
2/3 cup olive oil
6 T white wine vinegar
2 T smooth (not grainy) Dijon mustard
Combine ingredients and blend thoroughly.

TARRAGON SALAD DRESSING

3 T French tarragon vinegar
Dash of salt and pepper
1/2 cup olive oil
2 T fresh French tarragon, chopped.
Combine all ingredients in a screw-top jar.
Shake well before using. Makes 1/2 cup.

Use any of the salad dressings to dress a salad of fresh, mixed greens, strawberries, green onions, blue or feta cheese or ingredients of choice.

WALNUT AND HERB BATTER BREAD

Makes 1 9-inch round loaf

Ingredients:

1 1/2 tablespoons active dry yeast
Pinch sugar
1 cup warm water (105-115 degrees)
1 cup warm milk (105-115 degrees)
2 T brown sugar
1 T salt
3 T chopped fresh parsley
2 T chopped fresh basil or 1 1/2 teaspoons dried basil
1 T chopped fresh tarragon
1 clove, garlic minced
4 1/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
3/4 cup walnuts, coarsely chopped.

Instructions:

- In a small bowl, sprinkle yeast and sugar over warm water. Stir to dissolve and let stand until foamy, about 10 minutes.
- Combine the next 7 ingredients and 1 1/2 cups of the flour. Add yeast mixture. Add remaining 3 cups flour and beat vigorously by hand or in the electric mixer until batter is smooth yet sticky. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 45 minutes to an hour.
- Sprinkle walnuts over the top of the batter and stir down, beating vigorously to distribute the nuts. Turn batter into a well-greased 1 1/2 -quart casserole or 9-inch springform pan. Let rise, loosely covered in a warm place until batter is even with top of pan. Bake in a preheated 375 degree oven until brown, crusty, and a cake tester comes out clean. 50-60 minutes. Turn loaf out and let cool on a rack.

COLD MARINATED VEGETABLES

Ingredients:

8 medium carrots, scraped and sliced
2 medium cucumbers, sliced (peel in winter)
2 ribs celery, sliced
1 green pepper, seeded and cut into strips
1 red pepper, seeded and cut into strips
1 small head cauliflower, divided into flowerets
1/2 pound fresh green beans, cooked slightly
12 small onions, peeled and cooked slightly (frozen onions can be used)
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 pound fresh mushrooms (to be added later)

Instructions:

- Combine vegetables except mushrooms and sprinkle with 1/2 tsp. salt.
- Cover and refrigerate for 2 hours.
- Rinse vegetables, spread out on clean towel to dry.

Meanwhile, make this marinade:

3 cups cider vinegar, or half cider and half French Tarragon Vinegar
3 cups water
1 1/2 cups sugar
1/4 cup mustards seeds
2 teaspoons fresh French tarragon, chopped, or 1 tsp dried, crumbled
3/4 tsp. celery seed
3/4 tsp mace

More instructions:

Combine all ingredients in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 2 or 3 minutes. Add rinsed and dried vegetables, plus 1/2 pound cleaned and sliced fresh mushrooms. Bring to a boil. Immediately remove pan from heat. Let cool, then refrigerate for several hours. Will keep for 1 week in the refrigerator. Serves 8 to 10.

TARRAGON BUTTER

Ingredients:

1/2 cup butter, softened
2 T onions, finely chopped
2 T fresh French tarragon, finely chopped
1 tsp grated lemon rind
2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
1 T fresh parsley, finely chopped
Dash of salt and pepper

Instructions:

Mix all together. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use. Can be wrapped well and frozen.

CUCUMBERS IN TARRAGON CREAM

Ingredients:

3 T freshly squeezed lemon juice
Salt
Freshly ground black pepper
3/4 cup sour cream
3 T chopped tarragon
2 long seedless cucumbers, thinly sliced into rounds

Instructions:

In a small bowl, combine the lemon juice and a generous pinch of salt and pepper, and stir to dissolve the salt. Add the sour cream and stir to blend. Stir in 2 tablespoons of the tarragon and set aside for 15 minutes to allow flavors to develop. Arrange the cucumbers on a platter and spoon tarragon cream over them or combine in a salad bowl and toss gently. Garnish with the remaining tarragon, and serve.

FRENCH TARRAGON VINEGAR

Fill a sterilized gallon or plastic jar 2/3 full with clean, moisture-free tarragon sprigs. Pour white distilled or white wine vinegar over the leaves to cover. Seal with a nonmetallic lid. Set in a cool, dark place for 3 weeks. Discard the tarragon and strain the vinegar through a coffee filter into sterilized bottles. Add a new sprig of tarragon for presentation. Seal or cork. Store in refrigerator or cool, dark place.