



# **Ancestral Foods Lessons:**

## **Mint**

**ALIMENTOS ANCESTRALES: YERBA BUENA**

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LA SEMILLA FOOD CENTER

2022

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Rubi is a lifelong student of elders, poets, and writers in both the US and Mexico, and holds a graduate degree in community health from UC Berkeley. She serves as Director of Storytelling and Development at La Semilla Food Center in Anthony, NM. Through that role, she spearheads efforts to uplift the foodways wisdom of people of the Paso del Norte region and increase connection with the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem. She worked with La Semilla's Policy Director V Quevedo and illustrator/editor Zeke Peña to create the zine *Food, Land, and Us: A Look at the Farm Bill from the Paso del Norte Region*.

Her documentary poetry book, *Inventos Míos*, is inspired by the history of nixtamalization and its current practice in the El Paso region. It received the 2019 Tejas Poetry Book Award from the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies. Her work has been featured in podcasts such *Proof* (from *America's Test Kitchen*), *Toasted Sister*, and *Words on a Wire*.


## BIOGRAFIA DE LA AUTORA

Durante su vida, Rubi ha sido la estudiante de poetas, escritores, maestras y maestros tanto en los Estados Unidos como en México, y tiene un título posgrado en Salud Comunitaria de UC Berkley. Ella es Directora de Narración y Desarrollo en La Semilla Food Center en Anthony, NM. Liderando los esfuerzos para elevar la sabiduría de los hábitos alimenticios de la gente de la región Paso del Norte y aumentar la conexión con el ecosistema del desierto de Chihuahua. Rubi trabajó con la Directora de Política de La Semilla, V Quevedo, y el ilustrador/editor Zeke Peña en la creación de la revista *Comida, Tierra y Nosotros: Un Vistazo al Proyecto de Ley Agrícola desde la Región del Paso del Norte*.

Su libro de poesía documental, *Inventos Míos*, esta inspirado en la historia de la nixtamalización y su practica actual en la región de El Paso. En el 2019, recibió el premio Tejas Poetry Book Award de la Asociación Nacional de los Estudios Chicanas y Chicanos. El trabajo de Rubi ha aparecido en podcasts como *Proof*(de *America's Test Kitchen*), *Toasted Sister* y *Words on a Wire*.

**Get Ready to Explore Mint!**

**Be Safe**

When you see this symbol  that means you are going to work with something hot. Always ask an adult for help when working with hot things. In this lesson, you will work with hot water. Do not drink it fast from the cup. Scoop some up in the spoon and blow on it. Touch it on your lips. If it is too hot, blow on it more.

**Clean up**

When you are done, clean up. Clean the table. Put trash in the garbage can. Put dirty dishes in the sink.

**Listen to your body**

If you get frustrated, take 3 deep breaths. You can ask for help. You can take a break.

**Have fun!**

Plants are fun! You are fun! Stay curious.

**MINT AND ME**

Have you ever tasted mint? Have you ever seen it? Draw or write what you know about mint here. If you do not know mint, draw or write what you want to learn.





## Story and Uses of Mint

There are many minty plants in the world. Two common ones are spearmint and peppermint. People made peppermint by combining spearmint with water mint.

In the past, people in Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome used mint.

Today, we still use mint. We use it fresh and dried. Mint adds flavor to foods. Some people use mint as a remedy.

Mint has vitamin A. Vitamin A keeps our eyes healthy.

Mint helps our digestion and protects our cells from damage. Even smelling mint can help our health.

Many people like how mint tastes. Mint is used to flavor many foods and candy, like candy canes.



## Tasting Tannins

### What are tannins?

Plants make chemicals called tannins. They make tannins to defend themselves against pests.

Plants with tannins taste a little bit bitter. They also taste astringent. Astringent flavor is like an unripe banana. It may make you pucker your lips.

Tannins are good for human health. They protect us against swelling. They may protect us from cancer, too.

Some foods with tannins are tea, coffee, and chocolate. Berries, grapes, and pomegranates also have tannins.

Many teas have tannins. Mint tea has tannins, too. Let's taste tannins!



## TASTING TANNINS

You will taste your tea after steeping it 3 lengths of time.

### You will need:

- Drinking Water
- 1 measuring cup
- 1 ceramic or glass cup with a handle (**NOT** plastic or metal)
- 1 mint tea bag
- 1 teaspoon
- Clock or timer
- 1 Pencil

#### No microwave?

Use hot water from the sink or ask a grown up to heat up water on the stove.

### Directions:

**Step 1.** Measure 1 cup of water. Pour it in the cup.



**Step 2.** Microwave the cup with water for 30 seconds. Use the handle to take the cup out of the microwave.

**Step 3.** Steep your tea bag in the hot water. Use a clock or timer to mark 2 minutes. When 2 minutes pass, use your teaspoon to taste some of the tea.

**Step 4.** Add 3 minutes to the clock or timer and taste it again.

**Step 5.** Then add 5 minutes and taste it.

Each time, look for these flavors:

#### MILD

when something doesn't taste very strong. The tea may taste a lot like water.

#### MINTY

is fresh and cool on the tongue

#### BITTER

makes us pucker our mouth

**Don't worry if you don't taste them! You are just exploring.**



**TASTING LOG**

Put an "X" by any flavors you taste at different steeping times.

Example:

- mild
- a little bit bitter
- minty
- very bitter



First, taste your tea after **2 minutes** of steeping

- mild
- a little bit bitter
- minty
- very bitter



Set a timer for **3 minutes** and taste it again

- mild
- a little bit bitter
- minty
- very bitter

Set a timer for **5 minutes** and taste it again

- mild
- a little bit bitter
- minty
- very bitter

**How did the flavor change over time?**

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# Mint Tea Recipe

Let's make tea! You will need some ingredients and supplies:

- Drinking water
- 1 measuring cup
- 1 ceramic or glass cup with a handle (NOT plastic or foam)
- 1 mint tea bag
- 1/2 teaspoon honey or sugar (optional)

## Instructions:

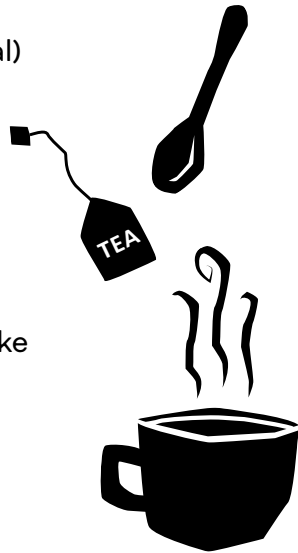
**Step 1.** Measure 1 cup of water. Pour it in the cup.



**Step 2.** Put the cup with water in the microwave. Microwave for 30 seconds. Use the handle to take the cup out of the microwave.

**Step 3.** Steep your tea bag in the hot water for 5 minutes.

**Step 4.** Remove the tea bag. Scoop up a bit of tea in the teaspoon and blow on it. When it is less hot, taste it. You might like your cup of tea just the way it is, with no sweetener. If you want, add half a teaspoon of honey or sugar in your tea.



## Be Safe!

Do not drink hot water too fast. Scoop some up in the spoon and blow on it. Touch it on your lips. If it is too hot, blow on it more.





**AMAZING MINT**

Write or draw your answers to the next 3 questions.

**How do people use mint?**

**Why do plants make tannins?**

**How did the mint tea flavor change over time?**



**Take a Break!**

Then watch Doctor Castro read the story of Tata's Remedies on YouTube (search for "HECHOS Tata's Remedies"). Does your family use remedies like Tata?

