

Recipes



Serving suggestions: On warm spring days I often serve the tomato soup slightly chilled, making it a refreshing lunch option. If you have any leftover chilli it is perfect to have the next day with salad and a spoon of the raita in a wholemeal pitta bread.

Tomato and Roasted Garlic Soup

serves 2

6 large tomatoes, chopped
5 cloves garlic, whole
2 tbsp. olive oil
½ tsp. cayenne pepper
1 tsp. paprika
2 tsp. ground coriander
1 tsp. dried thyme
1 onion, chopped
600 ml vegetable stock
salt and pepper, to taste

Preheat oven to 200C. Transfer garlic cloves and tomato into an oven-proof pan and drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper and roast in the oven for 30-45 minutes. After removing from the oven, squeeze out the softened garlic.
Pour a bit of oil into a saucepan and sauté the onion until soft. Add the remaining ingredients and cook for 5 minutes on medium heat and stir.
Add vegetable stock and bring to boil for a further 5 minutes. Blend in a processor until smooth.

Cucumber, Onion & Garlic Raita (with Soya /Rice Yoghurt)

1½ cups natural rice yoghurt or soya yoghurt
1 cup cucumber, peeled and chopped into small pieces
1 small red onion, chopped
8-10 wild garlic leaves, washed, or 1 clove of garlic crushed /chopped
1 tbs. fresh mint leaves, finely chopped

1 tbs. coriander, finely chopped
1 green chilli, finely chopped
½ tsp. salt, adjust to taste
¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper.

Blend the yoghurt, garlic, salt and black pepper together. Add cucumber, onion, half of the mint leaves, coriander and the green chillies. Mix well. Transfer to a serving dish and garnish with remaining mint leaves. Serve chilled. Raita is also great to have with curries, chilli or as a dip with raw vegetables.

Vegetable Chilli Bowl

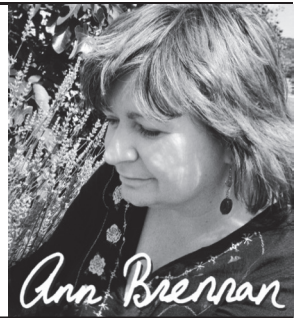
serves 2

2 cloves of garlic, crushed
1 onion chopped
2 finely chopped red chillies
1 tsp. paprika
Olive oil
2 tsp. ground cumin
250g mushrooms, chopped
400g can, chopped tomatoes
400g can kidney beans, drained
150g green beans, sliced

In a pan, soften the garlic, onion and chilli in 1 tbsp. of oil for about 3 minutes. Add the mushrooms, paprika and cumin and cook for a further 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes to the pan along with the kidney beans and 200ml of water. Stir and allow to gently simmer for about 10 minutes. Add the sliced green beans and gently cook for 5 minutes until the sauce is thickened and the vegetables are softened. Serve with rice.

WORDS *on* health

free



Seasonal Allergies Are Here Again

Along with the natural beauty of nature during this time of year comes the misery of seasonal allergies for many.

From March to May, pollens from trees are the most common cause of seasonal allergies. Experts say that it is anticipated the birch pollen will start arriving early with very high counts. Birch trees tend to pollinate more heavily biannually and this year it is likely to be high. The grasses that cause most hay fever also start to flower in May.

Every year I see more and more people who have never had any allergy problems suddenly develop symptoms. Many think they have a spring cold

which they say they have had for several weeks and cannot get rid of. The usual symptoms are irritability, decreased energy, shortness of breath, sinus congestion, itchy eyes, runny nose, sneezing, even sore throats and headaches. I have also seen a large increase in skin related allergies developing in the spring. Asthma attacks are also prevalent at this time of year.

Try out some of the tips inside to help make this season more bearable.



For information about herbal medicine and nutritional consultations contact Ann Brennan on 07745 898911 or visit www.annbrennan.co.uk

Using diet to ease hay fever

Simple changes to your diet can often help to ease the symptoms of hay fever. Stubborn cases may need a more individual approach using both diet and herbs, but the dietary changes below can be easily made. Try the recipes on the back page.

include

✓ Berries, plums, citrus fruits, peppers, spinach, and broccoli

These contain Vitamin C, quercetin, rutin, and hesperidin, all of which are thought to be natural antihistamines that help to reduce nasal secretions and inflammation.

✓ Chilli (*Capsicum*)

Chillies have potent antibacterial properties that help fight and prevent infections, congestion and sinusitis. The peppery heat also stimulates secretions that will help clear mucus from your stuffed-up nose and congested lungs.

✓ Onions

Onions contain quercetin, an antioxidant that helps reduce inflammation associated with hay fever. They have the ability to loosen and increase nasal secretions thereby helping to clear excess catarrh and prevent its recurrence.

✓ Garlic

Garlic has potent antibacterial properties that help fight and prevent infections. It helps to break up catarrh and ease nasal and bronchial congestion. Try to eat two cloves a day.

avoid

✗ Dairy products

Dairy products increase mucus production. By simply cutting down on mucus forming foods many people notice a marked reduction in symptoms. Alternatives to dairy milk are **rice**, **oat**, **almond** or **soya** milk.

Goat's milk and **sheep's milk** products may also be fine. Try them out and see how you respond.

✗ Refined foods

Cut down on **white bread**, **white rice**, **white pasta** and **white sugar**. Substitute wholemeal versions of these foods.

The question of calcium

If you are worried about not receiving an adequate supply of calcium when you cut down on dairy products, don't be. There are plenty of other foods that are high in calcium.

In order for calcium to be used effectively it needs to be in the right balance with magnesium. Green leafy vegetables (such as spinach, kale, watercress, broccoli, cabbage), nuts and seeds have absolutely the right balance of calcium to magnesium, ensuring the best uptake and utilisation by the body.

Other good sources of calcium include parsley, dried seaweed, fish, and beans (such as haricot and kidney beans).

Herbal helpers

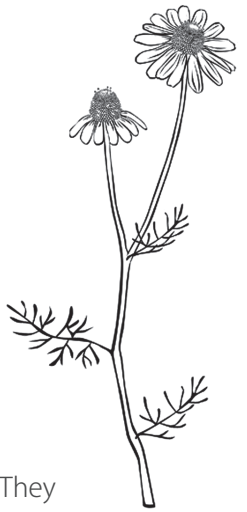
Camomile

In ancient times, herbalists noted how the appearance of some plants resembled parts of the human body. They applied this observation to camomile which they said looked similar to the eyes, and it has long been used to soothe swollen inflamed eyes.

The anti-inflammatory properties we now know are due to the volatile oil components proazulene and bisabolol, among others. They reduce histamine-induced reactions in hay fever and allergic asthma.

As well as their anti-allergic action other constituents in camomile have the added benefit of relaxing and aiding the digestive and nervous systems.

People often ask, 'How can it have all these different actions, and what have they got to do with treating hay fever?' But you could consider it another way: 'What if all these actions are linked?' When choosing herbs as medicine, I will want to know how particular tissue or organ functions normally. Then I ask, how did it go wrong? And how do I support it to allow normal function again? When I know the action required, I can choose the herbs.



Infusion (herbal tea)

If using dried camomile use 1-2 teaspoons of dried herb for each cup of water, or 1 ounce per pint. Steep the herbs for 5 minutes in water that has just been boiled. Then strain the infusion.

If using fresh herbs use 3 teaspoons of the fresh plant parts per pint of water. Make the same way as above, and strain.

Tip: Do not let it brew too long as this will make it bitter.

Camomile eye compress

1. Make a cup of weak camomile tea and allow to cool
2. Soak a wad of cotton wool or a clean cloth in the tea
3. Gently place over the eyes and leave until the soreness has subsided

Always use a fresh compress for each eye to avoid infection.