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Yeah, oats are also a bit misunderstood that's why I feel like I really need to talk about it as well. Okay, so I'm going to nerd into the fibers now, and you've got to stop me at some point because I can go off for an hour about the fibers and the bacteria. It's super interesting. It's called "butyric acid." It is basically what the cells of the intestine love to eat, and actually, they also kill off cancer cells, and it is one of the main ones that gets released from oats.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

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. In this episode, I'm joined by Karoline Karttunen, an herbalist and community weaver, to talk about one of the gentlest, most powerful plant allies – oats. Karoline shares how this humble grain and its medicine nourish the nervous system, restore resilience, and connect us back to rhythms of care and rest. After this interview, I kid you not, I ate oats for breakfast for weeks on end. I was that inspired about it, and I know you'll be too. This conversation is soothing, heartfelt, and filled with practical wisdom, and I can't wait for you to join us. If you enjoy this episode, please give us a thumbs up so more plant lovers can find us, and be sure to stay tuned in until the very end for your herbal tidbit.

Thank you so much for being on the show. I'm so excited to have you here, Karoline.

**Karoline Karttunen:**

Thank you. I'm very excited to be here, Karoline.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

Wonderful, and thank you for all of your patience, we've had lots of tech stuff getting this one started. I think we're rolling clear now. Thank you so much. It's always a miracle that we get to do this, and then when the tech goes wrong, it's just such a bummer, but we're here now.

**Karoline Karttunen:**

But still, we're able—we're still able to talk even though we're halfway around the world from each other.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

As I mentioned in the introduction, you and I met in Italy, which is a very good meet-cute origin story for us, and we got on really well. I don't think I know your origin story amidst all of that, so I'm excited to hear how the plants called you along the way and hear about the things that brought you to us today.

**Karoline Karttunen:**

Well, I wasn't brought up in a family of plants. I'm brought up just by the water and by the ocean in Sweden on the west coast. My whole dad's family were fishermen, so the ocean has always been our focus. We've always been out in the water. We've been fishing way too much when I was a kid. That has always been my element. Wherever I traveled, it was always close to the ocean. The more I traveled, the more I realized that I actually liked going to the jungle more than I like to be in the water. I would take more and more trips into the jungle or find the forests. I really, really like to hike and to walk, so that's what I've been doing. I've been traveling a lot. From the age of—I went at 16 on my first trip by myself, and then I just continued. By 19, when I finished school, I just took my backpack, and then—I basically lived in my backpack for ten years. Through those trips, I'm going to spend a lot of time in India and many other places where herbs are more of a natural part of life, which it really, really isn't in Sweden. I think Sweden is one of the most restrictive countries when it comes to herbs. We really don't use it so much anymore for the last one or two generations, but before that we did. We really don't use it so much. Rules and regulations on how to use it are extremely tough. I think, actually, one of the toughest in the world. I've done a lot of research about it. My generation, we don't know so much about plants. We don't use plants so much and we've been taught that it's something to be a bit scared of, not deal with it too much. Then, I was traveling through all these countries where there—of course, we use plants. We use it to strengthen our health. We use it when we need them.

I think my first proper experience of what herbs are capable of doing was when I was in India and I got so constipated. Usually, you get the opposite, but I got horribly constipated. I didn't know what to do with myself. I went to some doctor that gave me a big blue pill. It's like taking the flu on a pill. It was horrible. It helped but it was not worth it. Eventually, I went to an Ayurvedic doctor that do what—they're Ayurvedic doctors. They talk to you. They ask you about your habits, how you sleep, and all of that, which was really interesting, and then told me to use triphala, which is a combination of three herbs and fruits that they use for problems with the digestive. It was amazing. It was the only thing that really helped me. I didn't really know so much about herbs then. I know that I could take it for a longer period of time. I traveled to other places and I didn't bring it with me, but it was really my first experience of like, "Wow! Herbs are amazing, they really work." Then, slowly, slowly, I started getting more interested.

I got pregnant when I was 29, and that was when I really started questioning, "Okay, what am I putting into my body? What am I putting on my skin, on my body?" Everything is going to affect this little baby," and I took my first herbal courses. It was doing skincare with herbs, and I got just completely—I went bananas. I went crazy with it. I was just—I think that's what I did when I was pregnant. I was just standing in my kitchen and making all these herbal creams, and then very soon after that, after our daughter was born, we moved to California, which is the Mecca of herbalism in many ways, like everyone is into herbs. You can talk to anyone in the supermarket who bought herbs. Everyone is there by the—by the herb section. So, it was a really good jumpstart for me.

I met this beautiful woman in the Farmers Market up north, in Northern California. I asked her, "Where do I buy herbs? What do I do now? I want to learn more." She really pointed me to all the good places to Mountain Rose and to Learning Herbs. That's where I got in contact with you, first as my teacher, which you've really been an important teacher in my journey. I just dived into it, and then doing that for many years and living in California, and then I got back to Sweden and decided to go to university to become a nutritionist because it's free here in

Sweden. You can go to university and pay nothing, which is amazing. That's what I did, and then afterwards, I did more courses in herbalism and just experimenting a lot. I just really liked to be practical with herbs and using herbs. I'm such a forager, so I'm just always out, and I have been since I started learning about it, just being out picking herbs. It's been a journey in many directions, just how it is for most people.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

I love that combination of travel and herbs, and the story of having the Ayurveda healer, and then, also diving into dietitian work as well because, obviously, those things go together so well.

I love that you chose oats for today because oats are some of my favorite, and I've actually been drinking a lot of oat straw infusions recently, and just really loving the oats as well. Just a ways back, I just went into an oatmeal phase, so I was eating lots of oatmeal too. Anyway, oats are very up for me and I'm excited to hear you talk about them. I'm curious why you chose oats for today's episode.

**Karoline Karttunen:**

It just felt like the obvious choice because I'm a nutritionist and I'm a herbalist. It just felt like, of course, I need to talk about oats. Either that or nettle, but oats are just—because I think—I'm Swedish, and my generation and a few generations before me, we are brought up on oats. Sweden is one of the biggest producers of oats per capita and per the area of where we—how much we grow. We grow a lot. Finland and Sweden grow a lot of oats. We've been eating it—when I was young, every camp you went to, there was always a porridge—pot of porridge and whatever. It was—it's a plant that I hold dear. I eat porridge everyday still. Monday through Friday, I eat oatmeal, and that's the recipe I'm sharing with you that we are going to talk about later. On the weekends, I eat yogurt to be a bit crazy.

Oats are also a bit misunderstood. That's why I feel like I really need to talk about it as well because there've been—within the herbal world, they really are very respected.

We realize that it's a really important plant. It has so much nutrients in it, and it's a great plant for restoring and balancing, and strengthening our nervous system. In herbalism, we usually use the milky oats, the milky tops, as the most potent maybe to strengthen and affect the nervous system. But, of course, the whole plant, whatever way we eat it, whatever way you use it, that's the same thing. It's such an obvious plant to love as a herbalist, but otherwise, it feels like oats have—I think, especially, I noticed when I lived in the States, that in the States it has a really bad reputation. I think it has to do with you having a lot of these ready-made packages where you have a ton of sugar inside of it. I think most Americans seem to think of oatmeal as something very sweet. You eat with a jam. You eat it with maple syrup; something really sweet and not a good breakfast.

Also, at the moment, we are really questioning carbs. In the '80s and the '90s, people were super scared of fat. Fat was the devil, and then we realize that it's not really that easy. It's not like that. Today, we have a completely different view on fats. Today, instead, carbs have that reputation. Of course, if you eat a lot of refined carbs like refined sugars, white flour, it's really not good for us. Unfortunately, that's what a lot of people are doing. But carbs are super important to us. We need carbs and there are certain part of the body that doesn't survive without it, like our brain, and our heart, and our red blood cells—they have to have carbs. They do not survive without it. They cannot live out of the—if we don't eat carbs, for example, then the body starts producing ketone bodies, which has—this is the keto diet that people are on. You have a low carb diet, and then you start creating these ketone bodies. Like I said, our brain cannot live on that. Carbs are important and we need them.

Also, I think people forget that dietary fibers are a part of—they're also carbs, and it's such an important part of our diet. In the old days, we used to eat a ton of it. We don't eat a percent of what we ate before. Most people really don't get enough. If we cut down on the carbs, there's a big chance that we cut down a lot of the dietary fibers, and that's detrimental to our health, to our intestine and bacteria, that I'm going to talk a lot about today because it's super interesting.

I think in that way, it's also really interesting to talk about oats because people think it's not a good thing. I get a lot of comments and questions about that as well, and this thing of we're not supposed to eat grains, really. That's another thing that people say—that we shouldn't be eating too much grains. I don't really know what I feel about that. First of all, the science today says that a whole wheat grain is we can see it if we do big studies on population levels, which I think gives a fairly good—show how good it is for humans when we don't zoom in too much on the small. We zoom out and we look at full populations, and then we see the people who eat a lot of whole grains are usually pretty healthy, and it's good for us. Then, there's all these voices today saying we shouldn't be eating too much grains. We haven't been eating it for too long like before we started cultivating food about 10,000 years ago, we weren't eating grains. To me, it doesn't really make sense. It also doesn't make sense because we know, for example, that in the south of Italy, people were using oats, specifically, 32,000 years ago. We have evidence of that. They used to grind it up like what we do today and make a porridge of it. That's what we think they've been doing with it. That's 32,000 years ago. That's when most people on this planet still lived as hunter-gatherers, and then 10,000 years ago, we started cultivating food. People are saying, "But before that, we didn't use these grains, so that's why we're not supposed to eat them." But also, why did we start cultivating these seeds? Probably because they were pretty easy to cultivate; because we were probably picking them a lot and realizing this is really good food. It gives us a lot of energy. They grow really well. When I drop these seeds, they pop up again. I mean, there's a purpose to why we started cultivating them as well, so that's why I wanted to talk about oats.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

I love that. I can tell that you're going to dig in to some topics that I'm really excited about. I was raised on those little packets of oatmeal sugar, basically. They're basically quick rolled oats that they have been stripped out of a lot of their fibers, and then a bunch of sugar added to them. That was like—that was the solid breakfast at my house, for sure. You brought me back to that. As anyone who's in my classes knows, I don't think there's a class where I don't talk about the joys of fiber and how much we need it, and how fiber is so much more important than, say, taking in an expensive probiotic supplement.

It sounds like you're going to get into that though, so I will hold off, but yeah, I'm really excited to hear about it. You're right. It's vilified in so many ways. The whole grain thing, I've definitely moved beyond that too because looking at those big studies, things are okay. It's just a matter of—like you said there's a big difference between those little packets of oatmeal sugars, and a difference between having whole rolled oats that have been properly prepared. It's a really big difference on so many different levels, even glucose metabolism as well. Alright. Where are we going to dive in next?

**Karoline Karttunen:**

Exactly. Let's start with that, like how it regulates our blood sugar levels and stuff because I think if you eat it like how you said, with these packages, then yes, your blood sugar level is probably going to jump up pretty fast. Actually, I can start talking because we did a really cool test when I was studying to become a nutritionist in one of my classes. We did the lab test. The first week, we got to the lab and on fasting stomach in the morning. We were allowed to eat dinner the night before early, and then we didn't eat anything. I think we drank a little bit of water. I think that's all we were allowed. We came there in the morning, fasting stomach, and we drank this horrible slimy, glucose—like what you do when you're pregnant, you get to drink this horrible liquid, like pure sugar to see if you have diabetes. It's like a pregnancy diabetes. It's a lot of sugar, and then for two hours, we were taking our blood sugar levels for every 15 minutes for two hours. It was interesting because you drink this sugar and the blood sugar level just peaked, and then it crashed pretty fast, actually. It crashed to the levels of below where we started on a fasting stomach. We all felt horrible after two hours.

The next week, we got to do the same test, but choose ourselves what to eat, and then—with the same amount of carbohydrates—and we chose oats—oatmeal in our group. We had to eat quite a lot of oatmeals to get to the same carbs, and we didn't get to do anything else. We didn't get to add salt or anything, so it was pretty yucky, but it was interesting because then we ate that, and for two hours, took our blood sugar levels. It was a completely different story because you have so much dietary fibers in the oats, and you have actually quite a lot of protein, like 13% protein. You have healthy fats.

All these things help to regulate the blood sugar levels. They make them not go spiking up. Instead, we didn't add anything to it. We just ate the oats and we had a really stable blood sugar level for two hours. That's interesting because it really shows, like I said, a lot of people think it's the same thing as eating like a toast with jam on it, and it really, really isn't. A big part of that are these fibers.

Okay, so, I'm going to nerd into the fibers now, and you've got to stop me at some point because I can go off for an hour about fibers and the bacteria. It's super interesting. In general, the dietary fibers, they are carbohydrates, like long chains. There are two different types of them. We have the soluble and the insoluble. The soluble fibers are the fibers that are actually not—they're not absorbed by our bodies. We're not able to absorb them and use them in our bodies. They also don't go down to the bacteria, instead, they are—if you put these kind of fibers in water, they swell up just like how a porridge does, how oats do, and how chia seeds do, and how flax seeds do. They just basically go through our bodies like a gel and act as a vault for our intestines, for our whole system. What they also do is they bind to all of these different toxins and cholesterol, and then they make the stomach—the food stay in the stomach for a longer time. It takes a longer time for it to release into the intestine, which is what we want for our blood sugar levels. It just makes us go to the bathroom much, much better, so people who need to have help with that should really eat more of these soluble fibers because it just helps the whole system be smoother. These kind of fibers you have a lot of in oats.

Beta-glucans is one of them, which has been spoken about quite a lot because we realize that mushrooms have a lot of them, and it's those fibers that are really good for our immune system. They look a little bit different in mushrooms. The ones in mushrooms are even more effective in boosting our immune system, but of course, the beta-glucans in oats also do that. There's a bunch of different types of—a bunch of different types of soluble fibers.

Then we have the insoluble fibers, which is that—also don't get absorbed by our body, but they go down to the bacteria in the large intestine, and there they get fermented,

which is just magic, actually, how it happens. They ferment it and when they ferment it, all these different metabolized stuff are released, and that's what is the magic of them. The more these bacteria we have—different types because we eat a lot of different types of fibers, the better we feel because they release more and more stuff. It also lowers the pH in the intestine, which is really good because then we are able to get even more bacteria as you have this positive spiral. Oats have a bunch of these as well, so there's a lot of fibers in oats that are really, really important to our health.

You have some of the things that are released from the fermentation when the bacteria ferment the fibers—are called—okay, this is such a tongue twister for a Swede: short-chain fatty acids. I'm not going to say that fast five times. They're like short-chain fatty acids that's released. There's one that's especially good, the best food for the cells of the intestine. It's called butyric acid. It is basically what the cells of the intestine love to eat – what keeps them healthy, what helps them to keep whole, and actually, they also kill off cancer cells. This butyric acid is super, super important for us, and it is one of the main ones that gets released from oats. Oats is one of the best foods to eat to release these butyric acids, which today, when we have so many problems with our intestines—I mean, there are so many people with inflammations in the intestine, with leaky gut. Not everybody with these kind of conditions can handle oats, but most people actually can. If we can, then we really, really should because butyric acid is going to make sure to keep the intestine really strong and healthy. So, these are some of the—I can babble on forever, but yeah.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

Well, I have to admit that right now, I really, really, really want a bowl of porridge. [unclear] I'm curious just on a personal level. I'm really into oat bran and I will add that to—we put it—we make our own bread and we add oat bran to our bread. Any baked good that we do, we sub out a quarter cup or whatever of regular flour—whole wheat. We use whole wheat flour—then we sub in the oat bran. Just because of that fiber aspect of it, I'm just curious what you think of that. Hopefully you think it's good.

**Karoline Karttunen:**

I think it's great. I think we all need more fibers. It's interesting because the recommendations today—I think it's the same thing in the States as in Sweden—is about 25 to 35 grams. It's grams though, per day. Most—it's more or less the same in the States and here in Europe—most Westerners eat about 20 grams a day, and then a lot of people eat more than that so that means a lot of people are eating much less than that. Very few people are getting up to the recommendations.

And then there's—it's just so fascinating because there are still people on this planet that live as hunter-gatherers. You have a few groups in the world that does that. There's one group in Tanzania, the Hadza people, which is just fascinating. They live as hunter-gatherers. Like we did 10,000 years ago, they still live like that. They're super generous with sharing their lives with Western scientists that come down there. I always think about what they think of us. They come down and we ask for their poop to see what kind of bacteria they have. We put all these machines on them to see their pulse and how many steps they take. These people don't even have healthcare. It's really fascinating how generous they've been so that we understand how is the human body actually supposed to function. We don't know that anymore. They've done a lot of nutritional studies on them and seen that the hunter-gatherers eat somewhere between 80 to 150 grams of fibers every single day. It's a huge difference from what we eat. I think wherever we can add fibers, just like what you're doing in your bread, even if you're using whole wheat bread, whatever, like whole grain bread, it's great. We need fibers. For some people, it's going to be hard to just start adding it into food. You got to do it slowly, so that you adjust your bacteria in the stomach. You get the right bacteria because if you just start adding a bunch and you don't have the bacteria to break it down, it's going to—it's going to hurt, but if we do it slowly, it's a great thing to do.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

I became really fascinated about this because I started reading studies about the short-term benefits of taking probiotic supplements, which probiotic supplements are generally expensive. There's questionable quality. Let's say you get a good quality one, you're taking it.

It's been shown to mildly change gut flora for a short period of time, which then pretty much ends once the probiotic ends. To me, I was like, "Wow. That's a big waste of money." I mean, you go to the store, the health food stores, they have a whole dedicated fridge, mini-fridge that's all probiotic supplements. I always love it when it comes back to whole foods and how much better whole foods is. Just like you're saying, we need all different kinds of fibers and we need a lot of them. We probably can't do it too much unless we go too fast, like you said. I work really hard to get enough fiber in my diet. It's a struggle to get up to 40 grams. I can't even imagine 80 to 100, that just seems amazing to me. A lot of fibers [crosstalk]

**Karoline Karttunen:**

It's really cool because they've done a lot of studies recently where they found bones from people who lived 6,000 to 8,000 years ago. It's amazing what we can see today. We can go in and look at all these different small things. I don't know how they do it, but pretty cool studies where they've seen that a lot of people around the world, actually, that hunter-gatherer time, ate 75% to 90% plants, and not as much animals as we thought. Of course, I guess that's what the Hadza people are doing as well. It takes a lot of energy to hunt. It's a big risk because you might hurt yourself and so on, so people have always been eating a lot of plants. We don't do that anymore in the same way.

Also, on that note, with the probiotics, it's been blown up because it's a business. You had the probiotics, which is already the bacteria, like what you're saying, and then we have the prebiotics, which are the fibers. That's what we should eat more. We should talk more about prebiotics as well because that's what—that's the food for the bacteria. If we eat prebiotics, which are the fibers, then the bacteria have something to eat, and then they multiply. If you eat a lot of vegetables and if you eat this kind of diet, you're going to get enough of probiotic as well. Just eat more prebiotic.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

Good call. I'm sure I'm not the only one who really wants a bowl of porridge right now each and every day. Can we talk a little bit about the recipe you shared with us?

**Karoline Karttunen:**

Definitely. I'm just going to add something else about the oats, before I start talking about my recipe. I think within the herbal world, we put a lot of emphasis on the milky tops and how important they are, how strong and potent they are, really, to strengthen and balance our nervous system. If we feel really—everyone is stressed today, right? If we feel tired and stressed and all this, it's such a great help and you can feel the effect pretty fast. But any kind of oats will do the same. It's just that we need to use it for a longer period of time. It is pretty cool because there's a bunch of different things. We can go into molecules and see why that might be. One of the things with this, like I said, these short-chain fatty acids.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

Good job.

**Karoline Karttunen:**

This butyric acid that oats release a lot, they actually go and cross the brain-blood barrier. It affects our brains, so of course we're going to feel better. They affect our brains in many different ways, like antidepressant. It makes us calmer. It affects the vagus nerve. The communication between the brain and the gut is stronger. All these things, whatever kind of oats we eat, we're going to get that effect as well.

Oats contain melatonin and it contains tryptophan, which is the amino acid that we need to create melatonin and serotonin. I always find it so interesting, like there are so many foods and plants that actually contain melatonin and serotonin. These neurotransmitters, like a lot of other neurotransmitters, we got to eat stuff and we got to do things to kick them in going. But this, we can actually eat more foods so that we sleep better, and feel better, and are more content, and all this stuff. Oats do this to us as well. It actually makes us more content. We create more melatonin and serotonin.

I think that's why I eat so much porridge. If anybody tells me to eat the same dinner every day. I would shoot myself. At night, I can be like, I can't wait to go and eat my porridge in the

morning. I just love it! I don't make a very, very sweet porridge. What I do is I just add a bunch of things to it and that's why porridge is so amazing because you can add so many different types of nuts and seeds. It's great for herbal—herbal powders. You can even make a herbal tea and use that as the water. In the end, this porridge is just full of fibers. It's full of healthy fats. It's really protein rich. I feel full from it for many, many hours. I add chia seeds and hemp seeds--quite a lot of hemp seeds because they have a lot of protein. Then I add—it depends on—now, it's the nettle seed season, so I usually use—put nettle seeds inside. I almost always have maca in it, which is also really nutritional powder, which gives energy. It's a bit sweet. Sometimes I add rose hip powder. You can use any kind of powder. If we do that on a daily basis, we really get a good effect of these herbs. I think it is really one of the easiest breakfasts to mix in a lot of things, a lot of herbs and stuff. I eat mine with blueberries and unsweetened apple sauce. I make my own milk from different nuts. It can really be a healthy—a healthy breakfast.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

I have a question about the oats that you might use. I know here we have different options. You go to the store, there's rolled oats, Scottish oats, all different kinds of oats. Do you know about the different kinds of oats?

**Karoline Karttunen:**

I think you guys have more than we have. We have oats here in Sweden. It's organic oats or it's regular oats. We don't really have the steel-cut oats that much. You can find it, but it's not that common, but those—the steel-cut one, of course, is the absolute best because they've been the least processed. They take the longest as well to cook, but if we have the time, then it's a great way to eat it. Otherwise, as long as it's—it hasn't been too processed and mixed with—the less processed something has been, and that means “processing” just means cutting it or whatever we do to it. I don't know what the Scottish ones are.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

When I said “Scottish,” I think maybe I meant steel-cut, actually. Are those Scottish oats? I’m not quite sure. There’s Scottish oat cakes—but yeah, maybe steel-cut. Do you soak overnight or do anything like that, and then cook them in the morning?

**Karoline Karttunen:**

I don’t. I just use it in the morning. There are some concerns about you have these anti-nutrients in the—it’s in grains, in general, like phytic acid. It’s interesting. I really read a lot of articles about it. It’s just funny. With this kind of science we have today when we nerd into specific components of food, we can really—it can really be mis-showing what actually happens because it never just acts as one thing and isolate it. We’ve been doing studies earlier where we’ve seen that the phytic acid—it’s not so great. It binds to other minerals. It can bind to calcium and stuff, and then we can’t absorb it. For a long time we were scared of it, but then, there’s been a bunch of studies that have been looking at a little bit of a bigger view from different angles, and seeing, “Hold on. It actually has a bunch of benefits.” It’s actually anticarcinogenic, for example. It strengthens health in many ways. I’m not so concerned—of course, if I eat beans, I soak them before because they have quite a lot of it, and I pour out that water, but I’m not so concerned with the oats. I just make them.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

Okay. That’s good to hear. I love how you’re just adding all these different herbal goodies to it, like the nettle seed. It is nettle seed season. I’ve got so much in my garden, so I’m going to be doing that. I can also see, like you’re saying, you have oats everyday for breakfast, but you could be having a different bowl of porridge every day, in the sense that you could change up all the different things that you’re putting, all the different herbs, fruits, nuts, spices—all of it. I love it. Thank you so much for sharing the recipe with us. Listeners can download that at [herbswithrosaleepodcast.com](http://herbswithrosaleepodcast.com) or check out the show notes, and definitely let us know what you think. I know that I can’t be [unclear] for porridge right now.

**Karoline Karttunen:**

It's blueberry season here as well, so now, it's like fresh blueberries on my porridge. It's amazing. I love it.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

I love that.

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Was there anything else that you'd like to dive into about oats?

**Karoline Karttunen:**

I can go off for another two hours about oats, but no. I think that's some of the most important things about oats. It's a beautiful, beautiful food.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

Wonderful. Thank you so much for sharing that. Your enthusiasm really comes through. You mentioned herbalism in Sweden is kind of different, maybe not as accepted. I know you do teach. I'm just curious to hear what things you're working on and—I don't know, maybe more about herbal life in Sweden.

**Karoline Karttunen:**

Yes, it's a very small community here of herbalists, of people who actually work with it, but it's growing and it's really fun. We're really trying to get to know each other and build a community here with so much love and inspiration. We really feel—taking inspiration from the American community because you guys have been amazing too. We actually had Rosemary Gladstar come here now this spring. A few of us organized an event that she came over to help us to—how do we start community—a herbal community here both as working with it, but also people who are interested in it because there hasn't really been that much, but it's happening, which is really fun. So, it's a fun time to be here. I can see it for—I've been—I had my business now for a few years and every—for five years—and every year, there's more and more, more interest, of course, and it's not just because I'm getting better at marketing. It's because you really see it's happening here and it's happening rapidly. I have both—I have courses, which I just love to have courses in person. I have them—actually, where I'm sitting right now, is a beautiful, beautiful spot. It's a house that—I have all these different kinds of herbal courses where people come to learn. I have herb walks and I do different projects and products, and natural skincare. I also have my online courses. I'm not really sure if I'm going to be able to keep this house, so I might be doing a very intense fall now with a lot of herb courses here in person, and then do a little bit more of my online in the spring. Let's see. Now, there's just so much going on here, which is really fun. I don't have time to create this new online course that I want to create. It's fun to be working here now at this time when it's really starting to happen in Sweden, definitely.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

I find that so fascinating about the building of community. It's just something that really interests me on a personal level. I knew that Rosemary had gone there and she had such a lovely time. That's interesting that part of the reason you brought her there was about “How do we form community?”

**Karoline Karttunen:**

Exactly.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

[crosstalk]

**Karoline Karttunen:**

[crosstalk] She's so good at it. She's so good at making people come together. It was a good, nice inspirational event with her, definitely.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

I'm putting you on the spot here, so feel free to side swipe this. I'm kind of wondering, do you have any tips for someone who might want to—might be in a similar place? Maybe even if it's here, they live in the US, but maybe they don't have a lot of herbal community specifically where they live? Do you have any things that you're kind of working on or just kind of that beginning like, "Here's how we build the community within the herbal world?"

**Karoline Karttunen:**

It takes engagement. It takes a strong will. It takes a bit of work to reach out to people. That's what you have to do. You have to contact each other and meet up and be a part of it. If there's not so much community-building, you have to step into it and start creating it. I guess that's what we did here a bit, just meeting in different places and then meeting online even if you don't live close to each other, and like, "Okay, we're doing this," and then start planning for it; just diving into it and not waiting for someone else to do it even if you don't feel like you're that kind of person. If you are a group of people, it doesn't have to be like a crazy event that you're doing a big festival or whatever. Just something and be a part of reaching out and doing it. In the States, you already have spots where you can go and just form community. Here, it's been like more of "How do we create it?" The more people that are getting into it, the more enthusiastic people you have, and then I think it kind of starts rolling.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

I love that, it's very practical. It's just like we have to engage. We can't always wait for community to come to us. We have to be the ones that are out there, foot in—foot in front of another.

**Karoline Karttunen:**

Yeah.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

Before you go, Karoline, I have one last question for you, and that is, how has herbalism surprised you?

**Karoline Karttunen:**

Of course, in so many ways, like all of us. The first time maybe when I used the triphala. It just—in so many different ways. Every time it surprises me how herbs can affect people in so many different ways. For me, personally, when I started—I was like 29 when I really started getting into herbs. I wasn't a teenager. I wasn't a child. I was already an adult woman who had done a lot of stuff in my life. I went into it and with the time, I didn't just find the plants or the plants me, but wow, I really found myself! I realized that I am such a forager. I don't have an ADHD diagnosis, but I think a lot of people who know me think that I'm on that spectrum, definitely. I think our task in hunter-gatherer, which I think is always interesting, it's always important to go back to that thought because that's where we come from, like "Who would I be?" in a hunter-gatherer group. My kind of personality that's always out looking, needing to go to new places, never satisfied, always a lot of energy to go and do stuff, it's super important nowadays, right? I go, "We can go and find blueberries over there. I think they have—it's more water if we go that way," and then you have some other crazy person who comes and are impulsive, and takes risk without thinking before. Really, really important, right? I think a lot of us are foragers. I'm a lousy gardener. I really don't like it. I make myself garden. My husband is a great gardener. He pushes me and he looks at me. He's like, "Karol, you need to put the seeds in now."

I just want to forage. I just want to be out on the fields if I cannot walk anywhere without—my eyes are just scanning every plant that I see. That is definitely who I am. When I turn that person in—you know, on—I cannot believe I didn't see that before. I think that's how herbalism has surprised me the most, like, "Oh, my God! I didn't even know that that person existed before, this is who I am." It's crazy to think if I never went into herbalism, I wouldn't have found that. I think, also, it's really the core of being—it's the core of being me. It's the core of being a human. This is what we're supposed to do – to forage and look for plants, look for food. Nothing else would have been able to fill that spot. I would have just been—I think what a lot of people try to do to fill this spot of what we're supposed to do, finding food, and then we just—trying to fill that hole with a bunch of other crap instead, when people should just go out and look for food, basically. I think that might have been the biggest—the biggest surprise.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

I love that so much. Truly, when I see that in so many people – finding the herbs, being called on the plant path, they find out who they are and it feels like a recognition almost of just like, "Oh, this is who I am. This is where I'm meant to be." It's so wonderful to see that within the herbal world too because you have people like yourselves who are just so called to the foraging, and then you'll find people who are—their thing is the medicine making or the gardening or the whatever, and they get to just bring their deep skills and passions to that, and become such a benefit to the herbal community because their gifts are shared. It's a beautiful, beautiful way that herbalism can surprise us, is finding ourselves.

**Karoline Karttunen:**

Definitely, definitely.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

It's so nice to have you. You're so enthusiastic and fun. It's just infectious. I'm just like I can't wait to have more oats in my life now, so I'm very excited for that and I'll have to do photos for my breakfast. So excited. I'm excited to just make all different kinds of porridge too,

like you've shared with your recipes. I'm going to feed all my healthy gut flora, do all the things. I'm all into it. Thank you so much for taking the time to be with us. I'm just really looking forward to hearing from other folks and how much they're going to love their oats too.

**Karoline Karttunen:**

Yeah. More oats to the people. Thank you, Rosalee. It's been really nice to talk to you. Super sweet.

**Rosalee de la Forêt:**

Thanks so much for listening. You can download your illustrated recipe card from today's episode, just head over to [herbswithrosaleepodcast.com](http://herbswithrosaleepodcast.com) or check out the show notes for a link. And 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 Megan Verdugo in California. Megan has taken many of our programs including Cooling Inflammation, The Herbal Energetics Course, and Rooted Medicine Circle. She brings so much warmth and curiosity and encouragement wherever she goes. She once shared that in her twenties, her sister called her, "my own private witch doctor," whenever she was catching a cold or feeling a UTI coming on. Now, she's taking that early spark even further, continuing her dream of becoming an herbalist, and deepening her connection with the plants through every course.

To honor her contributions, Mountain Rose Herbs is sending Megan a \$50 gift certificate to stock up on their incredible selection of organically and sustainably-sourced herbal supplies. Thank you, Mountain Rose, for supporting our amazing students.

If you'd like to be an herbalist, you can check out my foundational courses at [herbswithrosalee.com](http://herbswithrosalee.com).

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

Here's the tidbit about oats: unlike many of our herbal allies, oats don't rely on bees or butterflies for pollination. They're wind-pollinated which means entire fields of oats release pollen into the breeze to ensure the next generation. And I love imagining that--the beginnings of this powerful food and medicine being carried on the wind.

Thanks for joining me. I'll see you in the next episode.