



Taste of Herbs Flavor Wheel Introduction

Hearing impaired?

All lessons in the upcoming Taste of Herbs course will have accompanying transcripts.

John:

Hey there, this is John from Learning Herbs and today I traveled across the Puget Sound, and over the Cascade Mountains, on through North Cascade's National Park, and on into the Methow Valley. Home of the herbalist Rosalee de la Foret, most of you all know through the remedies and recipes on Learning Herbs.

Well not to long ago Rosalee sent me a copy of the Taste of Herbs Flavor Wheel, which you all took a look at. If you haven't you can just download that on this page right here. What really struck me what how it was like a road map to matching herbs to people. It really lessoned a lot of confusion. So let's go to Rosalee's cabin and meet her and check out what she has to say about the flavor wheel.

Rosalee:

Hi John, welcome!

John:

Good to see you, you know this is my first time here.

Rosalee:

This is your first time here. I've only lived here six years, I think another year and I would have to had start taking it personally.

John:

Well, you know...you've been busy.



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Rosalee:

You've been busy...we have been busy.

John:

This isn't actually a set, it actually looks like Little House On the Prairie.

Rosalee:

No...Yeah, I call this my butterfly cabin actually. It has a nice forest setting.

John:

Absolutely stunning.

Rosalee:

Yeah, well have a seat John, let chat.

John:

Alright, so the folks out there in internet-land have downloaded this flavor wheel, this Taste of Herbs Flavor Wheel. What inspired you to make this?

Rosalee:

Yeah, well...I've been teaching about the taste of herbs for a couple years now. I do webinars with Michael Tierra and I teach and at conferences and such. I've been interested in the taste of herbs and how to distill that information and share it with people. A while ago I started thinking about...you know, herbalists are not the only ones interested in taste. Other people are very interested in taste, food scientists, chefs, and so forth. So I really just started thinking kind of outside the herbal box and who else is learning about taste that I could also learn from. Kind of like new perspectives. That brought me to wine tasters. Wine tasters are famous for their sense of taste. We even kind of make fun of them, that they're so snobby. You know...I taste wood and a bit of cherry.



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John:

Do they really taste that?

Rosalee:

Yeah, that's the question. So, in studying that...wine tasters often have a flavor wheel.

John:

Really?

Rosalee:

Yeah, so if you go on a wine tasting thing, like a tour (I like to do that in France), or even if you go here in the United States they do it. You'll go and you'll see there's these flavor wheels. It's very much like the one I created, but it's specific for wine.

John:

You're is specific for wine?

Rosalee:

(laughs) There's is specific for wine. It helps them to figure out the different tastes, and helps them work through that process. So I thought that'd be really cool to create a similar tool, but for herbalist.

John:

Cool.

Rosalee:

Yeah, so that's how it came about and it was really like one of those Ah! You know, it just came.

John:



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When I saw it...you made it right?

Rosalee:

Yeah.

John:

Then you emailed it to me and the next morning I was like, this is awesome! It's absolutely incredible.

Rosalee:

You often get excited when I tell you stuff, but I would say that one kind of takes the cake.

John:

Yeah totally, and I was like...I can't wait for people to see this! It's taken us a little while, but now finally you have it in your hands. So what we're going to do now is...Rosalee is going to give you a little lesson so you can begin to understand how to apply The Taste of Herbs Flavor Wheel to your own learning and herbalism.

Rosalee:

If you know me then you know I really like things to be practical and easy to grasp. So that's what I want The Taste of Herbs Flavor Wheel to be.

John:

Absolutely, and that's what we're going to do right now.

Rosalee:

Welcome to an introduction on how to use The Taste of Herbs Flavor Wheel. This is Rosalee de la foret.

The Flavor Wheel is a tool I created for people who want to be more



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confident and effective when choosing herbal remedies. This tool essentially helps you choose herbs for a person, instead of choosing herbs for a disease. In this presentation I'm going to show you why matching herbs to a person instead of a disease is important, and I'm going to demonstrate how to use the Flavor Wheel. Of course there's a lot of information on this chart and I won't be able to go over the entire chart with you, but I will choose one aspect on the chart to give you an idea of how the entire chart works.

First, I want to demonstrate what I mean when I say "match an herb to a person, and not to the disease". The difference between these methods is a basic difference in how an herbalist approaches health and how a doctor might approach health. Of course what I'm going to be giving you is a very broad generalization. There's really no "one way" to practice herbalism, and doctors can vary greatly as well.

Herbalists in general might ask, who is the person that has the disease? Doctors in general might ask, what disease does this person have? Let me give you an example. Let's say someone has a rash on their arm, if they went to an herbalist, the herbalist would want to know a lot more about that person. What do they eat, do they have a lot of stress in their life, does the rash look dry or moist, is it itchy or red? The herbalist would then make recommendations based on that person's particular answers. On the other hand if someone went to a doctor (and let's say the doctor diagnosed them with eczema), they would most likely be given a prescription for steroids. In fact, most people with a diagnosis of eczema are given steroids without any other considerations as to who the person is, or what their particular rash looks like. So this is what I mean when I say that herbs are matched to the person, rather than herbs are matched to the disease.

The reason why I feel it's important to match herbs to the person is



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because this method gets to the root cause of a person's health problems. Western medicine rarely cures or solves chronic health problems, instead they suppress symptoms with drugs. So in our eczema example, steroids don't actually address why the person has eczema, it simply suppresses the inflammation temporarily so that the rash goes away. Once again I want to reiterate that I'm making some very broad generalizations here. It's impossible for me to get into more detailed nuances for this short presentation.

So here's the big question. How do we match herbs to people? Next I'm going to show you three basic principles to keep in mind when considering how to match herbs to people.

The first principle is, people are different. The second principle is, therefore, because people are different what works for one person may not work for another person. Lastly, the third principle is, herbs have different qualities (or energetic properties).

Let's take a look at the Flavor Wheel by choosing a common health problem. Let's go with digestion. So as a reminder, here's our first principle. People are different. To illustrate this principle I'm going to rely on two famous characters. Here we have Tigger and Piglet. These two characters from Winnie the Pooh couldn't be more different. Tigger's loud, friendly, boisterous, and he has lots of energy. Piglet on the other hand is small, timid, easily scared, and often nervous. So I've chosen fictional characters to help demonstrate how people are different, but I bet if you took a moment to think about your friends and family you could probably think of people who are more like Tigger and people who are more like Piglet.

Let's imagine that Tigger and Piglet are having digestive problems. If they both go to the doctor they may walk out of the clinic with the same purple pill. This is because the doctor will most likely match drugs to the disease,



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so if their disease looks similar their medication is similar. If they both go to an herbalist, they will probably be given very different herbs. This is because, while Tigger and Piglet have similar symptoms, because they are such different people they will most likely have different underlying causes. As a result the herbs they will be given will be very different.

How do we decide which digestive herbs are best? If we open up a book to digestive herbs, we'll see a really long list. Here's a list of digestive herbs I wrote down just off the top of my head. I'm sure there's many missing from the list, but how do we decide which one is best? Just looking at this list and trying to pick and choose can be a bit overwhelming. That brings us to principle number three. Herbs have different qualities (or energetic properties). One way we can determine the differences between herbs is knowing if they are warming, cooling, drying, or moistening. How do we know if an herb is warming, cooling, drying, or moistening? By taste! So this is why I've created the Flavor Wheel. It's a tool to help us understand how the taste of an herb effects it's qualities so that we can be more confident and effective when choosing herbal remedies. The best part... you already know this.

On a hot summer day do you reach for a bowl of steaming hot chili soup, or do you reach for that watermelon? On cold days do you reach for that watermelon, or do you reach for that hot bowl of soup? So once we know more about who the person is, and the herbs qualities, then we can better match herbs to people.

So let's go back to our friend Tigger. Tigger's a great representation of someone who might have a lot more heat in their body. Tigger's boisterous, he's loud, he's all over the place. He has a vibrant orange coloring as well, which also indicated heat. So it might sound strange or esoteric to hear someone has heat in their body. You're probably already familiar with the qualities of heat just by your everyday living experiences.



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These three photos show some examples of heat. Boiling water is active, it's hot. Lava (molten rock), also very active and hot and has that red and yellow coloring. The photo on the beach illustrates our increased activity in the heat of summer.

Here's a list of digestive disorders due to heat. So if Tigger were to get digestive problems these are probably what he'll tend to get. Because Tigger has signs of heat, we want to choose cooling herbs. Bitter herbs are cooling and some bitter herbs are very important for digestion. One example of a cooling, bitter herb that is commonly used for digestion is gentian root, which you can see a photo of here.

Looking at our bitter slice of our Taste of Herbs Flavor Wheel, we can see that this section of bitter herbs are cooling and drying. Within the bitter taste is a section for digestion. Then here's a short list of herbs that illustrate this action. Of course there's many herbs that can fit into this, but these three were given just as examples.

So let's not forget our other little friend, Piglet. Piglet is a good representation of someone who has more signs of coldness. Signs of coldness include shivering, nervousness, and a small and quiet voice. Again, here are three photos from nature that often illustrate this coldness. Unlike Tigger's boisterous and fiery attitude, Piglet's slower and more timid. A perfect example is a snake, or some other reptile who can't move in the cold weather, but instead needs the sun to warm up. Also during the winter months we tend to be less active. Here's a list of common digestive problems that can have a root cause of coldness. If piglet had a digestive problem, he would most likely lean toward these problems. You'll notice that most the problems on this list are the same digestive problems from our previous list. This is where the magic of understanding how to match herbs to people, really comes to life. People can have the same issue, but because they're different people with different underlying causes, we will be most effective when we choose herbs to match the person and not



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herbs to match the disease.

Pungent herbs tend to warm and stimulate digestion. They're especially beneficial to people with signs of coldness. The example given here is pepper. So here's our pungent slice of our Taste of Herbs Flavor wheel. Like the bitter slice there's also a portion here for stimulating digestion, however, these herbs are heating and drying. The example here is pepper, and again, there are many herbs that can fit into this description, pepper's just being one example.

So thank you to Tigger and Piglet for helping me explain how to use the Flavor Wheel. Next up, let's make this practical. Soon I'll be bring what I just explained to life with two recipe videos showing how to use The Taste of Herbs to guide us in choosing digestive remedies for Tigger and Piglet. In one we'll use pungent herbs to warm up Piglet, in the other we'll use bitter herbs to cool down Tigger. Remember in both cases we're treating a digestive issue. Since they're different characters (so to speak), we're using The Taste of Herbs Flavor Wheel to help us decide what herbs to use. As I said earlier, the Flavor Wheel is about matching herbs to people and not to diseases. The upcoming recipe videos will make this hands on and go into detail making this an actual remedy for an actual situation. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy looking over The Taste of Herbs Flavor Wheel, we'd love to hear your comments below.