

CINDY

CITRUS

part two

**Celebrating the members of the Rutaceae Family
The Citrus Fruits**

Italy, Australia, Spain, Algeria, Israel, South Africa, Iran, China and Peru.

Natty Mark Samuels

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DEDICATION

TO

MARCO FREGNAN

FOR THE

ONLINE PUBLICATION

OF

AFRICAN GARDEN

INCLUDING

CINDY CITRUS

THE BLESSINGS OF CALABRIA

Knowing that everyone wants to stop cancer and heart disease, Cindy Citrus thinks it makes sense to partake of what will stop inflammation: so let there be citron. One of the original ancestors of the Rutaceae family, it truly deserves its botanical name: *Citrus medica*.

She can think of no better way of eating this fruit, than Citron Fruit Rice. Lovely to watch the video of the woman making it; ingredients such as peanuts, black pepper, curry leaves, tumeric powder, green chilli and coriander leaves: further embellished with the juice of the citron.

To many people, citron means Calabria. At the meeting of air; cold from the mountains, warm from the sea, there is generated a perfect climate for citron cultivation. Representatives of the global Orthodox Jewish communities, travel annually to this region in Italy, to choose this fruit and have it transported back, as it is an essential item in Sukkot, the Feast of the Tabernacles. On a video-watching morning, she saw the keeping of tradition, the care of selection: the symbiotic relationship between these international Hasidic congregations and the farmers of Calabria.

As part of the Calabrian part of her Citrus Pilgrimage, she must visit the Citron Museum, in Santa Maria del Cedro, one of the major citrus towns in the region; cedro is the Italian for citron. It will be her first visit to a museum dedicated to it. How many others are there? And while in Calabria, she must sample the regional goodies. Not one for liquers, but she'll have to take a sip or two of the citron version; there's also a candy sweet made from the fruit. One she's really looking forward to, is a mix of citron slices and sweet grapes, baked in citrus leaves. The Blessings of Calabria.

SOMETHING FOR THE HEART

Cindy Citrus smiles as she reads that the first people, such as the speakers of Bundjalung, used it as an antiseptic – and is still being used for healing today. And whether they term it *Citrus australacia* or *Microcitrus australasica*, the potential to defend and repair remains. Cindy Citrus is looking forward to her time in Queensland and New South Wales, to spend time with the Australian finger lime.

To look at it, you may think it a member of the Cucurbits family, that includes the calabash, cucumber and gherkin, but it is a part of the *Rutaceae* clan, one of six endemic to Australia.

She's saddened to think that this tree was once cut down to make way for farming, when the European stepped on the continent; that it is only available now in the national park system and on the lands of private ownership.

The varieties of it carry names such as Limeburst Burghandy and Limeburst Green. That due to the look and texture of the pulp, the fruit is also known as "cavier lime." A popular choice of ingredient for Australian chefs, it is used in seafood dishes of salmon and oysters. And like other members of the clan, it is used as a garnish and in the making of marmalades.

As part of the finger lime leg of her Citrus Pilgrimage, she must go to Spain: to a place called Elche, near Alicante. As well as a long tradition of dates and tomato cultivation, there are the citrus groves also. Santiago Ortis of Huerto Gourmet said "We are Europe's largest producers of the finger lime pearls." For cocktails, potato salads, sushi and so on.

A great possessor of Vitamin E, the Australian finger lime supports and enhances: the skin, the eyesight and the heart.

BROTHER CLEMENT

Imagine if he hadn't changed his name: it would be called Vitaline!

Cindy Citrus sits pondering, before commencing the first making of oil from this fruit. As she thinks of the monks, resident in medieval Europe - especially those of the Benedictine order - tending the first herbal gardens of that continent, she thinks of the one in that 20th century Algerian garden, who gave us a little orange gem. When Vital Rodier joined the Order of the Annuciation in the village of Misserghin, he changed his name to Clement. After facilitating the coming of this fruit - this traditional treat in the Christmas stocking of children - has since bore his name: Cemetines. Vitaline would have been an apt word for this hybrid, with its list of health benefits. Among its many benefits, are the ones for dental care. Due to the residency in cemetines of phosphorus and calcium, oral hygiene is enhanced: defence against the forming of dental cavities.

She thinks to herself about the children of the orphanage where the first clementines grew. Did they make marmalade from the fruit? What was their input into the cultivation? Was there a daily intake of clementine juice? Did some become arboriculturalists or herbalists? Passing on the knowledge they had learnt from the French monk to others. She thinks part of the harvests must have been sold, to help fund the orphanage.

Before her first steeping of *Citrus x clementina*, Cindy Citrus writes in her notebook...

From France to Algeria,
Annuciation Brother.
Worked in a village,
Transforming an orphanage.
Trained so many orphans,
From the city of Oran.

Give thanks for Brother Clement.

Taught them of citrus trees,
Establishing nurseries.
As well as things on vine,
They established clementine.
From Mama Mandarin,
To Village Misserghin.

Give thanks for Brother Clement.

THE GOLDEN ORANGE

Known in China, where it originated from, as the "golden orange". Cindy Citrus has been thinking of a way to introduce the fruit to her family. Then she saw the picture and the recipe! Round the Christmas dinner table, she shall surprise them with a new relish for the turkey: made of cranberry and kumquat, a Middle Eastern favourite.

The kumquat part of her Citrus Pilgrimage will begin in South Africa, at a place two hours from Cape Town called Citrusdal, where a range of the fruits are grown, including kumquat.

She imagines sitting by a tributary of the Olifant River, below the Cederberg Mountains, eating a sandwich, filled with a jam of kumquat, ginger and chilli. In South Africa, the fruit is also enjoyed in spiced compote with coriander seeds and peppercorns; a liqueur with brandy; and in a sauce for goose and duck

From Africa to Asia, to the country of Israel. Cindy Citrus says she longs to partake of a meal there, starting with a salad of apples, walnuts, fennel, goats cheese and kumquat, followed by kumquat and pear pie, washed down with a kumquat smoothie. To go to Emek Hefer, to sit by Alexander River and talk with Uri Lemon. He is one of the great figures of citrus cultivation in Israel. She thinks of herself as one of the present-day Citrus Advocates; so it'd be a pleasure to speak with one of the long-time ones, a legend in agricultural and culinary circles, in his land of birth.

As well as taste, it heals. She wants everyone to enjoy the goodness of kumquat, so is happy to hear that it contains pinene and alpha-pinene, bastions against gallstones and heartburn, problems of indigestion.

From Citrusdal to Emek Hefer, Cindy Citrus is on the trail of *Fortuna japonica*, the Golden Orange.

SWEET PERSIAN LEMON

Cindy Citrus had never heard of Faloodah before, but now she begs the spirit of good fortune, to take her as soon as possible to Iran. Certainly, every lover of ice cream should savour it, especially when it has within it, the juice of the Persian Sweet Lemon. Made with noodles, rose water, cherry syrup and lemon juice; as her mouth waters, her wish is of Shiraz.

She wonders if the great polymath and herbalist Ibn Sina, partook of this delight - as a celebratory treat, or a regular form of relaxation – during his time of iridescence, in the Golden Age of Islam.

Come Ibn Sina,
Please drink a tea of Limoo Shirin:
Sit beside me at this café in Shiraz.

And she would ask the great man, if it is true, that Faloodah developed by accident, when a few drops of syrup fell in the snow. She knows that citrus fruits were one of the items he prescribed for the treating of skin diseases, as well as vinegar mixes. In his 11th century writings, he spoke of "lemon, lime, citron and sour orange." To talk with the great one, about *mizaj* and the ancient traditions of healing, records going back to 7th Century BC.

Come Ibn Sina,
Please drink a tea of Limoo Shirin:
Sit beside me at this cafe in Bandar Abbas.

To sit there and let the esteemed one, take her on a stroll through the citrus growing areas of his homeland: through the Fars, Hormozgan and northern provinces. Afternoon and into the evening, talking of all the members of the *Rutaceae family*, but especially of *Citrus limetta*. Words from the Farsi savant, sweet as Persian Lemon.

Come Ibn Sina,
Please drink a tea of Limoo Shirin:
Sit beside me at this cafe in Amol.

THE YELLOW TALISMAN

As well as the medicinal, the cultural and the culinary, the Citrus Pilgrimage has seen insights into spirituality. In Italy, Cindy Citrus learnt of the citron and its relevance to the Jewish Sukkot Festival; in China, she gets a little glimpse of Buddha.

Buddha's Hand or *fo-shou*, as it is known in China, is certainly the most physically unique of the citrus clan, hence its moniker. As she was happy to hear that a citrus fruit is important in Jewish belief, she is just as elated to know that this one is given as an offering of gratitude, when visiting a Buddhist temple. Also elated to hear that people simply like to carry it, like an amulet: holding the yellow talisman. And when they get home, they place it on the table, like a totem for domestic bliss. This fruit seems like a Chosen One, when a student monk in Zhejiang province told her that in China and Japan - where it is known as *bushukan* - they give this fruit as gifts for New Year: lemon-coloured wishes for health and prosperity. And may the prosperity include good food and drink, blessed by Buddha's hand; as tea; in vodka; sauted with olive oil and garlic; placed on the top of steamed tofu; slices for chicken and fish.

Wherever she stays on this section of her Citrus Pilgrimage, she attends to have the fruit, as the Chinese and Japanese do, hanging from the ceiling as a natural air freshener.

They say it was Buddhist monks who brought the fruit with them from India. They must have known! What we have labelled diosmin, coumarin and limonin, they knew could be used to decrease swelling and lessen pain.

From China south to Japan,
They hold the Yellow Talisman.

THE PERUVIAN RESIDENT

On her Citrus Pilgrimage so far, Cindy Citrus has been to Africa, Asia, Europe and North America: now she's going to take her first step into South America. She's on the trail of a fruit whose varieties are given names such as Murcott, Owari and Mihowase: she's going in search of Satsuma.

Although she shall return to the Peruvian capital Lima, her itinerary will begin in the Ica region, 300km from the first city. Ica grows the most, then Lima: they also grow tangelo. She finds out that most of the citrus fruit for export goes to America and to Amsterdam: Amsterdam for trans-European distribution.

Wherever she goes, she always finds the river. To see Ica River, she must go before it dries in April. She looks forward to seeing and smelling: walking in the valleys where red globe grapes, mangos and blueberries are grown, as well as other citrus fruits, such as honey tangerine. Remembering that in China, where it was first cultivated, it is seen as an item of good fortune. When you see the medicinal potential of Citrus unshiu, fortune is the perfect word of description. As well as a carrier of Vitamin C like the rest of the Rutaceae clan, one of its most attractive qualities, is the possession of Vitamin B12, which is good for hair growth, as a protective against environmental factors that will damage it: a shield against pollutants.

Looking at various ways this health tonic can be taken, she made a short list of a few; mulled wine, almond and lemon polenta cake, kebabs, sweet and sour turkey; pickled shrimp; Mexican crab salad and marmalade.

First cultivated in China, made popular in Japan – Satsuma is a former province now known as Kagoshima – this little ball of orange, has happily taken up residence in Peru.

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