

Ballad
of
Ginger
and
Papaya

Celebrating the herbalists of the Caribbean

Natty Mark Samuels

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Dedication

to **Dr Oku Ampofo**

pioneering herbalist and sculptor
from Ghana

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It is hard deciding where to start,
So let me begin with the elder.
Let's go first to Dominica,
To the use of elderflower.

Going to Dominica,
To meet up with Ras Bobby.
To improve circulation,
He utilises the hawthorn berry.

Voices: Seems like he was destined to heal,
Man of herbs and humility.

Dominica, Dominica,
What a treasure you have.
Guiding you to better health,
Blest by his herbal sat nav.

Now he lives on St. Thomas:
Annual herbal symposium.
He uses elderflower,
To improve the digestive system.

Voices: Grey has colonised his beard:
Knowledge permeates his mind.
Let there be ginger and papaya.

Leaving Dominica,
South-west to one of the three.
Time to visit Curacao,
Of the islands ABC.

To visit Dinah Veeris,
Of Den Paradera.
Who uses the Silk Cotton tree,
When she battles our insomnia.

Voices: To be in her presence,
A recipient of her laughter.

She went to Aruba,
On to Bonaire too.
Before they passed on,
She spoke with the ones that knew.

It cannot be forgotten,
The knowledge of the ancestor.
The crucial passing on,
From grandparent to the mother.

Voices: She's a bringer of the calabash,
When counteracting stomach ache.
Let there be ginger and papaya.

Northward from Curacao,
Across the sea to Jamaica.
To make the rendezvous,
With Kukuwa Abba.

To the island of Nanny Maroon,
Said to be a great herbalist.
What are you picking today, Kukuwa?
What is on your shopping list?

Voices: She knows the possibilities of plants,
Yearning to pass the potential on.

To stop our vomiting,
She will use use pepper elder.
And there's the option of soursop,
At the diagnosis of cancer.

From the "land of wood and water,"
Resident there in Portland.
She's a caretaker of Creation,
Carrying reverence in her hand.

Voices: She's a custodian,
Taking care of the Shrine of Healing.
Let there be ginger and papaya.

We go south now, fellow traveller,
From the island of Jamaica.
To meet the one called Karen Rose,
A native of Guyana.

Although a Brooklyn resident,
She's a retainer of the legacy.
From Ghana, India and China,
Diffused through her apothecary.

Voices: She introduces the city,
To the healing from the country.

From a village in Guyana,
To a city in America.
She brings teaching from the East,
The lessons of Ayurveda.

A herbalist in the city,
Using basil for depression.
The application of calendula,
To soften the complexion.

Voices: Encouraging people to grow their own,
The healing on their doorsteps.
Let there be ginger and papaya.

Time to meet Priest Kailash,
Going north-east of Guyana.
Up into the hills,
On the island of St. Lucia.

Listen to him talk of Joseph's Coat
With which to cleanse your blood.
He will tell you of root and stem,
Of the flower and the bud.

Voices: You may receive a massage:
Of castor oil, turmeric and other good things.

In his rejuvenation cocoon,
Days of learning and zest.
In the time to leave,
The spirit is back at it's best.

He comes to eradicate,
Using lemongrass and green banana.
Pineapple and sorrel,
Breadfruit and moringa.

Voices: Moments of praise to God,
For all that he has given us.
Let there be ginger and papaya.

Our last stop is in Grenada,
Where Patrick Delves awaits us.
He'll be our first destination.
When alighting from the bus.

Hear him talk of lemon or lime,
With a sprinkle of cayenne pepper.
Bring the morning tonic,
Bring the great awakener.

Voices: On the island called "Spice,"
He combines herbs and music for healing.

On the same island,
Where Marryshow grew roses.
They come to consult Patrick,
Herbal suggestions and appropriate doses.

In the time of detox,
Lettuce, apple and pepper.
A time to juice;
With pumpkin, lettuce and cucumber.

Voices: So let his enthusiasm,
Infect and inspire us all.
Let there be ginger and papaya.

Sources

Da Vibes: The Caribbean's News Portal

YouTube

Black Enterprise

American Herbalists Guild