



Lemon Balm

Melissa officinalis



Family Name: Lamiaceae

Common Names: Balm, Bee Balm, Melissa

Description: A hardy perennial and a member of the mint family, which grows in dense clumps to a metre height. It is shallow rooted with creeping rhizomes, which give rise to upright square stems bearing ovate leaves, toothed and crinkled. Small white hooded flowers appear mid-summer. The whole plant releases a delicious lemony scent when bruised.

Parts Used: Leaves, fresh and green rather than dried.

Active Constituents: Essential oil (0.1% volatile) containing citrol, citronellol, geranial, and linalool; bitter principle, flavorous (quercetic, rhamnocitrin), glucosides (apigenin, quercetic, luteolin), phenolic acid, tannins (rosmarinic acid, caffeic and photogenic acid), triterpenes (ursolic acid and lanolin acid).

Actions: Carminative, diaphoretic, antispasmodic, relaxant, mild ant-depressive, mild febrifuge, anti-viral (topically).

Medicinal Uses: Known as the 'Memory Strengtheners', useful for anyone suffering from restlessness, excitability or insomnia. A specific for the 'Busy Mind' or a 'Tired Brain', also used in a cream for cold sores. Has a quietening effect on the nervous system, aids heart function and circulation. Other uses include morning sickness, pregnancy headaches, fever, palpitations, heartburn, indigestion, nausea due to nerves, hyperthyroidism. Commonly used externally in a cream for *Herpes simplex* (cold sores).

Historical Uses: It was held to be sacred to Apollo, the 'god of medicine', and held up as an elixir of life; when Apollo fell in love with Daphne, he is reputed by the poet to have said: 'I suffer from a malady that no *balm* can heal'. The Swiss physician Phillip von Hohenheim (1493-1541) who was professor of surgery at Basel (1526-8) wrote a great deal about medicine, he was noted for his exceptional cures, and he stated clearly that he had achieved remarkable success with Melissa. Taking a simple tea prepared from lemon balm alleviates feverish conditions, colds, cardiac complaints and many other ills. It was drunk in earlier times to make the mind and heart merry, to revive the heart, to help people who sleep too much, and to drive out cares and melancholy.

Note: A safe herb for children. It is a gentle herbal tranquilliser and can be put in their baths. Lemon balm is powerful and gentle in small doses. It has been found that the volatile oil acts on the limbic system, the part of the brain that governs the autonomic functions.

Balm Butter with Fish

Small handful lemon balm tops

100gms butter

salt and pepper

Wash the balm leaves, remove stalks and chop the leaves finely.

Put the butter in a bowl and cream with a wooden spoon until soft. Mix the chopped balm into the butter with a fork and add salt and pepper.

Shape into a ball and leave in the fridge to firm up. Drain off any brown juice from the leaves, slice in 1 cm rounds and serve. The lemon tang of Balm is great with fish.

A great help for those who are seriously studying for exams.

Calming for thinkers and worriers



Lemon balm maybe used to give a lemon flavour to drinks, punches and teas, to fruit and other salads, and to fish dishes.

It is not wise to cook lemon balm for long as the essentials oils evaporate and leave a bitter taste-it is better to cook for only a short time or to use as a garnish.

As a tea it has the reputation of relieving repression and making the heart merry.

To make an infusion:

Loosely pack a teapot with fresh leaves, add boiled water and steep for 10 - 15 minutes. Drink up to 3 cups daily.

Dried herb - 1 tspn per cup boiled water. Steep as for fresh

Apple Balm Crumble Cake

6-8 cooking apples

Sprig of balm to sweeten

Water

Sugar

250 g shortcrust pastry

½ cup wholemeal flour

½ cup plain flour

Cook finely sliced apples with a sprig of balm and a little water until soft. Remove balm and sweeten with sugar to taste. Roll out pastry, line 30 small tart tins and fill with stewed apple. Sift flour and salt, rub in butter until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs, Add balm and sugar and sprinkle over apple. Cook at 180C for 20 mins. Serve hot or cold with ice-cream or cream.

pinch of sea salt

75 g butter

2 tblspns chopped balm

3 tblspns raw sugar

Melissa Liqueur

½ cup fresh lemon balm

Pinch coriander & cinnamon

Sliced & scraped peel of ¼ lemon

3 peppermint leaves

½ cup sugar

1 cup vodka

Place all the ingredients in a bottle and steep for 3 weeks. Shake during this time. Strain and put into a bottle and keep in a cool dark place for about a month.

Matrimonial Cake

1 cup wholemeal flour

1 tspn baking powder

½ cup wheat germ

½ cup rolled oats

1 cup brown sugar

1 tblspns finely chopped balm

175 gm melted butter

Topping:

1 cup minced dates

1 cup minced raisins

grated rind of lemon

2 tblspns flour

½ cup brown sugar

½ cup water

Combine the base ingredients in a bowl, mix to a paste with melted butter. Press into a greased Swiss roll tin. Combine all topping ingredients in a saucepan and simmer, stirring for 5 mins. Spread this topping over the base mixture and bake about 40 minutes at 180°C. Poppy seeds or other seeds maybe sprinkled on the topping before baking. Finely chopped balm may be added to any plain cake mixture when lemon is not available.