

Nutritious Spring Tonics

by © June Kaminski, MSN PhD(c)

Now that Spring is in full swing, it's time to clear your body and mind of winter residues and blocks, and prepare for the active warm days ahead. We offer some time-honored tips on pampering yourself and your family with simple natural spring tonics from Mother Earth's pantry. Enjoy!

Why a Tonic?

Cultures from all over the globe have created and used cleansing and rejuvenating tonics for centuries, especially in spring. After the long winter with our tendency to eat diets that include heavier foods that often leave system residuals, a simple herbal tonic works wonders! You can easily tone and clean your body of accumulated wastes by enjoying these simple remedies, tried and tested over the ages.

Tonic herbs are unique amongst remedies, because they act in a bidirectional fashion. This quality is how herbal tonics help us to restore and maintain balance and good health in all of our body systems. What this means is that tonic herbs exert their healing actions in opposing directions. These herbs contain biochemical substances which act in uniquely opposite directions which is how they can help us to maintain system balance. For example, Ginseng both raises and lowers blood sugar levels and white blood cell count, back and forth, until balance is achieved, and then maintained.

In addition to these tonics it is wise to include eight to ten glasses of distilled water each day, a balanced diet, regular exercise, and proper rest for optimal Spring energy and vitality for the whole family.

Northern European Spring Cleanser

This pleasant tasting tonic has been used in Northern Europe to cleanse the system, and free up energy for a more active Spring lifestyle. It will leave you feeling light and refreshed.

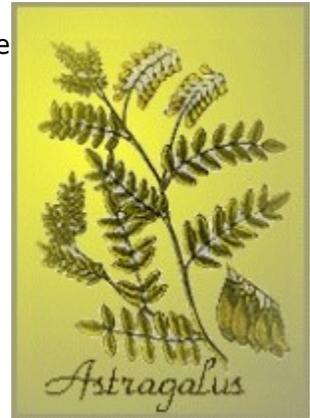
1 large bunch of fresh Chervil
1 quart or litre of water
Squeeze of fresh lemon juice

In a large glass container, combine the Chervil and water and let the mixture steep at room temperature overnight. Strain out the Chervil in the morning, and add a squirt of fresh lemon juice. Now sip the refreshing brew throughout the day.

Oriental Spring Rejuvenator

According to Oriental medicine, there are five seasons which affect and relate to our health - spring, summer, late summer, autumn, and winter. Each season corresponds to both one of the five elements (wood, fire, earth, metal and water, respectively) as well as to a pair of energetic channels called meridians (associated with the organs of the body). The Spring element is Wood and the corresponding meridian is the liver and gallbladder, our centers of detoxification. Traditionally, a special tonic was used for each specific season to optimize the functions of it's corresponding element and meridian.

Astragalus tea has been used for centuries as a natural mild stimulant for spring vim and vigor. As an overall tonic the root helps activate the immune system, enhancing the body's natural healing. It is also used for balance in diabetes, heart problems, hypertension, colds, arthritis, asthma, nervousness and as a deep tonic for the bone marrow.



Early Americana Tonics

Several spring tonics were used by the early North American settlers, both in the U.S. and in Canada. Tonics tended to be simple and focused on readily available plants, which we can still use today.

Dandelion leaves picked while still young and tender were used as a green in salads; cooked like spinach; or dried and made into a refreshing tea.

Both **Purple and White Yarrow** were used to treat throat and respiratory ailments and as a tonic and stimulant by the early settlers.

Burdock seeds and roots were used by folk doctors as a blood purifier and tonic. Poultices of the crushed leaves were also used to treat poison ivy and insect bites, especially handy when one is out in the wild.

Red Raspberry leaves were used by women as a tea, to both increase and decrease uterine tone. This was particularly useful as a uterine tonic during pregnancy, and for preventing and treating menstrual discomforts and imbalances.

Indian Medicine or Ayurvedic Tonics

In the springtime, the Ayurvedic traditions taught people to eat light but pungent foods to cleanse the system. Drinking Ginger tea or adding **Ginger** to foods was highly recommended to tone the system. **Black Pepper, Cloves, Cinnamon and Cardamon** teas and spices are added to meal dishes to help tone the digestion and balance the body system.

Central and South American Tonic

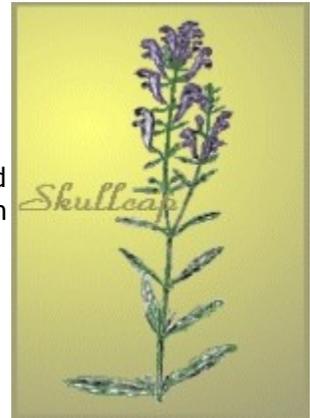
Pimento or Allspice Berry has long been used as a tonic for the digestive system. Used both as a condiment, mixed in food, or as an essential oil, pimento aids in toning the gastrointestinal tract, releasing flatulence, and healing any digestive problems.

Central European Nervine Tonics

A considerable amount of both ancient and modern research has been focused on the discovery of natural remedies to strengthen and feed the nervous system. Through the ages, people have benefited from the gentle yet powerful properties found in several herbal teas and tonics. Nervine tonics strengthen and nourish the nerve tissues directly, greatly reducing the need for harsher sedatives and drugs.

The simplest remedy for toning your nerves is not an herb, but a grain: - good old fashioned **Oatmeal!** Whether eaten as porridge, or taken as a tincture, Oats both stimulate and sooth the nervous system for prime function and comfort. Great for the kids!

Other nervine tonics commonly used throughout Europe, and later in the Americas include **Damiana, Skullcap, Vervain, St. John's Wort and Wood Betony**. Skullcap is the most powerful for aiding restful sleep and alleviating stress - especially helpful to tired, overworked parents. You can buy these herbs in herbal and health stores as a tea. This is especially good to drink right before bed for a deep restful sleep. Some are also available in capsule form, with the powdered herb extracted and packaged in gelatin capsules or formed into tablets. They work bidirectionally to both soothe away stress and "touchiness", as well as perk you up and sweep away the winter doldrums.



More Links to Explore!

[**Greens and Rhubarb are Spring Tonics**](#), an article in the online publication, *Backwoods Home Magazine*. Spring tonics presented, supplemented with delicious recipes. Recommends garden and wild spring greens such as nettles, spinach, and spring mustard to cleanse and purify your digestion and your bloodstream.

[**The Wellness Report**](#) presents a great list of detoxifying herbs and herbal combinations.

[**Spring Tonics**](#) is an article written by Joanne Cohen, PhD for New Visions Magazine, featuring the use of herbs like violet, dandelions, burdock and so on for spring cleansing.