

A CORE GUIDE

The Kitchen Apothecary

*The quiet medicine already growing on your windowsill & resting in your
spice drawer.*

BETTER OUT CO.

BEFORE WE BEGIN

Medicine that hides in plain sight

Long before pharmacies, there were kitchens. The pot of mint by the back door, the rosemary growing wild against a wall, the ginger and garlic tucked into nearly every pot – these weren't just flavour. They were the first medicine cabinet, passed hand to hand through generations of grandmothers who simply *knew*.

We've mostly forgotten this. We reach for a packet at the first sign of a sniffle and walk straight past the thyme that has soothed coughs for two thousand years. Yet the knowledge never left – it's waiting in the most ordinary corners of your home, asking only to be used.

This little book is an invitation to remember. Not to replace your doctor – please never that – but to weave small, daily acts of nourishment back into your cooking. A scatter of parsley that does more than decorate. A turmeric you understand. A cup of chamomile that means something.

Nothing here is exotic. That's rather the point.

I've gathered the herbs and spices most likely to already be within arm's reach, and given each one its own page: the gentle truth of what it offers, a touch of modern understanding – including which are quietly *blood-cleansing*, a real gift in our toxin-heavy world – and the easiest ways to fold it into an ordinary day. Read it like a cookbook for wellness – one small remedy at a time.

Four ways to use almost anything

You don't need special equipment or training. Nearly every herb and spice in this book can be enjoyed in one of four simple ways — learn these once and the rest of the book unlocks. The principle behind them is simple: **delicate fresh herbs are best raw**, their goodness easily harmed by heat, while **tougher roots and spices are best gently warmed**, their goodness needing heat to be released.

FINISH **Scatter it raw, at the end.** The delicate leaves — parsley, coriander, basil, dill, chives — hold their gifts in fragile oils, vitamins and living enzymes, all of which heat quickly destroys. So add them *after* cooking, over the finished plate. Two seconds, maximum nutrients, maximum flavour.

STEEP **Make a tea (an infusion).** Pour just-boiled water over fresh or dried leaves and flowers — mint, chamomile, sage, thyme — cover, and let sit 5–10 minutes. Covering matters: it traps the very oils you're after.

SIMMER **Make a decoction.** Tougher roots and barks — ginger, turmeric, cinnamon — carry much of their goodness in heat-stable compounds and minerals, locked in fibrous flesh. A gentle 10–15 minute simmer is what coaxes it out — the base of every golden milk and ginger brew.

INFUSE OIL **Cook it into fat.** Many of the most protective compounds — in turmeric, rosemary, garlic — are both heat-stable and fat-loving. Warming them gently in olive oil or butter both releases them and helps your body absorb them.

ONE QUIET PRINCIPLE

Little and often beats heroic and rare. A pinch of turmeric in your eggs most days does far more than a single mighty dose once a month. The magic of the kitchen apothecary isn't potency — it's *rhythm*. Small amounts, woven through ordinary meals, day after day.

A handful, not a garnish

Here is a question worth sitting with. Most people use herbs as decoration — a single leaf of basil on the pasta, a token sprig of parsley pushed to the side of the plate. Add it all up across a year and it might come to a handful, total. A handful of these powerful plants in twelve whole months.

I eat a handful with *every meal*. Not as garnish — as food. And once you understand what these plants actually carry, you see why that single shift may be one of the most quietly transformative things you can do for your body.

The difference between a garnish and a handful is the difference between decoration and medicine.

Herbs are among the most antioxidant-dense foods on earth — far richer, gram for gram, than most fruits and vegetables. Antioxidants are the body's defence against **free radicals**: the unstable molecules, multiplied by modern stress, pollution and processed food, that damage our cells and drive the very heart of ageing. Every generous handful of herbs floods the body with the compounds that neutralise them.

YOUR CELLS Polyphenols in herbs help shield cell membranes and even the DNA inside from oxidative damage — protecting the integrity of the cell, the very unit that everything else is built from.

AGEING Much of what we call ageing is accumulated cellular damage and low, chronic inflammation. Herbs work directly against both — which is why the longest-lived cultures eat them not as garnish, but by the fistful, every day.

IMMUNITY Their antimicrobial and antiviral compounds give the immune system daily, gentle support, while their polyphenols feed the gut bacteria where so much of immunity is actually built.

None of this asks for a supplement or a protocol. It asks only that you stop treating these plants as decoration and start treating them as the food they are. Be brave with the green stuff. Your cells are counting it.



SECTION ONE

The Everyday Herbs

*The green things on your windowsill – the ones
we treat as garnish and underestimate every
single day.*

Parsley

Petroselinum crispum

The most dismissed herb on the plate is quietly one of the most nourishing. We push it to the side as decoration; our grandmothers ate it by the handful — and they were right.

RICH IN VITAMIN C & K

GENTLE DIURETIC

BREATH FRESHENER

IRON & FOLATE

Parsley is a genuine nutritional powerhouse hiding as a garnish: remarkably high in vitamin C, vitamin K, and a range of antioxidants for something we eat in such small amounts. Traditionally it's been used to gently support the kidneys and to ease bloating — it nudges the body to release excess water. And the old trick is true: chewing fresh parsley really does neutralise strong food smells like garlic on the breath, thanks to its chlorophyll.

Ways to use it daily

FINISH Chop a generous handful over eggs, roasted vegetables, fish, grains — treat it as a leafy green, not a sprig. The flat-leaf kind has the most flavour.

BLEND A big handful into pesto, salsa verde, tabbouleh, or green sauces — this is how you eat it in quantity, where the real nourishment lives.

STEEP A small bunch steeped in hot water makes a fresh, mineral-rich tea traditionally sipped to ease puffiness and water retention.

MODERN NOTE · BLOOD & DETOX

Parsley has become a quiet darling of the detox world — and with reason. It's rich in chlorophyll, the green pigment that helps cleanse the blood, and contains compounds that support the body's natural clearing of heavy metals. In a world heavier with toxins than our ancestors ever knew, a daily handful is gentle, real support for the body's own filtration.

A gentle note: culinary amounts are wonderful for everyone. Concentrated parsley *teas or extracts* are best avoided in pregnancy, as large medicinal doses have a long traditional history of stimulating the uterus. Sprinkled on dinner, it's simply food.

Rosemary

Salvia rosmarinus

“Rosemary for remembrance,” the old saying goes — and modern curiosity is catching up with the ancient wisdom. This piney, resinous herb has long been the one tied to a clear, sharp mind.

ANTIOXIDANT-RICH

LINKED TO FOCUS & MEMORY

AIDS DIGESTION

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY

Rosemary is dense with aromatic antioxidant compounds — chief among them rosmarinic acid — which give it real anti-inflammatory character. It has a centuries-old reputation for sharpening concentration and memory; even the *scent* of it has been associated with feeling more alert. At the table it's a digestive ally, traditionally paired with rich, fatty roasts precisely because it helps the body handle them.

Ways to use it daily

INFUSE OIL Warm a sprig gently in olive oil, then roast potatoes, vegetables or meat in it — the antioxidants are fat-loving and release beautifully into the oil.

STEEP A short sprig steeped in hot water makes a clarifying afternoon tea — a lovely, gentler alternative when you'd normally reach for more coffee.

INHALE Crush a few needles between your fingers and breathe in while you work — the simplest possible focus ritual, free on the windowsill.

MODERN NOTE · FOCUS & PROTECTION

Rosemary's carnosic acid is being explored for how it shields brain cells from oxidative stress — modern echo of the old “herb of remembrance.” Biohackers keep a sprig on the desk and crush it for a hit of clean, caffeine-free alertness, and its antioxidants gently support the liver, one of the body's great detox organs.

A gentle note: everyday culinary use suits everyone. Very concentrated medicinal doses or strong rosemary essential oil taken internally are best avoided in pregnancy and by those with epilepsy. As a roast-dinner herb, enjoy it freely.

Basil

Ocimum basilicum

Sweet, peppery and instantly summery — basil is far more than a pizza herb. It has long been used to calm the nerves and settle an uneasy stomach.

CALMING

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY

DIGESTIVE

ANTIOXIDANT-RICH

Basil is rich in aromatic oils — chiefly eugenol — that give it a gentle anti-inflammatory and antibacterial character. Traditionally it was reached for to ease tension, soothe the gut and lift the spirits. Its close cousin holy basil (tulsi) is the celebrated adaptogen, but even ordinary sweet basil carries real, quiet goodness in every fragrant leaf.

Ways to use it daily

FINISH Tear over tomatoes, eggs, roasted vegetables or soups at the very end — heat steals its delicate oils in moments.

BLEND Into pesto with olive oil, nuts and garlic — the classic way to eat it in real, nourishing quantity.

STEEP A few leaves in hot water for a calming, faintly sweet tea after a meal.

MODERN NOTE · STRESS & CELLS

Basil's antioxidants help mop up the free radicals behind cellular ageing, and its oils are studied for an antibacterial edge. Tulsi, the holy-basil cousin, is a favourite adaptogen among biohackers for buffering cortisol — a gentle daily steadier in stressful seasons.

A gentle note: a joy for everyone in normal culinary amounts. Only concentrated basil essential oil or large medicinal doses warrant caution in pregnancy — the leaves on your plate never do.

Mint

Mentha piperita

Cooling, reviving and endlessly soothing — mint is the great calmer of the digestive world, and one of the easiest herbs of all to grow (almost too easy).

EASES DIGESTION

RELIEVES BLOATING

CALMS NAUSEA

FRESHENS BREATH

Peppermint's menthol relaxes the smooth muscle of the digestive tract, which is precisely why a cup after a heavy meal brings such relief — it eases cramping, bloating and trapped wind, and settles a queasy stomach. It also clears the head: even its scent feels like a breath of fresh air on a foggy afternoon.

Ways to use it daily

STEEP A generous handful of fresh leaves in hot water, covered, for 5 minutes — the everyday after-dinner digestive.

FINISH Chopped over fruit, salads, yoghurt, peas or lamb for a cooling lift.

INFUSE Into a jug of water with cucumber for an all-day refreshing sip.

MODERN NOTE · GUT & FOCUS

Peppermint is one of the best-studied natural aids for an irritable, spasming gut, and a whiff of it has been shown to sharpen alertness and ease tension headaches — a clean, simple reset when the day feels heavy.

A gentle note: wonderfully safe. Those prone to acid reflux may find strong peppermint relaxes the valve at the top of the stomach and worsens heartburn — if so, simply favour ginger or fennel instead.

Thyme

Thymus vulgaris

A small, unassuming herb with an ancient reputation as a guardian of the lungs and chest. If one herb belongs in your winter cupboard, it's this one.

ANTIMICROBIAL

EXPECTORANT

SOOTHES COUGHS

ANTIOXIDANT

Thyme is rich in thymol, a powerfully antimicrobial compound that lends real weight to its two-thousand-year history of easing coughs, sore throats and chest complaints. It helps loosen and clear congestion (an expectorant) while calming the irritated tickle that keeps a cough going. A true ally when the cold-season sniffles arrive.

Ways to use it daily

STEEP A few sprigs with honey and lemon at the first scratch of a sore throat or tickly cough.

INFUSE OIL Warm into olive oil with garlic for roasting — protective and delicious at once.

COOK IN Into slow soups, broths and stews, where its flavour deepens beautifully.

MODERN NOTE · RESPIRATORY & MICROBIOME

Thyme's essential oils are studied for genuine antibacterial and antiviral activity, and it's a common ingredient in natural cough syrups for good reason. A gentle, food-based way to support the body through the seasons that test the lungs.

A gentle note: safe and treasured in cooking and tea. Concentrated thyme essential oil is potent and best avoided internally in pregnancy — the herb itself, in food and tea, is a comfort.

Sage

Salvia officinalis

Its very name, *Salvia*, shares a root with the Latin *to save* — and few herbs have been so trusted for so long. Earthy, savoury and quietly powerful.

ANTIMICROBIAL

ASTRINGENT

EASES SORE THROATS

CALMS SWEATS

Sage is antimicrobial and astringent — it gently tightens and tones tissue — which is why a sage gargle is the time-honoured remedy for a raw, sore throat. Ancient tradition also leans on it to ease excessive sweating and night sweats, and it carries a long reputation as a herb of clarity and memory, much like its cousin rosemary.

Ways to use it daily

STEEP A strong tea, cooled a little, as a gargle for a sore throat — or sip it slowly.

INFUSE OIL Crisped gently in butter or oil to dress squash, beans or pork — a classic for a reason.

COOK IN A leaf or two in slow-cooked beans and rich dishes, where it shines.

MODERN NOTE · MIND & MENOPAUSE

Sage is being studied for supporting memory and mental clarity, and it's one of the most-researched natural aids for the hot flushes and night sweats of menopause — a time-honoured remedy modern science keeps quietly confirming.

A gentle note: lovely in food and the occasional cup. Concentrated sage tea or oil in large, ongoing medicinal doses is best avoided in pregnancy and while breastfeeding (it can reduce milk supply). As a cooking herb, enjoy it freely.

Coriander

Coriandrum sativum

Loved and quarrelled over in equal measure — coriander (cilantro) is bright, citrusy and cooling, and quietly one of the most valued herbs in natural detox circles.

COOLING

AIDS DIGESTION

BLOOD-CLEANSING

ANTIOXIDANT

Coriander leaf settles the digestion and brings a fresh, cooling lift to rich or spicy food — no accident that the cuisines with the most warming spices reach for it most. It's rich in antioxidants and has a long traditional use in calming an unsettled stomach. But its modern fame rests on something deeper, below.

Ways to use it daily

FINISH Scattered raw at the very end over curries, eggs, salsas and soups — heat destroys its fragrance.

BLEND Into green sauces, chutneys and dressings — the way to eat it in real quantity.

JUICE A handful blended into a green juice, the favourite vehicle of the detox world.

MODERN NOTE · HEAVY-METAL CLEANSING

Coriander is the darling of natural detox protocols: compounds in the leaf are thought to help *bind and mobilise heavy metals* such as mercury and lead, supporting the body in clearing them. In a world carrying more of these than ever, a regular handful is gentle, sensible support.

A gentle note: simply a wonderful food for everyone. The strong dislike some people feel is genetic, not harmful — if it tastes of soap to you, dill or parsley offer similar gifts.

Dill

Anethum graveolens

Feathery, fresh and faintly aniseed — dill is the gentle digestive herb of northern and eastern kitchens, soothing enough that its seeds have calmed colicky babies for generations.

CALMS COLIC & GAS

EASES BLOATING

MINERAL-RICH

SOOTHING

Dill is a carminative — it eases gas, bloating and the cramping that follows a rushed or heavy meal. The word “dill” itself comes from an old Norse word meaning *to soothe*, and its calming reputation is so trusted that “gripe water” for unsettled babies was traditionally built around it. It pairs beautifully with fish, eggs, cucumber and yoghurt.

Ways to use it daily

FINISH Scattered raw over fish, eggs, potatoes or a cucumber-yoghurt salad at the end.

STEEP A teaspoon of lightly crushed dill seeds in hot water as a gentle after-meal digestive.

STIR IN Through soft cheeses, dressings and dips for a fresh, calming note.

MODERN NOTE · DIGESTION & MINERALS

Dill carries useful calcium, magnesium and manganese, and its seed oils are studied for soothing digestive spasm — a small, food-based way to keep the gut calm and the meal comfortable.

A gentle note: gentle enough to be a classic for infant tummies and safe in pregnancy as food. As always, concentrated seed extracts are a different matter to the herb on your plate.

Oregano

Origanum vulgare

The warm, peppery soul of Mediterranean cooking — and, gram for gram, one of the most potently protective herbs in the entire kitchen.

POWERFULLY ANTIMICROBIAL

ANTIOXIDANT-DENSE

ANTIFUNGAL

IMMUNE SUPPORT

Oregano is extraordinarily rich in carvacrol and thymol, compounds with strong antimicrobial and antifungal action. Most of us only ever meet it dried — and even dried it ranks among the most antioxidant-dense foods by weight that exists. But the **fresh** herb, picked from a living plant, is a different creature entirely: its volatile oils are vibrant and intact, the flavour greener and more peppery, the goodness at its living peak. If you only ever shake it from a jar, you've met a whisper of what oregano truly is.

FROM MY GARDEN

I grow oregano in my garden and use it by the fistful — heaps of it torn into soups, stirred through a slow bolognese, tossed fresh into chicken salad. Not a timid pinch: a real, generous handful. Fresh oregano can carry it; it only grows more delicious the more brave you are.

— Laura

Ways to use it daily

COOK IN Fresh, by the handful, into tomato sauces, bolognese, soups and bean dishes — it stands up to heat where the soft herbs wilt.

FINISH Torn fresh over chicken salad, roasted vegetables or eggs for a green, peppery lift.

INFUSE OIL Warmed into olive oil with garlic for a protective, savoury drizzle.

MODERN NOTE · GUT & CANDIDA

Oil of oregano is a staple in natural anti-microbial and anti-candida protocols, valued for its carvacrol. While the concentrated oil is a supplement to use thoughtfully, simply cooking generously with the herb is a gentle, daily way to support a balanced gut — the very terrain we spoke of in *Steady*.

A gentle note: a wonderful food for all. Concentrated oil of oregano is potent — best used short-term and avoided in pregnancy — but the dried and fresh herb in cooking is simply nourishing.

Chives

Allium schoenoprasum

The gentlest member of the onion and garlic family – a mild, grassy whisper of allium goodness that you can scatter raw over almost anything.

MILD ALLIUM BENEFITS

VITAMIN K & C

ANTIOXIDANT

GUT-FRIENDLY

Chives carry, in soft and gentle form, the same sulphur compounds that make garlic and onions so protective of the heart and circulation – only mellow enough to use raw and generously. They add vitamin K, vitamin C and antioxidants, and a little prebiotic fibre that quietly feeds the friendly gut bacteria.

Ways to use it daily

FINISH Snipped raw over eggs, potatoes, soups, salads and anything that wants a gentle savoury lift.

STIR IN Through soft cheese, yoghurt dips and dressings.

SCATTER As the easiest two-second flourish on almost any savoury plate.

MODERN NOTE · HEART & MICROBIOME

The allium family is among the most studied for cardiovascular support, and chives let you enjoy that goodness raw, where it's most alive. Their inulin fibre is a gentle prebiotic – quiet food for the good bacteria that keep digestion and blood sugar steady.

| A gentle note: a friendly food for everyone, including in pregnancy. Simply enjoy.

A LIVING SUPERFOOD

Sprouts & Microgreens

The whole plant's potential, in a single inch

If the herbs are the apothecary's wisdom, sprouts and microgreens are its pure, concentrated life force — a seed's entire blueprint for a plant, packed into a tiny, tender green you grow on your own windowsill in days.

NUTRIENT-CONCENTRATED

LIVING ENZYMES

EASY TO DIGEST

GROW IN DAYS

When a seed germinates, it unlocks everything it was saving to build a whole plant — and the result is astonishing. Microgreens can carry **many times the vitamins and antioxidants** of the same plant fully grown: studies have found some holding several-fold more vitamin C, vitamin K, vitamin E and carotenoids gram for gram than their mature leaves. Broccoli sprouts are the famous star, exceptionally rich in *sulforaphane* — one of the most studied compounds for supporting the body's own detoxification. In a single small handful you get a concentration of minerals, vitamins and living enzymes that's hard to match anywhere else in food.

WHY THEY'RE SO SPECIAL

They're alive when you eat them — enzymes intact, nutrients at their peak, picked seconds before the plate. They're effortless to grow indoors year-round with no garden, no sun, no skill. And they're the ultimate two-second flourish from *Steady*: a living, mineral-dense crown on your eggs and avocado.

Ways to use them daily

CROWN A generous handful over eggs, avocado, soups and salads at the very end — raw, alive and uncooked.

GROW Sprout seeds in a jar with a mesh lid, rinsing twice daily; or grow microgreens in a shallow tray of soil on the sill, snipping in 1-2 weeks.

BLEND A handful into a green smoothie for a concentrated, living nutrient hit.

MODERN NOTE · DETOX & DENSITY

Broccoli sprouts are a genuine biohacking favourite for their sulforaphane, studied for activating the body's own detox and antioxidant defences. Growing your own is the freshest, purest nutrition there is — living food, at its absolute peak, in a toxin-heavy world that needs it.

A gentle note: rinse sprouts well and keep them clean and cool, as their warm, moist growing conditions can occasionally harbour bacteria. The very young, elderly, pregnant or immune-compromised may prefer soil-grown microgreens, snipped fresh, over raw sprouts.



SECTION TWO

The Warming Spices

*The drawer of roots and barks – deeper, slower
medicine, and the heart of every healing brew.*

Turmeric

Curcuma longa

The golden root at the heart of so much traditional medicine. Its warm, earthy colour comes from *curcumin* – the compound behind most of its quiet power.

POTENT ANTI-INFLAMMATORY

ANTIOXIDANT

SUPPORTS THE LIVER

EASES JOINTS

Turmeric is one of the most studied plants in the world, prized above all as a natural anti-inflammatory – and since so much modern ill-health begins as low, simmering inflammation, that matters enormously. It has a long history of supporting the liver and digestion and easing achy joints. But there's a crucial nuance most people miss.

THE TRICK THAT UNLOCKS IT

On its own, curcumin is poorly absorbed – most passes straight through. The great unlocker is **fat**: curcumin is fat-loving, so a little oil, butter or coconut milk transforms how much your body takes up. Gentle heat helps too. So the oil and the simmering aren't incidental – they're what make turmeric actually *work*.

You'll often hear **black pepper** is essential – its piperine does boost absorption. But pepper, like coffee, is one of the crops most prone to *mould*, so I quietly leave it out. You don't need it: a little **ginger** or a pinch of **cayenne** brings its own warming lift alongside the fat – all the help, none of the mould.

Ways to use it daily

SIMMER Golden milk: warm milk of choice with turmeric, cinnamon and a little honey, with a touch of coconut oil to carry the goodness. The classic, soothing evening ritual.

COOK IN A teaspoon into scrambled eggs, roasted veg, soups, rice or dressings – always with a little fat alongside to unlock it.

MODERN NOTE · INFLAMMATION & DETOX

Curcumin is one of the most researched natural anti-inflammatories in the world, studied for everything from joint comfort to mood. It also supports the liver's detox pathways and the body's master antioxidant, glutathione – a real ally for a system under modern toxic load. Always paired with a little fat, as below, to unlock it.

A gentle note: culinary amounts are safe and wonderful. Concentrated curcumin supplements can thin the blood and stir the gallbladder – worth a word with your doctor if you take blood thinners, have gallstones, or are pregnant.

Ginger

Zingiber officinale

If you keep one root in the house, make it this. Warming, settling and endlessly useful, ginger is the great all-rounder of the kitchen apothecary — and you already met it in *Steady*, in your morning water.

CALMS NAUSEA

AIDS DIGESTION

WARMING & CIRCULATORY

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY

Ginger's gift is best known for the stomach: it's one of the most reliable natural remedies for nausea of nearly every kind — travel, morning queasiness, an unsettled tummy. It gently stokes digestion, eases bloating, and brings a warming heat that supports circulation on cold or sluggish days. Like its cousins, it's quietly anti-inflammatory too.

Ways to use it daily

SIMMER Fresh slices simmered 10 minutes with lemon and a little honey — the everyday brew for digestion, colds, or simply comfort.

GRATE Into warm morning water (your *Steady* ritual), stir-fries, dressings and soups — fresh has far more life than dried.

CHEW A tiny piece of raw ginger, or a slice in hot water, at the first hint of nausea or travel queasiness.

MODERN NOTE · CIRCULATION & CLEANSING

Ginger's gingerols are studied for easing inflammation and supporting healthy circulation — and good circulation is how the body actually carries waste to be cleared. It gently warms a sluggish system and stimulates digestion, both quiet pillars of the body's own daily detox.

A gentle note: loved in pregnancy for morning sickness in normal food and tea amounts. In very high or supplemental doses it can thin the blood, so check with your doctor if you're on blood thinners or near surgery.

Garlic

Allium sativum

The kitchen's great protector — food and medicine in a single clove, revered across every culture that ever cooked.

ANTIMICROBIAL

SUPPORTS THE HEART

IMMUNE-BOOSTING

BLOOD-CLEANSING

When raw garlic is crushed, it forms allicin — the potent, short-lived compound behind most of its power. Garlic has a deep, well-earned reputation for supporting the heart and healthy blood pressure, for cleansing the blood, and for rallying the immune system against the bugs of cold season. It is perhaps the single most valuable plant in the whole apothecary.

Ways to use it daily

CRUSH & REST Crush or chop and let it sit 10 minutes before cooking — this lets the allicin fully form and survive the heat.

EAT RAW Grated into dressings, dips and finished dishes — raw is where its medicine is strongest.

INFUSE A clove steeped with honey, or warmed into oil, as a traditional winter tonic.

MODERN NOTE · HEART & DETOX

Garlic is one of the most researched foods on earth, studied for cardiovascular health, healthy circulation and immune resilience. Its sulphur compounds also feed glutathione and the liver's detox pathways — a daily clove is one of the simplest acts of self-protection there is.

A gentle note: a wonderful food for nearly all. In large medicinal or supplemental amounts it can thin the blood, so ease off before surgery and check with your doctor if you're on blood thinners.

Cinnamon

Cinnamomum verum

Warming, sweet and comforting — and a true friend to your blood sugar, which ties it straight back to everything in *Steady*.

STEADIES BLOOD SUGAR

ANTIOXIDANT-RICH

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY

WARMING

Cinnamon's great gift is helping to steady the glucose rise after a meal — it supports the body's sensitivity to insulin, so the curve climbs more gently. It's also wonderfully antioxidant-dense and warming. One important nuance: choose **Ceylon** ("true") cinnamon for daily use, as the common cassia kind contains coumarin, which isn't ideal in large amounts.

Ways to use it daily

SPRINKLE Over oats, yoghurt, fruit, coffee or golden milk — especially alongside something sweet, to soften its rise.

SIMMER A stick in stewed fruit, broths or chai for a gentle, fragrant warmth.

STIR IN A pinch into smoothies or baking as a natural sweetness enhancer.

MODERN NOTE · GLUCOSE & METABOLISM

Cinnamon is widely studied for its supportive effect on blood-sugar balance and insulin sensitivity — a small, delicious metabolic ally. A dash on a sweet food is a genuine *Steady* habit, not just a flavour.

A gentle note: lovely and safe as a daily spice, especially Ceylon. Very large medicinal doses of cassia cinnamon are best avoided, particularly in pregnancy — a sprinkle on breakfast never is.

Cayenne & Chilli

Capsicum annuum

A little fire that gets everything moving – warming, circulatory and metabolically lively. Heat, it turns out, is medicine.

BOOSTS CIRCULATION

STOKES METABOLISM

EASES PAIN

ANTIOXIDANT

The heat of chilli comes from capsaicin, a compound that stimulates circulation, gently lifts the metabolism, and even prompts a soothing release of the body's own feel-good endorphins. Used topically it's a well-known remedy for aching muscles and joints. A pinch quite literally wakes the whole system up – warming cold hands and sluggish mornings alike.

Ways to use it daily

PINCH Into soups, eggs, stews and even a glass of warm lemon water – start small and build to taste.

WARM TONIC A tiny pinch in warm water with lemon and honey to kick-start a cold morning.

COOK IN Through slow dishes for a gentle, building warmth rather than a sharp hit.

MODERN NOTE · METABOLISM & CIRCULATION

Capsaicin is studied for a modest metabolism-lifting, appetite-steadying effect and for supporting healthy circulation – good blood flow being how the body delivers nutrients and carries waste away. A small, warming nudge to a sluggish system.

A gentle note: enjoy to your own tolerance. Those with sensitive stomachs, reflux or ulcers may prefer to go very gently. Wash hands well after handling – and keep it away from eyes.

Cloves

Syzygium aromaticum

Tiny dried flower buds with an enormous, warming punch — and one of the most antioxidant-rich foods on earth. A little goes a remarkably long way.

POWERFULLY ANTIOXIDANT

ANTIMICROBIAL

SOOTHES TOOTHACHE

AIDS DIGESTION

Cloves are extraordinarily concentrated in eugenol, a warming aromatic compound that is both naturally numbing and strongly antimicrobial — which is exactly why a clove pressed against an aching tooth has been a trusted remedy for dental pain for centuries. That same eugenol makes cloves one of the highest-antioxidant spices that exists, gram for gram. They warm and settle the digestion, freshen the breath, and bring cosy depth to autumn and winter cooking.

Ways to use it daily

SIMMER A few whole cloves in stewed fruit, chai, mulled drinks or bone broth for warm, fragrant depth — remove before serving.

STEEP One or two cloves with cinnamon and ginger for a warming, digestion-soothing winter tea.

SOOTHE A single whole clove gently held by a sore tooth or gum — the traditional, numbing first-aid while you arrange to see a dentist.

MODERN NOTE · ANTIOXIDANTS & ORAL CARE

Cloves regularly top the charts for antioxidant density, and eugenol is so effective that it's still used in modern dentistry. A little clove in cooking is a quietly powerful way to add protective, free-radical-fighting compounds to an ordinary meal.

A gentle note: wonderful as a culinary spice for everyone. Concentrated clove oil is very potent — use it only diluted and externally, never swallow it, and keep it away from children. The whole or ground spice in food is simply a warming pleasure.

Fennel & Cumin Seeds

Foeniculum vulgare · *Cuminum cyminum*

The after-dinner digestives of the world's great food cultures — tiny seeds with an outsized gift for a comfortable, calm belly.

EASE BLOATING

CALM DIGESTION

IRON-RICH (CUMIN)

FRESHEN BREATH

There's a reason Indian restaurants offer a little bowl of fennel seeds by the door: they sweeten the breath and ease the bloating and gas that follow a rich meal. Cumin gently kindles the digestive fire and is a quiet source of iron. Both are carminatives — herbs that settle and de-gas the gut — and both have soothed bellies across continents for thousands of years.

Ways to use it daily

CHEW A pinch of fennel seeds after a meal — the simplest, oldest after-dinner ritual.

STEEP Lightly crushed fennel or cumin seeds in hot water for a gentle digestive tea.

TOAST & COOK Bloom cumin seeds in a little oil to release their warmth into soups, stews and rice.

MODERN NOTE · THE CALM GUT

Fennel is well studied for relaxing digestive spasm and easing colic and bloating — it's a key herb in many soothing "gripe" and after-dinner blends. A pinch of seeds is a small, ancient piece of gut wisdom that still holds.

A gentle note: gentle and food-safe, fennel included in pregnancy in normal culinary amounts. Concentrated fennel extracts in large medicinal doses are best discussed with a practitioner.



SECTION THREE

The Gentle Healers

*The soothing flowers and wild greens – for
calm, for comfort, for the quiet repair work of
the body.*

Chamomile

Matricaria chamomilla

The little daisy that calms the world down. If any herb deserves a place by the bed, it's this one – gentle enough for children, profound enough to matter.

CALMING & SLEEP-SUPPORTING

SOOTHES DIGESTION

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY

EASES TENSION

Chamomile is the classic herb of rest. It gently quietens a busy mind and eases the body toward sleep, which is why an evening cup has comforted people for centuries. It's also a wonderful digestive calmer – soothing a tense, cramping or anxious stomach – and mildly anti-inflammatory throughout. Its gentleness is precisely its strength: this is a remedy you can lean on nightly.

Ways to use it daily

STEEP A heaped spoon of dried flowers (or a good teabag) in just-boiled water, covered, 5–10 minutes. The evening ritual, perhaps an hour before bed.

SOOTHE Cooled chamomile tea makes a calming compress for tired, irritated eyes or sensitive skin.

PAIR Beautiful with a little lavender or lemon balm for a deeper wind-down blend.

MODERN NOTE · NERVOUS SYSTEM

Chamomile's apigenin binds gently to the same calming receptors many sleep aids target – without the grogginess or dependence. In a wired, over-stimulated age it's a beautifully simple way to down-shift the nervous system and protect the deep sleep in which the body does most of its repair.

A gentle note: very safe and widely loved. As it's in the daisy family, those with severe ragweed or daisy allergies should approach gently. A calming choice for most, including as a mild tea for restless little ones.

Nettle

Urtica dioica

The sting that heals. Beneath its prickly reputation, nettle is one of the most deeply nourishing wild plants there is – nature’s own multivitamin, free for the gathering.

MINERAL-RICH TONIC

BLOOD-CLEANSING

SUPPORTS KIDNEYS

EASES ALLERGIES

Nettle is extraordinarily dense in minerals – iron, calcium, magnesium, potassium – and in chlorophyll, which is why it’s the classic tonic for rebuilding after illness, depletion or heavy bleeding. It gently supports the kidneys to do their cleansing work, and a regular cup is a beloved natural remedy for easing the misery of seasonal hay fever. (Cooking or drying removes the sting entirely.)

Ways to use it daily

STEEP LONG A strong infusion – a good handful of dried nettle steeped for hours or overnight – sipped daily as a mineral tonic.

COOK IN Fresh young nettle tops into soups, stews or in place of spinach – heat neutralises the sting.

TONIC A daily cup in spring as a traditional “blood-cleansing” reset after winter.

MODERN NOTE · MINERALS & CLEANSING

Nettle is treasured in natural medicine as a “blood builder” and gentle detoxifier – its rich, plant-form minerals are easily absorbed, and it supports the kidneys, a primary route by which the body clears waste. A wonderfully grounding tonic for our depleting, toxin-heavy age.

A gentle note: a nourishing food and tea for most. Because it gently supports fluid clearance and is so mineral-rich, those on medication (especially blood-pressure or blood-thinning drugs) or who are pregnant should enjoy it as food and check with a practitioner before strong daily medicinal infusions.

Calendula

Calendula officinalis

The humble pot marigold — a golden flower that is, above all, the great healer of the skin, inside and out.

HEALS SKIN

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY

ANTIMICROBIAL

SOOTHES THE GUT

Calendula's bright petals are gently anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and remarkably healing to tissue — which is why they've been the heart of skin salves, washes and baby balms for centuries, soothing grazes, rashes and irritated skin. Taken as a tea, that same soothing quality reaches inward, calming an inflamed or irritated gut lining.

Ways to use it daily

INFUSE OIL Dried petals steeped in olive oil for weeks make a simple, beautiful healing salve for dry or irritated skin.

STEEP A gentle tea of the petals to soothe the digestion, or cooled as a wash for sore skin.

SCATTER The petals are edible — a pretty, faintly peppery confetti over salads and rice.

MODERN NOTE · SKIN & REPAIR

Calendula is well represented in natural skincare for supporting wound healing and calming inflammation — a gentle, plant-based way to care for the body's largest organ, your skin, which is also a real route of both exposure and repair.

A gentle note: very gentle and widely loved on skin and as tea. As it's in the daisy family, those with ragweed or daisy allergies should patch-test first. Strong internal use is best avoided in pregnancy.

Lemon Balm

Melissa officinalis

A bright, lemony member of the mint family that lifts the heart and quietens the mind — the old herbalists called it “the gladdening herb.”

CALMS THE NERVES

LIFTS MOOD

EASES TENSION

AIDS SLEEP

Lemon balm has a centuries-old reputation for easing anxiousness and gentle low spirits without dulling the mind — it calms while keeping you clear. It soothes a nervous, butterfly stomach (where tension so often lands), helps quieten a racing mind at bedtime, and simply tastes of summer. A herb that seems to exhale on your behalf.

Ways to use it daily

STEEP Fresh or dried leaves as a daytime calming tea when the mind feels frayed or scattered.

PAIR Beautiful blended with chamomile in the evening for a deeper wind-down.

FINISH Chopped into fruit salads, dressings and cold drinks for a lemony lift.

MODERN NOTE · CALM & FOCUS

Lemon balm is studied for easing stress and supporting calm, clear focus — a favourite of those seeking a non-drowsy way to take the edge off a wired nervous system. A gentle daily ally in an over-stimulated world.

A gentle note: gentle and well loved. Those with a known thyroid condition may wish to check with their practitioner before strong, regular medicinal use; as an occasional tea it suits almost everyone.

Lavender

Lavandula angustifolia

Not only for the bath and the linen drawer — a few culinary buds bring lavender's famous calm to the table, and its scent alone can settle a whole room.

CALMS & RELAXES

AIDS SLEEP

EASES HEADACHES

SOOTHES THE SPIRIT

Lavender is perhaps the most beloved calming scent in the world, and for good reason: its aroma measurably soothes the nervous system, easing tension, restlessness and the kind of headache that comes from a clenched, over-busy day. A small culinary pinch carries that same gift inward. The golden rule is restraint — a little enchants, too much turns soapy.

Ways to use it daily

PAIR A tiny pinch of buds with chamomile at night for a deeply restful evening tea.

INHALE A sprig by the pillow, or buds rubbed between the fingers, to calm before sleep.

BAKE GENTLY A few buds in honey, shortbread or with berries — sparingly, for a floral note.

MODERN NOTE · NERVOUS SYSTEM & SLEEP

Lavender's calming effect on the nervous system is among the best documented of any aromatic — studied for easing restlessness and supporting sleep. In a hyper-stimulated age, its scent is one of the simplest, loveliest ways to signal the body that it's safe to rest.

A gentle note: lovely and safe in culinary and aromatic amounts. Concentrated lavender essential oil should not be taken internally, and strong medicinal use is best discussed with a practitioner in pregnancy. A pinch of buds is pure pleasure.

Holy Basil / Tulsi

Ocimum sanctum

Revered in India as “the queen of herbs” and planted by the doorway of countless homes – tulsi is the adaptogen of the kitchen apothecary, a herb that helps you weather life’s storms.

ADAPTOGEN

BUFFERS STRESS

STEADIES MOOD & ENERGY

ANTIOXIDANT

An adaptogen is a plant that helps the body adapt to stress – steadying the system rather than stimulating or sedating it. Tulsi is among the most cherished: sipped daily, it’s traditionally used to calm a frazzled mind, support balanced energy and mood, and build resilience over weeks and months. Its gifts are quiet and cumulative, the way adaptogens always work – less a quick fix than a steady hand on the shoulder.

Ways to use it daily

STEEP A daily cup of tulsi tea, fresh or dried – especially through demanding, stressful seasons.

BLEND Into calming evening blends with lemon balm or chamomile.

GROW A pot by the door or on the sill, in the traditional way, for fresh leaves to hand.

MODERN NOTE · STRESS & RESILIENCE

Tulsi is one of the most studied adaptogens, explored for buffering cortisol and supporting a steady, resilient response to stress. In biohacking circles it’s a gentle daily ally for the nervous system – a calm centre held over time.

A gentle note: a treasured daily tonic for most. As tulsi may gently support blood-sugar balance and has traditional links to fertility, those on diabetic medication, trying to conceive, or pregnant should check with a practitioner before strong daily use.

Onion in the socks

For fevers, flu, coughs & restless nights

Of all the old remedies, this is the one that makes people smile — and then, the first time they try it on a feverish child who finally sleeps, stops smiling and starts believing. A simple slice of onion, tucked against the soles of the feet overnight.

SOOTHES FEVERS

EASES FLU & COUGHS

COMFORTING

GENTLE & CHILD-FRIENDLY

Onions are rich in the same sulphur compounds and quiet antimicrobial gifts as their cousin garlic. Traditional wisdom holds that, pressed against the feet — where reflexology maps connections to the whole body, and where the skin is thin and willing — an onion draws out heat and impurities through the night and lends its soothing compounds while you rest. Whether it works through the skin or simply through warmth, comfort and a good night's sleep, generations have sworn by the morning-after difference.

HOW TO DO IT

Cut a fresh onion into thick, flat slices. Press a slice against the sole of each foot, then pull a snug (ideally cotton) sock over the top to hold it in place. Tuck in for the night and let it work while you sleep. In the morning, discard the onion — never eat it — and wash the feet. Repeat as many nights as comfort calls for.

It pairs beautifully with the rest of the apothecary on a sick day: a thyme-and-honey tea for the cough, a ginger brew for warmth, a bowl of *Steady's* herb-healing chicken soup, and onion socks at bedtime. Old remedies, layered with love.

A gentle note: this is a comforting traditional practice, not a cure — a real fever, especially in a baby or young child, or any fever that climbs high, persists, or comes with stiffness, rash or breathing trouble, always needs a doctor. Use onion socks alongside proper care and good sense, never instead of it.

Infused Honey

Where the apothecary meets the honey pot

Honey is medicine in its own right — and a perfect keeper of other remedies. Steep the right herbs in it and you have a jar of comfort that lives in the cupboard, ready for the first scratchy throat of the season.

CHOOSE YOUR HONEY WELL

Reach for **raw, unprocessed honey in glass** — never the cheap, heat-treated kind in plastic squeeze bottles. Raw honey keeps its enzymes, antioxidants and gentle antimicrobial gifts alive; processing and heat destroy them, leaving little more than sugar. Good honey is a living food — treat it like one.

How to make it

The method is the same for any herb, and beautifully simple. No heat — that's the whole point. Just time.

RATIO Fill a clean glass jar about **one-quarter to one-third** with your herb, then pour over raw honey to cover it completely — leaving a little room at the top. Roughly one part herb to three parts honey.

PREPARE **Crush or chop** first to release the goodness: crush garlic cloves (this forms the active allicin), bruise thyme sprigs, slice or grate ginger thinly. More surface area, more medicine drawn into the honey.

SUBMERGE Stir well so everything sits *under* the honey — anything poking out can spoil. Seal the jar.

WAIT Leave somewhere cool and dark for **at least 1–2 weeks** (3–4 is better), turning the jar daily. The honey slowly draws the herb's goodness into itself and turns fragrant and active.

KEEP Strain if you like, or leave the herbs in. It keeps for many months in the cupboard — only growing more infused with time.

A gentle note: always use clean, dry spoons, and keep everything submerged. Garlic-in-honey is a raw, low-acid ferment — store it cool, and if it ever smells truly off (rather than pleasantly tangy) or fizzes hard, simply let it go. Never give honey to a baby under one year old.

Three honeys to keep

Same simple method, three different gifts – plus one mighty blend for the depths of winter.

GARLIC Crushed garlic cloves submerged in raw honey – the great immune-and-throat tonic. Crushing forms the active allicin; over a couple of weeks it mellows into something soft and gold. A clove-and-a-spoonful at the first sign of a cold.

THYME Bruised fresh thyme sprigs steeped in honey – the cough and sore-throat honey, marrying thyme's chest-soothing oils with honey's coating calm. A spoon straight, or stirred into warm (not hot) water.

GINGER Sliced or grated fresh ginger in honey – warming and settling, for queasy tummies, cold mornings and sluggish digestion. Wonderful stirred into tea.

THE MIGHTY BLEND · ALL FOUR TOGETHER

For a true winter powerhouse, infuse them as one: *raw honey with crushed garlic, bruised thyme, sliced ginger and a little fresh or dried turmeric*. Immune-rallying garlic, chest-soothing thyme, warming ginger and anti-inflammatory turmeric, all held in honey's soothing gold – a single spoonful that draws on the whole apothecary at once. A teaspoon at the first sign of a sniffle, or daily through the cold months.

HOW TO TAKE IT

A teaspoon straight from the spoon, melted into warm water or tea (never boiling – it would undo the raw honey), or drizzled over yoghurt. With the garlic honey, eat the mellowed clove too – that's where much of the goodness sits.

FOR THE LITTLE ONES

Herbs for fussy eaters

Children are famously picky – and so often, without anyone meaning it, their plates end up missing the very nutrients growing bodies need most. Herbs are a quiet, brilliant way to close that gap, no battle required.

The secret is simple: you don't announce them. You *hide them in plain sight*, woven into the foods children already love, so the nourishment arrives without negotiation. A few playful ways in:

BLEND IN A handful of spinach, basil or parsley vanishes into a fruit smoothie – bright green “monster juice” or “fairy potion” that’s suddenly fun to drink.

STIR THROUGH Finely chopped herbs disappear into tomato pasta sauce, meatballs, bolognese and soups – the flavours they already adore, quietly upgraded.

SWEETEN GENTLY Cinnamon on apple slices, in porridge or stirred through yoghurt – a warming spice that feels like a treat and steadies blood sugar at once.

DIP & GROW A herby yoghurt dip with sticks of veg, or letting them grow their own pot of basil – children eat what they help make, every time.

START AS YOU MEAN TO GO ON

A child raised on real, herb-rich flavours from the very beginning doesn't learn to expect bland or sugary food – their palate simply grows up wide, adventurous and well-nourished. The earlier you begin, the easier every meal that follows.

How I fed my daughter

When my daughter was a baby, I never reached for the store-bought pouches — those sugary purees sealed in plastic, processed to sit on a shelf for a year. It never sat right with me to make a child's very first taste of food something so lifeless.

Instead, I cooked. Real, powerful food — vegetables, good broths, gentle proteins — and I loaded it with herbs, then blended it soft. From her very first spoonfuls she had **turmeric, sage, basil, cinnamon** and more, woven right into the food. Not as an experiment — as the most natural thing in the world.

In ten years, she has not been sick a single time. Let that sink in.

I share this not as a promise — every child and every body is different, and no food is a guarantee — but as something worth pausing over. A body built from the start on living, herb-rich, nutrient-dense food, rather than sugar and plastic, is a body given the strongest possible foundation. Those early flavours also shaped her palate for life: she grew up genuinely loving real food, herbs and all.

If you have a little one just beginning, or one on the way, consider it the most beautiful place of all to start your kitchen apothecary. The first foods we give become the blueprint a body builds on — so let them be alive, real, and full of green.

— Laura

A gentle note: always introduce new foods one at a time and age-appropriately, watching for any allergies, and check with your paediatrician or health visitor about what suits your child — and remember, never honey before age one. Culinary amounts of gentle herbs in real food are a wonderful start.



ONE LAST THING

Begin with one

You don't need to use all of these. Choose one herb that called to you — the ginger for your mornings, the chamomile for your evenings, the turmeric for your eggs — and simply begin. Let it become a habit before you reach for the next. This is a lifelong, unhurried friendship with your kitchen, not a checklist.

Small amounts, woven through ordinary days. That's the whole secret — and it's been waiting in your cupboard all along.

With care,

Laura

FOUNDER, BETTER OUT CO.

This guide is for general education and gentle inspiration only, and isn't medical advice for your individual situation. Herbs are food, but they are also active — concentrated teas, extracts and supplements can be more potent than culinary amounts and may interact with medications. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, give herbs to children, take prescription medicine (especially blood thinners), or live with a health condition, please check with a qualified practitioner before using any herb medicinally. Nothing here replaces the care of your doctor.