

298. *ROSMARINUS OFFICINALIS* L. (LAMIACEAE) — Rosemary

Rosemary is grown primarily for the leaves, used ground or whole as a condiment in lamb dishes, stews, or soups. Oil of rosemary, because of its persistent, woody odor, is used in wine, cosmetics, soaps, perfumes, deodorants, and hair tonics. A perennial to 2 m tall, this evergreen blue-flowered shrub is native to the Mediterranean. As a camphoraceous spice, it is used with chicken, duck, fish, lamb, pork, rabbit, shellfish, soups, stews, and veal. Among vegetables, it is used with eggplant or potatoes, or zucchini, but sparingly. Some cultivars are adaptable to bonsai and hanging gardens. Rosemary is found in herbal baths, herb biscuits, bouquets, potpourris, weddings, and even funerals as a symbol of fidelity. It is a cordial, reputed to stimulate the blood, eyes, hair, and memory. Placing a pan of water with crushed rosemary and juniper on the radiator can improve the aroma of the place. The French are said to burn the mixture of rosemary and juniper berries. The oil is used in cosmetics, deodorants, liniments, lotions, soaps, and tonics, as well as liqueurs and medicinals.²⁹ Rosemary lotion is said to stimulate hair growth and prevent baldness. Used as an insecticide in Latin America. It is a fragrant moth repellent. The oil is bactericidal, fungicidal, and protistocidal. Rosemary makes good bee forage. Rosemary extracts are antioxidant, perhaps due to carnosic- and labiatic-acid.²⁹ Inatani et al.²⁸⁰ indicate a strong antioxidant activity for an odorless and tasteless lactone known as rosmanol.

The leaf, in distilled water, is said to alleviate cancer, and the seed, powdered for an ointment, to alleviate indurations. The essential oil in wine is said to help cancers.⁴ In Central America, rosemary figures in a concoction (with “*Artemisia maritima*”?) for fertility control, which may produce temporary sterility or possibly interfere with the implantation of the ovum or affect menstruation (*Artemisia* contains thujone).³ Rosemary oil is used, perhaps dangerously, for headache and tardy menstruation.¹ Rosemary tea is said to cause temporary sterility in females, but I would not count on it. Rosemary, steeped in vodka, makes a satisfactory liqueur, called Hungary Water. I would count on it, having made it. It was once massaged onto gout of the hands and legs. Fresh leaves are cooked in wine to poultice on hemorrhoids.⁴² As a massage ointment, rosemary spirits are said to prevent premature baldness. A cold mixture of dried rosemary mixed with borax is said to be a good dandruff shampoo. Mixed with lavender (10 g) in alcohol, 20 g rosemary is used for alopecia, bruises, and sprains.⁴² “A tisane of Rosemary will cure a nervous headache and has a beneficial effect on the brain. Its constant use will greatly improve a bad memory.”² The tea is also good for colds, colic, dyspepsia, headcolds, and nervous tension.²⁹ Yucatan natives use rosemary for dysmenorrhea, dyspepsia, neuralgia, and rheumatism.⁴² Cubans use it for fever, hoarseness, and insomnia. Rubbed together with coltsfoot leaves, rosemary is smoked to treat asthma, lungs, and throat conditions. Brazilians douche with the decoction for leucorrhea, and take the decoction for asthma, bronchitis, cough, and hysteria. Medicinally, rosemary is variously considered aperient, astringent, carminative, diaphoretic, dissolvent, diuretic, ebolic, emmenagogue, febrifuge, nervine, stimulant, stomachic, and tonic. In Latin America it is used also for cardosis, diarrhea, edema, nausea, nephrosis, neuralgia, polyuria, rheumatism, stomatosis, toothache, and vertigo.⁴²

Per 100 g, the dried herb is reported to contain 331 calories, 9.3 g H₂O, 4.9 g protein, 15.2 g fat, 64.1 g total carbohydrate, 17.6 g fiber, 6.5 g ash, 1280 mg Ca, 70 mg P, 29.2 mg Fe, 220 mg Mg, 50 mg Na, 955 mg K, 3.2 mg Zn, 3128 IU vitamin A, 0.5 mg thiamine, 1.0 mg niacin, and 61 mg ascorbic acid.²¹ Plant tops contain up to 3.9% ursolic acid. The diuretic, glycollic acid, has also been isolated from the tops.³ Tannins are also reported. Oil contains alpha – thujene and alpha-pinene (12.5%), camphene (4.0%), beta-pinene (1.3%), delta-3-carene and myrcene (1.3%), alpha-terpinene (0.4%), limonene (3.0%), 1,8-cineole (47.0%), gamma-terpinene (0.4%), *p*-cymene (1.8%), copanene (0.6%), camphor and linalool (10.7%), bornyl acetate (0.9%), terpinen-4-ol (1.3%), caryophyllene (4.9%), delta-