

GARDEN SPOT

Spice up your recipes with herbs



MARTY FIGLEY

Herbs are becoming more and more popular, so this book nook column is devoted to these plants and using them in the kitchen.

"Lavender: Fragrance of Provence," Hans Silvester, text by Christiane Meunier (Abrams, \$29.95), traces the

history of the cultivation of lavender, which grew wild on the sunny slopes of the region from earliest times. The book details its importance as an essence, when it was first used to scent bath water and laundry, and used medicinally.

In the 1920s lavender, *Lavandula angustifolia*, was crossed with another plant in the same Labiatae family, "spike," *Lavandula latifolia*. This superior hybrid, called Lavandin, yields 10 times that of lavender. From that time on the cultivation and business of lavender was off and running.

All aspects of the business are covered from planting, agricultural management, harvesting, distilling and marketing.

Silvester's full-page color photographs are a story in themselves, showing the fields through the seasons, from the austere winter scenes to the lush fields of summer. Beautiful.

"The Pioneer Lady's Hearty Winter Cookbook," Jane Watson Hopping (Villard, \$25), is the fifth in a series of books that evoke a feeling of nostalgia. The title continues, "A treasury of old-fashioned food and fond memories," and it truly is. We meet the family who generates warmth and the love of food, hearth and home and some of the ways they spent a cold winter. Hymns, poems, cooking traditions for holidays as well as old-fashioned and tasty recipes fill the pages; for instance, the Honey Mayonnaise dressing of mayo, honey and nutmeg makes the Celeriac, Carrot and Apple salad sparkle.

"Herb Mixtures & Spicy Blends," introduction by Maggie Oster (Storey, \$12.95), contains recipes for mixes suitable for dishes from appetizers to desserts. Herb growers and buyers across North America share their special blends to enhance the flavor of food with herbs. The recipes are simple, quick and easy, a bonus for busy people. The idea is to mix the ingredients so that they will be ready when needed.

Specific recipes follow each basic herb blend.

"The New Kitchen Garden," Anna Favord (Dorling Kindersley, \$29.95), gives a different slant for growing vegetables, fruits and herbs in a yard of any size.

Favord shows how to make the most of gardening space all the while designing the garden in a pleasing style, from formal to rustic. Growing and harvesting information about not only common, but plants not necessarily well known, will guide to success with excellent photographs for emphasis. The author discusses soils, crop rotation, sowing, pests and diseases, staking and all things necessary in a garden.

The color drawings for the plans are easy to follow with exact measurements and plant placement. The herb section is quite thorough. We must remember this is a book by an English author so some of our growing conditions may not be the same.

Seven small books published by Storey Communications (written by Ruth Bass, \$9.95 each) feature a particular food.

The first four are "Peppers Love Herbs," "Tomatoes Love Herbs," "Onions Love Herbs" and "Mushrooms Love

Herbs." The others are "Herbal Soups," "Herbal Breads" and "Herbal Salads." Each book follows the same format and is gently illustrated by Mary Rich. An introduction gives general instructions.

All encourage the use of fresh herbs and ingredients and the recipes are innovative. How about Peter Piper's Dill Peppers, or Herbed Tomatoes with Avocados, Onion Rice with Tarragon, or a Savory Mushroom Sauce? The soup book recipes are mouth-watering. Here you'll find, among others, Apple Onion Soup. In the bread book, Zucchini Cornbread and the Mustard Spread are quite tasty. I can't wait to try Jewel Coleslaw using purple cabbage from the salads book, and the Fruited Chicken Salad is quite delicious.

Thirty recipes per book make these attractive price-wise and would be an excellent gift, along with an herb plant, a bottle of herb vinegar or perhaps a spice grinder, set of tea towels or other cooking "goodie."

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