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And I think that of all the different things that cardamom can do, and it can do so many different things, that's probably my favorite—is just the bringing of delight, where it just lightens your mood. It helps you be open to joy, lets the sunshine rays in or the sparkles come.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I love that! I've never had that discussion about cardamom before but it is a felt experience for sure.

Welcome to the Herbs with Rosalee Podcast, a show exploring how herbs heal as medicine, as food, and through connecting with the living world around you.

Most of us have cardamom somewhere in our spice cabinet. We reach for it in baking, maybe in coffee, maybe in chai. But in this episode, herbalist Missy Rohs makes the case that cardamom is doing a whole lot more than adding flavor, and most of us are only scratching the surface of what this remarkable spice has to offer. We explore cardamom as a digestive remedy, as a mood lifter, and as what Unani Tibb medicine calls an “exhilarant,” an herb that genuinely helps you be open to joy. By the end, your spice cabinet may never look quite the same.

If you enjoy this episode, please give it a thumbs up so more plant lovers can find us, and be sure to stay tuned until the very end for your herbal tidbit.

Missy, I'm so thrilled to have you on the show. Welcome, welcome!

Missy Rohs:

I am so excited to be here. It's great to see you.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It's been a long time coming. I want to say that we met at Breitenbush. Do you think that's true?

Missy Rohs:

I do think that's the first time we met in person.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

In person, in person. We knew each other, as herbalists do, online for I think—I don't even know. I feel like you've always been there. That's how I feel.

Missy Rohs:

Likewise.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Thank you so much for being on the show. I'm excited to dive in with how the plants have called you to this path. I don't think I've actually heard that story.

Missy Rohs:

Yeah, great question. Sort of the prologue, I guess, is that as a kid, I was always so excited about just natural stuff. I considered myself a real nature kid, played outside a whole lot. I don't think anybody really picked up on that and tried to guide it anywhere, so it kind of just simmered down the backburner for a long time. And then in college, in the '90s, I remember reading punkzines because zines were a big thing in the '90s. I remember seeing that there were recipes for herbal abortifacients. I was like, "Wait! Plants can do something that important and that powerful? We'll never need doctors again," which is definitely not how I see things now. That's not how that goes, but it really caught my attention. So, I started dabbling in things. I took a tincture class in college, just a thing here or there, and then also set it aside for a while.

As a young adult, I was super focused on activism and was doing that kind of 24/7 it seemed like. After the big WTO protests in Seattle, which took a lot of organizing and a lot of energy, and then had a lot of energy coming out of that, and a lot of organizing, I started to get kind of burnt out on the activism that I was doing, and facilitating and doing all these trainings, and stuff like that. I was like, “I want a role where I can show up and do something where I feel like I’m contributing to the greater good, then I can go home and not be doing that.” And so that led me to become a street medic, somebody who provides first aid at protests. I got invited to join a group of folks who were doing that here in Portland, and then quickly realized that besides learning some first aid skills, which I was not really up to snuff on, I also wanted to learn other things about health generally, because I was in this group with people who were Emergency Room nurses, nurse practitioners, massage therapists, herbalists. It was like everybody else knows stuff and I’m interested in this stuff, so I should learn about it too.

That’s when I really started studying with two different instructors who were herbalists in that group – Colette Gardiner and then Krista Olson. At that particular moment in my life, I was unemployed. I had a partner who was super supportive and whenever I learned something, she was super eager to be like, “Teach me! I will be supporting and learning with you.” Between studying with both of those people and having that kind of time to devote to exploring herbalism, my whole world changed. I just had no idea that you could walk on a trail and know almost every plant that you encounter and know ways that you could utilize them if you wanted to or needed to, and that was a huge life shift for me. That was just a world that hadn’t occurred to me. That’s how I fell in.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I’m over here just laughing to myself because I feel like every person that comes on I resonate with their story. I’m like, “Oh, yeah, me too.” This particular one is like you’ve just shared my biography. Remind me where you went to college? I think I know where but I don’t want to say, in case I don’t know.

Missy Rohs:

Where I went to college? I went to Reed College.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That's what I thought. I went to Lewis & Clark. I almost went to Reed, I was like that close.

Missy Rohs:

Likewise, back at you.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I went to Lewis & Clark, and I always say I minored in activism and WTO, and got super burnt out not just with that but the whole scene because I just realized walking through the streets of Portland and yelling at people didn't seem to actually change anything. Anyway—and then I was like, “What can I do to make a difference?” Exactly. I just feel like you just told my story back to me.

Missy Rohs:

I know. I feel like because we're similar ages—I know that you're a little younger than me and you came up around the same era, and whatever. It's just I think that that's a course that some of us in our cohort, especially up here in the Pacific Northwest. It's so wonderful to have herbalism as a tool to wield for good, but also it feels really generative, like really fulfilling.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It does. Just to watch—for me, like you, I didn't know you could walk along a trail and know all the plants. I just didn't know that. When I got to have that experience and that learning, and that transformation for myself and I was in a school, and I watched other people have that too, it was like this huge aha, like, “This makes a difference.”

Missy Rohs:

Yes.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

When people love the land, when they see their medicine comes from the land and their food comes from the land, and then their deep sense of connection and purpose comes from the land, that transforms things. Anyway, so yeah, very similar stories. And then I'm assuming—you said you studied with a couple of herbalists in your cohort, and then I'm just assuming that we have a similar story, and then we studied with that person and that person, then suddenly a couple of decades goes by.

Missy Rohs:

Exactly. I studied with Colette Gardiner a couple of different years, and with Krista Olson a couple of different years, and then I took the big plunge and went to study with Michael Moore in Arizona. Just being outside of your own ecosystem to study herbalism is its own trip. I actually loved some parts of that experience, but it was also very interesting to realize, "I'm becoming really familiar with all these Southern Arizona plants," that 20 years later, I have no reason to use those. It's really cool that I learned some principles and stuff in that. It was a very special experience to study with Michael Moore and Donna Chesner because they're—Michael was great and Donna is so gifted and very cool to study from.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I'm sure that's a treasure to be able to have done that.

Hey, there. Just a quick note: if you'd like to hear from me in a more personal way, I'd love to have you in my free text community. I send a couple of texts every week, things like behind-the-scenes updates, herbal thoughts that I'm chewing on, and little sparks of joy I don't always share anywhere else. To join, just text the word ROOT to 1-509-383-8398, and if you ever want to break up, no hard feelings. Just text STOP to the same number and you'll be opted-out immediately. My goal is to make it so juicy and so fun that you look forward to getting my texts each week. Okay, now back to the show.

You and I both have a deep love for hawthorn. We were just discussing before I hit record that we're probably in a very elite population that we both have hawthorn tattooed on our bodies, and specifically, on our chests. It does seem weird to not talk about hawthorn with you today because we both share that deep love. Hawthorn has been on the show a lot, rightfully so, we thought we'd switch things up. Interestingly, you have chosen one of my very, very favorite herbs. Something I've been kind of obsessed with lately. This is like an obsession for me right now, so I want to put it over to you and say, "Why did you choose cardamom for today?"

Missy Rohs:

It's a great question. As you're saying, hawthorn has been a guest on this program many times. It's clearly a top choice for me when I'm going to gush about plants for awhile. One thing that Paul Bergner says—who's a great herbalist that I really take to heart—is he says, "Be a boring herbalist." By that he means it's okay to use the standards. It's okay to use tried and true herbs. You don't have to reinvent the wheel and whatever, use something unusual or exotic or not local to you. That just means that some of my most used herbs are other people's most used herbs too. I could gush about nettle all day. I could gush about dandelion all day. I could talk about plantain. Of course, all of them have been on your show so many times. So I was trying to think outside the box and when you invited me, I had relatively recently baked one of my favorite cakes and it prominently features cardamom in it. I was like, "I should talk about cardamom, honestly, just so I can gush about this cake."

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Nice.

Missy Rohs:

But it's also one of my very favorite spices. Truly, the choice to talk about cardamom is very not on brand for me because I usually am talking about weeds or about plants that are native and abundant where we live in Oregon. I also really appreciate all of the herbs that we can get at the grocery store, and that are so special that we use just small amounts of them usually. Like

you, I'm kind of obsessed with cardamom. It's one of my favorite flavors. How do you like to use cardamom? What are you obsessed with lately about it?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Lately, I've been putting it in my coffee. I've been doing ground coffee and chicory and dandelion and cardamom in the morning, which is absolutely lovely. My local—this is actually a funny story about cardamom. My local coffee shop is amazing! Blue Star Coffee, shout out! When I go there, I'll get an iced Americano with cardamom. They actually use cardamom. It's not a syrup. It's actual cardamom. I was traveling in Oregon, actually, and I went to a coffee shop. I was like, "Hey, can you do an iced Americano with cardamom?" The person goes, "What's a cardamom?" It was like, "Cool. We're probably not going to do that today." I couldn't believe that somebody didn't know cardamom. I kind of wanted to tell them in a way of like, "Have I got the best thing for you. You're going to love it." To introduce them to cardamom at this stage of life. So I've been doing that, but then I was just recently in Europe and I went to Sweden as part of that. In Sweden, they're obsessed with cardamom buns. I did not know this before I went. I did my best to not eat a cardamom bun with every single meal. They were always there. It was just like that was a standard thing. I had a basil banana cake—had cardamom in it. My wonderful host, Lisen Sundgren, she fed me nettle soup with cardamom.

Missy Rohs:

Amazing.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah. I never had that before. It was amazing. It blew my mind. Anyway, that's all my cardamom stories lately. I've just been loving the cardamom.

Missy Rohs:

That's so fabulous, yeah. I actually put some cardamom in my coffee this morning too—a little half spoonful in with my AeroPress. I love it. It just kind of lightens the coffee. It helps wake you up, but it also makes you feel like, “Oh, this is delightful coffee.”

Rosalee de la Forêt:

There is that, because of that aromatic quality. Right now, I'm just so into the flavor that there's like a presence that I get with it too. It's like, “This is fancy coffee. Oh, this is good.” It's just like it's this new special thing that's going on that just makes me feel delighted.

Missy Rohs:

Absolutely. I think that of all the different things that cardamom can do—and it can do so many different things—that's probably my favorite. It's just the bringing of delight, that thing that in Unani Tibb medicine they call an “exhilarant” where it just lightens your mood. It helps you be open to joy, lets the sunshine rays in, or the sparkles come.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I love that! I've never had that discussion about cardamom before, but it is a felt experience for sure.

Missy Rohs:

Yeah.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Lovely!

Missy Rohs:

I think, honestly, for that, any preparation where you can smell it at all, whether tasting and smelling, whether it's just the aromatics of it, I think is so useful 'cause that means your baked pastries with cardamom are medicinal too. This is just my medicine. I think that it's—it's just so sweet that way, and you don't need a ton of it in order for that to happen because

part of what I realized when I was doing some research before coming on here, is that cardamom is apparently the third most expensive spice after saffron and vanilla. I believe it, especially because prices have been going up a lot over the last few years, and so it's nice to know that often you don't need a whole lot of it for it to have really important effect.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I recently bought some cardamom whole seeds that was on sale. It was a big sale, so I was like, "Oh, I'm grabbing that." I did and I've been grinding my own, which has been nice. Usually, I would just buy it ground but this seemed like a much more affordable option, so look for that. Grind your own fresh, too, is really nice.

Missy Rohs:

Honestly, if the pods are fresh enough, you can even include the pods. For those of you who are visually joining this, I grabbed a couple of cardamom pods. They're like these little, like half inch long oblong pods that are very green when they're super fresh, then they fade into kind of a more light brown, and then when you crack them open, the seeds are inside. If you get them really fresh, which I realized you can sometimes, through high-quality companies like Diaspora Co., you can include the hull when you grind it too because it's just so aromatic when it's still fresh.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Lovely. I have gotten cardamom from Diaspora Company and it's amazing.

Missy Rohs:

Yeah, yeah. I got two different varieties from then once and got to sniff, sniff, sniff, sniff. They both just had that classic cardamom smell, but they were subtly different, and that was really fun too.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Nice, nice.

Hey, friends. It's Rosalee. If you've been nourished by this podcast, if it has helped you feel more connected to the plants or more grounded in your own herbal path, then I'd love to invite you to join the Herbs with Rosalee Podcast Circle. This special membership helps make the podcast possible. It supports everything we do behind the scenes, and it gives you a chance to go even deeper with the content that you love. Inside the circle, you'll get exclusive herbal resources, live classes each season with some of my favorite herbal teachers, and a private space to connect with fellow plant lovers. It's where the heart of our herbal community continues to grow. To learn more and join us, visit HerbalPodcastCircle.com. Your support means the world and it helps this podcast continue to bloom.

I know you have lots more to share, but this just popped into my head. Do you ever work with it as a tincture?

Missy Rohs:

I love to work with it as a tincture, actually. I once got a kind of windfall gift of some whole cardamom—cardamom pods, and so I experimented. This is, honestly, the only time that I've tintured them because, as mentioned, a little goes a long way. I tintured some in some 40% alcohol, and some in some full-strength, like 95% alcohol, and both came out really wonderful. I ended up liking the 95% a little bit better just because it—the aromatics stayed more true over time. I know that's a really high percentage of alcohol, but again, you're usually adding just a little bit to a formula, like a couple of squirts in a bottle or something. It helps things like bitters or carminative formulas taste a lot better. It can also flavor a really uplifting hawthorn-based heart tincture. It really—I love it for just improving the taste, and also adding that strong aromatic quality to a formula.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I've never tinctured it as a simple before, but I like throwing the pods in if I'm making a bitters blend extract. I did learn the hard way once not to do too many pods. They are quite strong. If you're looking for a balanced taste formula, honestly, three per quart is fine.

Missy Rohs:

Oh, yeah. Wow.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

You don't need to do more than that, really.

Missy Rohs:

One other thing I did in preparation for talking about cardamom today that I had never done before, was I made a cold infusion of just cardamom. A cold infusion is when you suspend the ground herb in just cold-from-the-tap water, not hot, and give it about eight hours or overnight to infuse. I don't remember what I was reading that mentioned that it could be prepared that way. Maybe it was Christa Sinadinou's book. I was like, "Oh, I never—I never really thought about that. I'll try it out." It's really intense. Rosalee, it is so intense, but kind of fun. You feel like you're drinking a very gut-stimulating medicine, like okay-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It was immediately what I thought of. I bet that's a digestive remedy.

Missy Rohs:

Yeah, yes. It was super bitter because when you use it in small amounts, you don't notice that it could be bitter, but when it's—I did a half an ounce for a quart, so it was a very strong infusion. It was very bitter. It was highly aromatic, and it definitely went straight to my gut. I was like I'm sure that I'm going to process everything that I just ate a lot more smoothly now. I'm going to have less stagnation. Also, whoa! My taste buds are very impressed.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That's interesting because that makes me think of as—I think I just tend to use cardamom as a lovely spice. I do love it immensely. I know that there is medicinal benefit in the ways that I work with it, but what you're describing, it's now moved into a therapeutic, medicinal potion.

Missy Rohs:

I still—like a lot of the things that do make it to our spice cabinet, I think it's fun to experiment with it at that “medicinal strength infusion” kind of level, but still part of the lesson I'm taking away from that is it's probably better to just use it in slightly smaller amounts so you're not quite as overwhelmed by it. It's still going to do the same job even if it's blended with some other things that are a little bit more gentle and buffering, or if it's even just in a smaller amount, it's going to do a lot of the same stuff.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Ah, cardamom.

Missy Rohs:

I know. It would be so lovely to have access to a ton of it because it has so many great qualities. It's an antimicrobial, and that would be so cool to be able to soak your infected wound in a cardamom tea, but that's probably not a very pragmatic move for most folks who live in North America.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Now I want a cardamom bath, but, again, probably not going to happen. That sounds like a very lovely, perhaps going into an aphrodisiac kind of realm. That just sounds like so—the aromatics, the sensuality of it.

Missy Rohs:

Yeah, and for something like that, pairing it with rose in a cardamom bath-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That sounds amazing.

Missy Rohs:

Flavorwise the two pair really nicely too, so you can make infused milk or whatever with cardamom and rose. They would also go really well in that coffee together.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Now, I want to infuse rose and cardamom and milk and put that in the bath.

Missy Rohs:

Yes.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I need to maybe get off the milk train and the bath train, but it all sounds so lovely. Also, thinking about that as an infused oil. That sounds really good.

Missy Rohs:

Yes. Cardamom is available as an essential oil, so if folks who use essential oils want to put a couple of drops into a massage oil with some rose extract—that sounds—that sounds like a perfect date night, really.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

You mentioned you're doing some research on cardamom. Have you looked at—just to put you on the spot—have you looked at traditional sources of cardamom? I don't think I really have. It's been more like of an experiential thing. I don't know that I've done a lot of research on cardamom.

Missy Rohs:

I was just looking in some of the “traditional European sources” like Girard and—with perimenopause his name’s evading me right now—but I wasn’t really finding anything but super brief like, “You can include it in this,” or whatever. I wasn’t finding anything in that kind of European tradition, but I don’t have any classical texts from any other traditions around.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Alright, something for us—there’s always more to learn, something to ponder. Sometimes it’s hard—I’m sure it’s not impossible, but it’s harder to find that. It’s kind of cool because it does lend for the, “Okay, I can get out of my thinking brain and into my experiential brain.”

Missy Rohs:

Yeah, yeah. It really is such sensual herb that it’s very fun to do that and to learn about it, just firsthand experimenting with it.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

For example in cake. I feel like we got teased earlier that you make this incredible cake, and you wanted to choose the podcast for that. It was a great tease. Maybe now would be a great time to share your Delightful Persian Love Cake. Tell us about it.

Missy Rohs:

As mentioned in the recipe, this is a riff on a recipe that I found online, and it is—it has just become a real go-to for me when, especially during the dark months of the year because like you, we in Portland have some very dark months during November, December, January, and kind of need some of that lightening, exhilarant vibe in our lives. This cake incorporates the taste of cardamom, as well as saffron and roses. That combination is just—talk about aphrodisiac, pretty amazing that way, but also very much just a sweet, uplifting thing that you can share with friends or on your own too. It definitely doesn’t have to be a “only for smoochy people” kind of cake. This cake, even though it has a lot of ingredients—I felt a little bit bad sending off a recipe that looks a little complicated at first glance—but it is such an easy cake to make. I’m kind of the baker that really just—I do riffs on standard Toll House chocolate

chip cookies, and stuff. I'm not a fancy baker at all. I have a partner who did that professionally, and so anytime I'm like, "Do something that involves multiple steps." I can enlist him, but with this cake, it has a lot of ingredients but so simple to put together. Once you actually present it, it is so stunning and unusual. We're not used to that kind of indulgent spice profile with the cardamom combined with the saffron and the rose and the pistachios. It's—it's a real stunner. I—my own pride and joy about this is that I made it earlier this year over the winter for a friend's birthday party. I had kind of forgotten—I remembered that we were supposed to bring a gluten-free baked good. I'd kind of forgotten that it was a contest, and so there were some secret voting ballots and whatever about who brought the best dessert, and that cardamom saffron cake did, in fact, win.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Wow.

Missy Rohs:

So, I felt very excited about that because I'm not—I'm not really a baked-goods-winner-person usually.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I'm sold on this. In fact, I'm going to have the handsome French husband make it. This sounds amazing. I keep thinking it sounds so delightful that I look over at the title, it's like, "Delightful." The name is there. It sounds absolutely fantastic and I'm excited to hear about other folks making it because I know people are going to be excited for this, so when you do make it and you love it, put it in the comments so we can read all about it. I also want to give a shout out to Tatiana, our botanical illustrator, because this botanical illustration—I don't think you've seen it yet, Missy. It's incredible. We'll put it on the screen about now. It's gorgeous. She's—I feel like every time she outdoes herself, so yeah, it's absolutely gorgeous. You can get your free recipe card by going to HerbsWithRosaleePodcast.com. Check for it there. Just look in the show notes or description, and we'll get that to you. It looks amazing. I can't wait. I'm feeling like maybe this weekend we're just going to make this.

Missy Rohs:

Yes.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Why wait? Why wait?

Missy Rohs:

I also can't wait to see that illustration. I will say that I was very tempted to bring saffron to this show instead of cardamom because I have to share with you that I do grow saffron crocuses.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

You do?

Missy Rohs:

This is my 2025 harvest.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Oh, my gosh.

Missy Rohs:

And so, it's so exciting because it's—it's just really magical. It's such a tiny—it's just a crocus. That's a small plant, and then you're gathering the stigma.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

How do you do that? Can I ask? Do you get out the tweezers? How does this work?

Missy Rohs:

I mean, it sounds a little ruthless, but I found that the easiest way is just to pluck off the flower and then bring it over to a bowl or whatever, and then just kind of rip apart the flower.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

To each their own, Missy. To each their own.

Missy Rohs:

I know. I'm like such a monster.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I've never done it. That is probably what I would do. That sounds like what I would do. I just kind of always envision the harvest as being plucking. I don't know why. It's just in my head, that's what I thought it was—like the long tweezers, that's kind of what I imagined.

Missy Rohs:

That's what I did the first time I did it. I was—my friend had grown a whole bunch of them and had invited me over because she was like, "I'm not going to use all of these. You can harvest come." I was like, "What?" I carefully plucked from the center of each flower and left them there, but then once I started growing them myself, I was like, "No, that's a little over the top and ridiculous." It's also helpful because they bloom in usually early October, and that is the start of the rainy season here. Half the time when I'm harvesting, the flowers are covered in water and it's not exactly ideal to just pluck out there, so I'll bring the flowers in. Especially, they're already—they're still closed sometimes, and then when they come inside after they've been beheaded, they'll open up. It's just the most beautiful way to harvest in the world, to have this bowl of open-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Especially in October, those beautiful purple flowers and—oh, that's lovely. Will you hold up your jar again for those [unclear]. I'm curious how much work goes into that jar.

Missy Rohs:

This is probably—I would guess—usually, there’s three big bloom days, and then maybe four or five smaller bloom days. It kind of extends over about two weeks. I’ll just go out and it’s in a —it’s in my raised bed and I just pluck off the flowers into a bowl, and then pluck out the pistils from there.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Do you dry them on a paper towel or do you dehydrate them more specifically?

Missy Rohs:

You know, I’ve been meaning to experiment with dehydrating them more deliberately with some heat because I’ve just left them out to dry, and because they’re so tiny and thin, they dry pretty quickly. I just spread them out on a bowl and let them do that very quickly. I did do some reading that the standard is to actually dry them much quicker on a medium high heat, so that might retain even more flavor. It’s always—it’s always bit of a juggle once the actual season gets around because then that’s also porcini season and chanterelle season. I’m trying to-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It’s actually the season where I don’t care anymore, like I’m just so tired because I’m like, “Should I grow crocus?” and in October I’m kind of just over it. But oh, my gosh, to have your own—and the thing too, I think about growing your own is because, as you mentioned, saffron being this incredibly expensive spice. But when you harvest your own or are at least familiar with it, it helps you understand why, I think.

Missy Rohs:

Yeah, it really does. I can’t even imagine that work that the workers go through, like crouching down with crocus being so low to the ground. It must be very grueling work, and totally worth paying for.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah. Thanks for bringing saffron to the show too. That's lovely. We got sidetracked. Is there anything else that you'd like to share about cardamom?

Missy Rohs:

I think that folks should just experiment with it more. It was a real eye-opener for me when I realized that you could use it in savory things too, so I'm excited for your nettle soup. I also make some collard greens that have cardamom and cumin and smoked paprika as their main flavoring, and that's really fun. So, yeah, I think folks should experiment with it and dabble in it more.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Definitely. Speaking of savory, that just makes me think of—my husband does a lot of Indian-inspired cooking. He has this dish that's like chicken and cardamom that's incredible. It's like a yogurt-chicken-cardamom thing. It's savory. What an incredible spice. You can go savory, sweet, and both are just delectable.

Missy Rohs:

Absolutely.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Thank you so much for bringing these wonderful spices and this delightful cake. Very excited to try that out.

I know you've had your school now for a couple of decades. I would love to hear more about that.

Missy Rohs:

Oh, yeah. This is the 20th year of the Arctos School. When we started it, Gradey Proctor and I named it Arctos because “arctos” is Greek for “bear,” and bears are really good herbalists. We wanted to take our inspiration from something that wasn’t one particular plant because it’s so—back then, we had the internet but we couldn’t search everything, so it was just like any plant we choose, we might be choosing the same name of five other schools around the country. Anyways, the Arctos School—and this year as I’ve been doing for the last decade or so, we’ve been focusing on the Herbal Immersion Program. It’s an in-person learning opportunity that goes April through October. The thing that I love about it—I love so many things about it, I guess, but we spend half of our time outside, so learning about ecology, and plant identification, and exploring ethical wildcrafting, and really getting folks familiar with the place where we actually live. I think that that’s—there’s really important things about the indoor part too where folks are at my home and we make different kinds of medicines. We learn about herbs by body system. We talk about formulation and all that kind of stuff, but the outdoor part, I think, does that thing that we were talking about earlier where folks are getting invested in where we live, and invested in our land, and invested in our planet. It’s just kind of re-humanizing our experience as people on this planet and shifting how we think about sustainability and ecology and environmentalism, and all that kind of stuff, and taking it to a different level.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That’s how I started my herbal journey, was a three-year apprenticeship that half the time was outside and doing very similar things. I am so grateful to that every day, that that’s where I started. I know some people, they just start entirely in clinicals and they’re just in classroom learning, which is great too. There’s lots of information there, but that transformation of coming back to the land, getting to know my green friends, feeling like I had a place and belonging finally on this earth—that is the thing that I love most about herbalism. The only way you can really truly capture that is an in-person program, so I’m so glad that you’re doing it and that you’ve been doing that work for a couple of decades now. It’s such a transformative experience. Will you share the URL, the website where folks can find you or Instagram or whatever—share it all.

Missy Rohs:

Absolutely! We're at arctoschool.org, which I know is like a weird thing to spell, but it's A-R-C-T-O-S school dot org. You can also find it as @ArctosSchool on Instagram and on Facebook. I'm always trying to up my social media game. I'm a little bit more on top of it now.

I—I really think that that in-person learning, it is so important. While folks can do it by themselves, it's so much more meaningful for a lot of folks to do it in community. Some of my favorite moments have been times when we've had, for instance, a naturopathic student in our program, and they're learning so much stuff that I'm probably never going to know. They're learning about physiology and illness, and all kinds of stuff. They're using the same plants, but they're—at least, this person that I'm thinking of and a lot of other students that I've known—they're exposed to them in bottles. So, to hear this one student say, "I have changed my relationship to everything that I use in the apothecary now because I didn't even know that arnica was a beautiful yellow flower. Now, I know all these plants and I can envision them, and I have my own relationship with them." I'm just like, "Yes!"

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yes! Thank you for sharing so much about that. Before you go, Missy, I have [knocking sound on door]—sorry. I'm sorry. Sorry.

Missy Rohs:

No worries.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Hi.

Mason Hutchison:

Oh, are you doing something? Oh, wow. Is that Missy? Wow. Cool.

Missy Rohs:

Hey, there!

Mason Hutchison:

Hey, Missy! What's going on?

Missy Rohs:

Surprise guest, Mason!

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I'd like to introduce surprise guest, Mason Hutchison, from HerbRally and Folk Methodology. This may or may not have been planned.

Mason Hutchison:

Very impromptu. I just wanted to shout out Missy and her school, Arctos School. I was a former student, actually, so I consider Missy one of my herbal mentors, for sure. Do you mind if I quickly plug your program or did you just do that?

Missy Rohs:

Please. That's so sweet of you.

Mason Hutchison:

Just from a student perspective, one of my—I say this all the time on my show—one of my OG herbal mentors, Howie Brounstein, always says, “Repetition is the key to mastery.” After a few years taking that school at Columbines, I was like I want take another mentorship program so I decided to drive up to Portland, hang out with you and Gradey Proctor. I know Gradey is not there as much these days. It was so cool to delve back into the plants with you all, and not only that, but you layered on some new components that I was super excited about. I don't know if you talked about this, but that mushroom hunting trip was super fun. You probably still do that I suppose, yeah?

Missy Rohs:

Definitely.

Mason Hutchison:

And then there's whole kitchen medicine component, so not only was I relearning a lot of the similar plants that I learned in Columbines, but I was layering on that repetition, but also you threw in a bunch of new components that I have no experience in whatsoever, a.k.a. tree medicine, mushroom hunting, the kitchen medicine component, and obviously, you all threw in a bunch of new factoids that I had no clue about a lot of these plants. Anyways, just personal testament: I loved the course. It was worth that two-hour drive from Eugene every couple of weeks or whatever that I did. That's arctosschool.org. More information in the link in the show notes, I'm sure.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Look at you.

Mason Hutchison:

Anyways, we just wanted to ask you this final question if you don't mind.

Missy Rohs:

Yeah.

Mason Hutchison:

What was it again? What part of herbalism turned out to be harder than you expected?

Missy Rohs:

Ooh. So, you know me. I've always—I'm full of hot takes.

Mason Hutchison:

We know that about you.

Missy Rohs:

My controversial take here is that I wasn't expecting so much—I wasn't expecting it to ruffle feathers that I believe that herbalism and conventional medicine are both really worthwhile, and that they can be used together, and that sometimes it's a great idea to take herbs and not conventional medicine. Sometimes it's a great idea to take conventional medicine and not herbs, and that—it surprised me when I realized that that is—has been and continues to be a very, very controversial take. I definitely caught some flak from folks for advocating that folks get COVID-vaccinated if they can, or that sometimes the easiest medicine to carry on you for pain is going to be a light weight container of Ibuprofen. That's also okay, and that herbs are still really powerful because even folks who have experience with both realms of medicine will sometimes say things like, "Herbalism is the real medicine, but of course, when it comes to infections, get some antibiotics." I'm like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa! Herbalism has amazing tools to fight infections too." I just feel like it's a constant dialogue with every different side about how powerful and important herbalism is, and how powerful and important other healing modalities are too.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That's so important, Missy, because I always just think the more things we have in our toolkit to choose from for any particular person, situation—like you said even just like when you're traveling, there are just so many different reasons why we might choose one or the other. For me, it becomes more and more powerful to have lots of options instead of shrinking down to feeling rigidity and that we only can choose one or the other.

Missy Rohs:

Exactly! I think that it's important to spread herbalism and empower folks to utilize them – utilize it their home and utilize it in their lives. And that we can also advocate for people having access to accessible healthcare and getting their conventional healthcare needs met too. Those are—it's a both/and, and it's so important to have both on board.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Thanks for bringing your hot take. I appreciate it.

Mason Hutchison:

One of my favorite examples of that was when I used to volunteer at the Occupy medical area in Eugene, Oregon. They would have nurses, doctors, herbalists, body care workers, and they're all working under one umbrella. It was so cool to see how everyone just collaborated on all of that.

Missy Rohs:

Absolutely.

Mason Hutchison:

[unclear] kind of does something similar.

Missy Rohs:

That was part of how I came into herbalism, was through working in that collective with folks providing first aid at demonstrations, and having people come from all different kinds of practitioner backgrounds.

Mason Hutchison:

Missy, how did you get into herbalism?

Missy Rohs:

Hit rewind!

Mason Hutchison:

I interviewed Missy too.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I do appreciate you showing up with an impromptu guest question.

Mason Hutchison:

Yes, yes, of course.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It's been so delightful to have you on the show, Missy. Thank you so much.

Missy Rohs:

Thank you for having me, and yeah, I look forward to whatever you two have cooking right now that you are collaborating together.

Mason Hutchison:

Lots of good stuff.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Are we? Are we working on projects together?

Mason Hutchison:

Oy vey. Let me count the ways.

Missy Rohs:

I don't know. There might be a thing or two-

Mason Hutchison:

Let's talk about Missy, though, we gotta-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That was a teaser.

Mason Hutchison:

Yeah, there you go.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Alright, Missy, thank you so much.

Missy Rohs:

Yeah, thank you.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Thanks so much for listening. You can download your illustrated recipe card from today's episode. Just head to herbswithrosaleepodcast.com or check out the show notes for a link. If you're not already subscribed, I'd love to have you as part of this herbal community so I can deliver even more herbal goodies your way.

This podcast is made possible in part by our awesome students. This week's Student Spotlight is on Angela Amarillo in Bogotá, Colombia. Angela is a student in the Herbal Energetics Course which really brings her background in biology and ecology into her herbal studies, along with a strong desire to support her family and community through plant medicine. She explored chamomile as her bitter ally, growing it on her farm, testing it, tasting it in all these different forms, and even involving her family in the process. Her observations about how each person experiences herbs differently offer a really beautiful reflection on how personal herbalism can really be. Angela's thoughtful engagement and curiosity really make her a valued part of the community. It's so much fun to have her in the live classes with her questions as well.

If you'd like to deepen your skills as an herbalist, you can check out my foundational courses at herbswithrosalee.com.

Okay, you've made it to the very end of the show, which means you get a gold star and this herbal tidbit.

We spent a lot of time today talking about cardamom as something you can find in your spice cabinet, but here's something that might surprise you about where that cardamom might have come from. Cardamom is native to the cloud forests of Southern India where it's been enjoyed for thousands of years, but today, more than half the world's cardamom comes from Guatemala, a country with no traditional cultural connection to the spice whatsoever. It arrived there in 1914 when a German coffee planter named Oscar Culfer brought it to his estate in the highlands of Alta Verapaz, where the cool, humid, high altitude cloud forest turned out to be the near-perfect match for its native habitat. Guatemala has been the world's largest cardamom producer since 1980. Like so many spices, cardamom depends on bees to reproduce. Its flowers require specific pollinators—bees large enough to force their way into the blooms and make contact with the pollen. In Guatemala, that means the entire cardamom harvest rests in the hands, or rather the wings, of local bee populations. So, next time you reach for your cardamom, there's a good chance it grew in a Guatemalan cloud forest, pollinated by bees, harvested by smallholder farmers, and traveled halfway around the world to end up in your spice cabinet. It's not bad for something that also happens to bring us so much joy.

As always, it's a pleasure to have you. Thanks for joining me. I'll see you in the next episode.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

So you missed it. You have to check out this cake that she has given us for the recipe.

Mason Hutchison:

Holy moly! That's amazing!

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It's a Delightful Persian Cake. It has things like rosewater, cardamom, honey, orange juice, rosewater, saffron, chopped pistachios.

Mason Hutchison:

I love pistachios.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, don't you think the handsome French husband-

Mason Hutchison:

Oh, yeah. He's going to be all over that.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

-should make that?

Mason Hutchison:

Oh, oh. To make it.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, he's going to make it, that's what I'm thinking!

Mason Hutchison:

Is rosewater synonymous with hydrosols—the same thing?

Missy Rohs:

It really is, yeah.

Mason Hutchison:

Cool. Nice. That looks incredible.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, can't wait.

Mason Hutchison:

Can't wait for him to make that for me.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, really?

Mason Hutchison:

He made us popcorn last night.