



Rosemary

Salvia rosmarinus

From Shakespeare's Hamlet, "there's rosemary, that's for remembrance – pray, love, remember."

A member of the Lamiaceae family, it used to be named *Rosmarinus officinalis*; rosmarinus is from the Latin ros – dew and marinus – of the sea, and is a native to the rocky shores of the Mediterranean. This is a very well known garden plant, which has many uses. Most people can identify rosemary, as it is both a very common garden plant and a flavoursome culinary ingredient.

There are two main forms; upright; a very dense bushy evergreen shrub that can grow up to 3 metres tall, though more usually 1-1.5m, or the prostrate form; that can trail over the wall. The foliage on both is dark green, with a white underside, and are very aromatic (there are variegated forms, which do not have as vigorous growth). The flowers are usually a bright violet blue, though there are varieties from white, pink, and pale blue. It grows best in sunny well-drained soils preferring an alkaline pH. This is a plant that is easy to grow from cuttings also from seeds, and is very hardy to drought and frost.

(Image: Rosemary flowers, Karina Hilterman)



The character of Rosemary is described as warm, dry, pungent, and bitter. Its main constituents (plant chemicals) are volatile oils, bitters, tannins, flavonoids, resins, and phenolic acids. Contains also; vitamins A and C and minerals calcium, iron, magnesium, potassium, phosphorus, sodium and zinc.

Therapeutic actions (what all those chemicals can do!): Anti microbial, spasmolytic (relieves spasms), stimulant to the nervous and circulatory systems, rubefacient (stimulates blood flow), carminative (relieves wind), a mild analgesic (pain relief) and a general tonic.

So Rosemary is good for treating the heart and circulation, for respiratory conditions, for digestive problems – especially indigestion. A wonderful tonic for the brain, to help memory and concentration, relieve headaches, depression and is a tonic for the nervous system.

If you are studying, drink rosemary tea or crush a sprig of rosemary and inhale the fragrance.

If travelling long distances by car, put a sprig over the air conditioning vent and the volatile oils which are released, can help keep you alert.

Rosemary is also a muscle relaxant—that is a bit of a paradox; that a plant can be both a relaxant and a stimulant! However, it does work this way; beware if you have aching muscles and use Rosemary at bedtime, you will probably be relaxed - but wide-awake.

Rosemary can be used topically for nerve and muscle pain and spasms and is used as a hair rinse for scalp conditions such as dandruff, and is said to help with baldness.

(Image: Rosemary 'Tuscan Blue', Karina Hilterman)

Folklore & Mysticism:

Folk names for rosemary include; compass weed, polar plant, sea dew, elf leaf, and incenseir; Gender; masculine; Ruling planet; the sun; Ruling element; fire; Powers; protection, love, lust, mental powers, exorcism, purification, healing, sleep, youth.

Rosemary is one of the oldest known incenses and has an ancient tradition to be burnt to purify and clear negative energy and can be used as a substitute for Frankincense.

Used in the bath it purifies, and placed under the bed is said to protect the sleeper from harm, ensuring a good night sleep and keeps nightmares away. If hung over the door and doorposts it is supposed to keep thieves away—a herb with much folklore—there must be some essence of truth!

Rosemary is traditionally used in the floral arrangements for both weddings and funerals and with the medieval symbolism of the Christian church; Rosemary was the symbol of the Nativity of Christ and was used accordingly in celebration of this.



To use a comb made of Rosemary wood was also thought to cure baldness; though a more usual use for the wood has been for making lutes.

Culinary: Rosemary is one of the most well known culinary herbs. Traditionally used when roasting lamb and an essential ingredient to have for Mediterranean and Italian style cooking. When making bread, pizza bases, or scones try adding a tablespoon of chopped Rosemary, not forgetting focaccia. Use also in stews, dips, preserves and marinades. Add the fresh flowers to salads, or they can be crystallized and used as a decoration cakes and desserts. Now for some recipes from 'A Herb Cookbook' by Gilian Painter, 'Aunt Daisy' & elsewhere...



(Image: Franz Eugen Köhler, *Köhler's Medizinal-Pflanzen*)

<p>Rosemary mustard 2 Tbsp mustard powder, 2 Tbsp white flour 1/2 tsp salt, 2 tsp sugar, wine vinegar to mix 1 Tbsp finely chopped Rosemary Combine all ingredients and mix to desired consistency with wine vinegar. Keep in a sealed jar 2-4 weeks before using.</p>
<p>Vegetable casserole with Rosemary 1 medium eggplant or 3-4 courgettes 2 skinned, sliced tomatoes, 1 peeled, sliced onion, 2-3 sliced cloves garlic, 2tsp finely chopped Rosemary, 1 Tbsp finely chopped parsley, salt and pepper, 1 Tbsp butter, Arrange prepared, sliced vegetables in layer in a casserole dish, sprinkling each layer with herbs and seasonings. Dot with butter, cover and cook for about and an hour at 180°C until done.</p>
<p>Rosemary pikelets with orange topping Pikelet mix (Aunt Daisy's) + 1tsp finely chopped Rosemary Orange topping (for 60 little pikelets) 5 Tbsp Cottage Cheese 1 tsp grated orange rind Decorate with parsley There are quite a number of variations you can use with this recipe. Try cumin, dill, fennel, coriander (grind this one), seeds, paprika sprinkled on top. Or just good old plain pikelets.</p>
<p>Savoury Rosemary Meatballs 500gms mince, 1 cup mashed potato, 1 finely chopped onion, 1 Tbsp finely chopped Rosemary, salt & pepper Blend well & shape into small balls, roll in flour or breadcrumbs. Deep fry, shallow fry or cook in a soup – drop balls into a soup or broth that is boiling.</p>
<p>Sprigs of Rosemary boiled in water will make a mild disinfectant.</p>

<p>Rosemary baked potatoes Wash old potatoes and cut in half without peeling sprinkle cut surface with salt and finely chopped Rosemary and place cut side down on an oiled baking tray. Bake for 30 – 40 minutes or until soft at 200°C, and serve with butter or sour cream.</p>
<p>Cheese straws 6 oz of flour, 1/2 tsp baking powder, 4 oz butter, salt & pepper, 2oz grated cheese, a pinch chilli powder, 1 tsp finely chopped rosemary leaves, a little milk to mix Rub butter into the flour & baking powder; add finely grated cheese, salt & pepper. Mix to a stiff paste with milk & roll out to 1/8th inch thick. Cut into strips about 10cm long. Bake in a hot oven 7-10 minutes till golden brown.</p>
<p>Rosemary wine 3 cups wine, 3 Tbsp lemon juice, 6 Tbsp honey, 3 Tbsp fresh Rosemary Bruise the Rosemary leaves in pestle & mortar (or similar) to release flavour. Add all ingredients together in a pot & simmer gently for 5 minutes, strain off leaves & drink warm, or bottle & keep in fridge. A soothing drink for those with coughs or colds.</p>
<p>Rosemary Walnuts 1 Tbsp of butter (or oil if preferred), 1 Tbsp finely chopped Rosemary, 1/2 tsp cayenne pepper, salt & pepper, 1 cup walnuts (or other nut to suit) Melt butter in a pot, add all ingredients mix well to coat walnuts, place on baking dish, bake 15minutes at 180 deg C, shake dish occasionally, cool & serve or refrigerate.</p>
<p>Aunt Daisy's pikelet recipe 1 cup flour, 1/2 tsp salt, 1 tsp cream of tartar, 1/2 tsp baking soda, 1 egg, milk to mix to paste, 1 tsp melted butter. Mix dry ingredients in bowl, break in egg & mix with milk, add melted butter. Mix well stand 1/2 hour. Drop spoonfuls onto hot buttered pan</p>

Prepared for the Herb Federation of New Zealand's Herb Awareness Month 2023-www.herbs.org.nz
 References: <https://pfaf.org/user/plant.aspx?latinname=Rosmarinus+officinalis> , G. Painter & C. Fisher, 'Materia Medica For The Southern Hemisphere'.

Advisory Note: This text is given as a general guidance. If any adverse reactions occur or symptoms persist, please contact a qualified medical herbalist or medical doctor immediately.