



Winter Holiday Hideout

Create simple spa pleasures with herbs and spices

by Linda Bertaut

Winter is the time to create a warm and cozy environment—a den of quiet solitude in your spa where clients can experience a hibernation getaway. It's a time for woody and spicy aromas, hot tea made with root herbs and honey, and sitting in front of a crackling fire, warming yourself inside and out.

This is the season of slowing down, going beneath the surface and deep within your soul to find inspiration and answers. It's a time to reflect and restore, so you can birth new inspiration in the spring.

So add an extra sheepskin liner to the facial bed, dim the lights, play meditative music, and create a sanctuary. Call it the Holiday Hideout, Winter Escape, or Delightful Den experience. And most of all, let the scent of aromatic herbs ground your clients and take them to a safe inner haven.

Following are some warm winter scents and flavors you can bring to your clients as enticing homemade extras in your waiting room before or after a treatment, or by sharing a recipe as a winter wellness tip in your spa's newsletter and other marketing materials.

Aromatic Honey

Honey has antibacterial properties, helps to prevent infection and inflammation, and soothes sore throats. By combining honey with aromatherapy in the form of scented herbs or fruits, you can create different herbal honeys and do many wonderful things with them in the wintertime.

For optimal immune system support, purchase raw honey (honey that comes straight from the hive, without the heating and filtering that is used to make commercial brands of honey look smoother) from a local beekeeper or farmer's market. Make sure it is fresh and not starting to crystallize. Experiment with adding any edible herb for aroma or flavor. Pureed fruit, such as pears or raspberries, can be mixed with honey in a 1:3 ratio to create a honey fruit drizzle you can spread on toast and other baked goods, or use to sweeten hot beverages—providing a selection of honey in a variety of flavors is an easy way to add a unique touch to commercial teas you provide in your spa.

Herbal Chai Tea

¼ cup mullein leaf
2 cinnamon sticks
6–8 rosehip berries
4–6 cloves
2–3 cardamom pods
1 teaspoon stevia leaf

Place all ingredients at the bottom of a 4–8 cup French press. Fill with hot water and steep for 5 minutes. Press, pour, and enjoy! Add almond milk or rice milk if desired.



Image courtesy of Bertaut Beauty ▶





Image courtesy of Bertaut Beauty



Ginger Honey

This is a very simple and enjoyable herbal honey. It is a winter staple and can be used in many other recipes. Purchase organic, fresh ginger root at your local produce store. Peel off the skin and slice to approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in thickness. Add these fresh ginger slices to your honey in a ratio of 1 cup of ginger slices for every 2 cups of honey. The honey will absorb the flavor and the benefits of the ginger after sitting for 24–48 hours, and the ginger slices can then be strained out if desired. Use ginger honey in tea, hot lemon water, or any other recipe where honey is used.

Store your aromatic herbal honey in decorative jars with a seasonal-themed business label. These can also make a memorable addition to any gift basket. (Note that if you plan to sell any food product in your spa's retail area, you should first make sure you are in compliance with any relevant local regulations.)

Herbal Teas

Root herbs, honey, and spices are all used in tea to warm the body, boost the immune system, and support the lungs and respiratory system. You may have considered creating an herb and spice tea bar for client use, but don't forget that all of these teas can be used equally well to create a wonderful aroma in your treatment room. Simply blend and diffuse aromatic herbs in your room by steeping them in hot water. The different aromas can clear negative energy, create a reflective mood, or inspire whatever kind of energy you wish to add to your atmosphere.

Spa Baking with Lavender

Why not welcome your clients with a scented home-baked cookie while they complete their intake forms?

Lavender is one of the most popular spa scents, but many do not realize that this beautifully scented herb is edible and can easily be added to many recipes. It is especially good in banana bread, cookies, honey, and tea. Grind it first, using a clean coffee grinder that has not been used for coffee. Lavender is calming and sedative, and relieves anxiety, depression, and exhaustion. It also aids digestion and is a natural antiseptic and antibiotic.



Image courtesy of Bertaut Beauty

Wonderful Winter Herbs and Spices

Try these plants as homemade teas, steeped in hot water for the time indicated, or as aromatic enhancements for your spa.

Cardamom pods

Stimulates digestion; reduces gas; improves circulation to the lungs; considered an aphrodisiac. Steep pods 2–5 minutes.

Cinnamon sticks

Reduces blood sugar level after meals; boosts memory; helps lower LDL cholesterol; some have found that half a teaspoon taken daily with one tablespoon of honey can reduce the pain of arthritis. Boil for 3–4 minutes, or steep for 15 minutes.

Ginger root

Supports the circulatory system; helps provide relief for allergies, arthritis, asthma, colds, and nausea. Steep root 15–20 minutes.

Licorice root

Sweetest of the root herbs; enhances immune system; has flavonoids and phytoestrogens useful for many ailments, including asthma, menopause, sore throat, and viral and fungal infections. Contraindications: pregnancy, high blood pressure, heart disease. Steep root 15–20 minutes.

Mullein leaf

Antispasmodic (calms a cough); astringent; emollient; expectorant. Steep leaf 2–5 minutes.

Peppermint leaf

Aids in digestion; increases bile secretion; calms the stomach; highly nutritive; antifungal; alleviates symptoms of allergies and asthma. Steep leaf 2–5 minutes.

Rose hips

High in vitamin C and bioflavonoids; antioxidant; contains vitamins A and B, essential fatty acids, and lycopene. Steep dried rose hips 10–15 minutes.

Slippery elm bark

Tonic herb; highly nutritive; contact healer, both inside and out. Steep bark 10–15 minutes.

Wild cherry bark

Increases respiration and suppresses the cough reflex; used in the treatment of asthma and bronchitis; improves digestion. Steep bark 15–20 minutes.



Image courtesy of Bertaut Beauty

Inner And Outer Rainbow

Using herbs and spices in treatments, or in the spa environment, has additional benefits for estheticians and clients who are interested in energy work. Humans have a symbiotic relationship with the Earth, and the more we follow nature's cycles, the happier and healthier we will be. To energy workers, the colors in nature's rainbow are the same as the colors of our inner rainbow, the chakra system.

The chakras are energy centers that are each associated with a color, sense, sound, organ, and endocrine gland. Chakras extend their energy around and beyond the body as the aura. This is the energy we experience when we meet someone. A person who is full of color energy is vibrant, whereas someone lacking color energy may seem dull.

Food has both a nutritional and an energy value. Foods that are fresh from the garden have the most life force energy and therefore supply the most vitality to the body; foods that are highly processed diminish vitality. Your environment and what you eat, think, and do has an energy value that directly impacts your health and vitality.

By fueling the chakras with color from nature—fruits, vegetables, herbs, spices, and more—we become healthier on all levels. Adding nature's gifts to your winter spa environment doesn't just add color, flavor, and scent to your surroundings, it will help you on your way to sweetening the lives of others. §

Author, esthetician, and Reiki Master Linda Bertaut specializes in bringing inner beauty to the surface and inspiring others to do the same. She founded Bertaut Beauty to help professionals add wellness therapies to their menu of services. Join Linda Bertaut at her blog www.chakralicious.com for more recipes to feed your inner rainbow. She can be contacted at linda@bertautbeauty.com or 626-405-0424.