A Spoonful
Of Bitters

"No one dies of a spoonful of sugar, but they can die from a lifetime of overconsumption of refined carbohydrates."
(Matthew Wood 2004; 73-74)

A SPOONFUL OF BITTERS MAKES THE SUGAR GO DOWN*, THE SUGAR GO DOWN*,
OH, THE SUGAR GO DOWN*...
A SPOONFUL OF BITTERS MAKES THE SUGAR GO DOWN*, THE SUGAR GO DOWN*,
IN A MOST RESOURCEFUL WAY!

*meaning: the blood sugar levels...
[subsequent chorus may substitute the phrase:
"makes the colon move down..." or "makes the stressors go down..."]

Different Characteristics

3 Basic Bitters:
Simple
Aromatic
Acidic/Acrid

Other Qualities of Bitters:
Tonic Cooling or Warming
Digestive Astringent
Laxitive Demulcent
Cathartic Anti-inflammatory
Diuretic Relaxing

Information compiled by Carol Jacobs, Herbalus Educatorus, gramherb@hotmail.com
WHERE TO FIND BITTERS & WHAT'S IN THEM:

AVENA BOTANICALS
(www.avenabotanicals.com) Ingredients:
Gentian root, Burdock root, Blessed thistle leaves,
Licorice root, Ginger root

BITTERCUBE
(http://bittercube.com/products) 1 example of
several: ORANGE - double macerated orange
peels; aromas of caramelized orange, toasted
coriander & cardamom...
This is locally made: Milwaukee, WI

HERB PHARM
(www.herb-pharm.com) Ingredients: Angelica
root, Hyssop leaf and flower, Juniper berry,
Cardamom, Ginger, Gentian, Anise seed,
Cinnamon, Myrrh, Peppermint EO

GALLEXIER by FLORADIX
(found many places) non-alcoholic; Ingredients:
Artichoke Leaves, Dandelion Herb, Gentian Root,
Turmeric Root, Yarrow, Fennel, Chamomile
Flowers, Blessed Thistle, Buckbean Leaves & other
Aromatic Herbs, plus fructose

MARIA TREBEN'S AUTHENTIC
SWEDISH BITTERS
(www.swedishbitters.com) Ingredients: Aloe,
Myrrh, Saffron, Senna Leaves, Camphor, Rhubarb
Roots, Zedoary Roots, Manna, Theriac Venezian,
Carline Thistle Roots and Angelica Roots

URBAN MOONSHINE
(www.urbanmoonshine.com) Ingredients:
Dandelion Root and Leaf, Angelica Root, Burdock
Root, Yellow Dock Root, Gentian Root, Orange
Peel, Fennel Seed, Ginger Root, Gum Arabic and
Organic EO

WISE WOMAN HERBAL
(www.wisewomanherbals.com) Ingredients:
Dandelion root, Gentian, Elecampane, Fennel,
Ginger, Turmeric, Slippery elm, Fennel EO

"Bitter to the taste is
sweet to the tummy"

DIY: SIMPLE RHUBARB BITTERS*
3/4 lb. fresh rhubarb
1 crushed cinnamon stick
zest from 1 navel orange
zest from 1/2 ruby grapefruit
12 oz. high proof alcohol
6 oz. water
1 oz. maple syrup or ?
-Chop rhubarb
-Carefully peel & chop orange & grapefruit
(don’t include white pith)
-Combine all in a glass jar & let it work its magic
in a cool, dark place for 24 weeks
-Strain & enjoy; may be used as is, or in a
cocktail or mocktail mix

(*there are many variations of this — some
recipes may use lemon & lime or include such
herbs as coriander, juniper, fennel, lavender,
chamomile &/or angelica)

DIY: JUNIPER TONIC
(non-alcoholic)
1 cup superfine sugar or ?
1 cup water
2 ounces juniper berries, crushed lightly in a
coffee grinder

4 ounces fresh lime juice
8 ounces tonic water
Thinly sliced lime rounds, for garnish

1. In a small saucepan, combine sugar, water
and juniper berries. Simmer gently for 20
minutes. Steep 4 hours. Strain.
2. In a cocktail shaker, combine lime juice and
juniper syrup. Pour into ice-filled highball
glasses. Top with tonic water. Serve, garnished
with lime slices

[this recipe is easily turned into a “fizzie”:
do not cook, line bottom of qt jar with ¼” inch
honey, add juniper, lime juice & slices, plus ¼”
cup starter culture. Fill with UNchlorinated
water, cap tightly, set out 24 – 72 hours, only,
util bubbly. Use right away! Make more when
needed, 2-3 days in advance. May add other
bitters before serving, if desired - see above...]

Celebrate the Bitters

Bitters make life worth waking up for!
(& helpful with stress management...)

The Goldilocks Stress Principle:

Too Muchness = damages
Not Enough = weakens & stagnates
Just Right = challenge, change & resiliency

BITTER ARE THE LESSONS IN LIFE...
AND THE PLANTS that teach our body how to go with the flow, adjust,
adapt & evolve with the changes in our environment (especially local!)

PLANTS COMMUNICATE CHEMICALLY:

Clues include 6 or 7 or more Basic Tastes (how do YOU interpret them?)

- Sweet
- Pungent/Spicy
- Sour
- Savory
- Salty
- Astringent

Bitter = the most diverse with 20 subdivisions & over 100 unrelated chemicals...

WHAT DO BITTERS DO FOR US?

- general health & well being
- healthy eating habits (less snacking)
- stimulation of normal body processes (through nerve & hormone responses)
- optimal gut function & natural detox
- nutrient absorption (mineral rich!)

THEY PROMOTE:

- metabolic function (incl. blood sugar balance)
- cardiovascular performance
- internal organ tone & skin health
- healthy molecular electrical charges
- grounds us to the present moment (& reconnects the brain & gut)

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COMMONLY USED BITTERS

Barberry
Boneset
Burdock
Chamomile
Dandelion

Gentian
Goldenseal
Mugwort
Wormwood
Yellowdock
Yarrow

Many wild greens used as food are very mild and need no special treatment, but the strong ones may taste better cooked by the following method:

1. Put greens in a pot and cover with water.
2. Bring to a boil, turn down heat and gently simmer for a few minutes.
3. Strain off liquid and cover with fresh water.
4. Bring to a boil again, simmer a few more minutes.
5. Pour off liquid and taste the greens.
6. If the greens are still too bitter to serve, repeat the steps again until palatable.

Most strong, bitter foods need only 2 or 3 changes of water to be palatable.

The downside to this method is that the water soluble vitamins go down the drain with the water, but there are still plenty of minerals, that won't be lost, so it's worth the compromise.

Dandelion greens can be eaten any time of the year with this method! Other common bitter wild greens include Wintercress & Garlic Mustard.

~ excerpted from Rose Barlow's writings: rosesprodigalgarden.org/

DANDELION COFFEE

Grind fresh, washed roots, rinse again; spread on cookie sheet & bake @250° until roasted, stirring frequently & watching carefully so they don't burn!!! Smells good when close to being done. Cool & store in glass jar with lid to preserve flavor & aroma.

Use 1 heaping TBLS per cup of water; simmer gently for 15-20 minutes; serve plain or with honey, maple syrup, cream or coconut milk

YELLOWDOCK SYRUP

8 oz minced root
1 qt water
raw honey

*Simmer (low heat) yellowdock rt & water until reduced in volume (1 to 2 pints liquid left); strain & cool somewhat; add an equal amount of honey & mix well. Take 1 to 2 TBLS with meals, 1 or 2 times daily. Store in refrigerator. OK for pregnancy.
APPLE BITTERS

Organic apple peels
(from up to 6 apples)
Zest of organic lemon
1 to 2 cinnamon sticks
¾ to ½ tsp allspice berries
¾ to ¼ tsp coriander seeds
¼ to ½ tsp cassia chips
¼ to ½ tsp cinchona bark
2 to 4 whole cloves
1 to 2 cups high proof bourbon
(or whatever is on hand...)

(use small amounts for a small jar,
Use larger amounts for a larger jar...)

Directions: place c/s (cut & sifted) herbs in jar, pour bourbon over them
– add more if needed to cover herbs.
Close up with a tight fitting lid.

Store in dark cupboard for two weeks,
shaking every day. Strain.

Syrup: simmer strained herbs in 1 cup
water over medium heat for 10 min;
(optional: some recipes let this mixture
sit one week in a covered jar)
Strain again, add 1 to 2 cups sugar or honey
& mix thoroughly. Use as is or add by the
spoonful to bitters (above) or to mixed
drinks.

PEAR BITTERS

3 pears, cored & chopped
Zest of a lemon
1 cinnamon stick
¼ tsp allspice berries
¼ tsp black peppercorns
¼ tsp cinchona bark
¼ tsp calamus root
4 whole cloves
1 vanilla bean, cut & scraped
3-inches of fresh ginger, chopped
2 cups or more high proof vodka

Directions: similar to Apple Bitters
Syrup: see Apple Bitters recipe

INTERESTING BOOKS:

Wild Medicine Solution
– Guido Mase

A Spirited History of a Classic Cure All
– Brad Thomas

The Drunken Botanist
– Amy Stewart
Winter

A VALENTINE BITTER

2 tbsp dried orange peel
zest of 1 orange
1/4 cup sour cherries (or wild from freezer?)
2 cinnamon sticks
1 vanilla bean- split & seeds scraped
1/4 tsp cloves
1/4 cup quassia chips
2 juniper berries
1/8 tsp cocoa nibs (or more)
pinch of black walnut leaf
1/2 tsp cinchona (quinine)
1/4 tsp wild cherry bark
1/4 tsp orris root
(Optional: 5 cracked cardomon pods???)

2 cups or so of the rye
(add more if needed to cover herbs)

Cover the jar and store at room temperature
for two weeks.

shake the jar 1-3 times a day for two weeks

Later, a Rich Syrup:
(made with the dregs after straining)
2 cups turbinado sugar
1 1/2 cups water

Simmer the solids strained from the rye & herb soak
for 10 minutes, add sugar & water, stir & just bring
back to a boil, take off heat & let cool, then strain.
It should be somewhat thick. It should last 1 month
in the refrigerator. Optional: add 2 or more TBLS to
the bitters formula...

Notes: