

Stories

of

Jah Lemon

part ten

The Citrus Room

Natty Mark Samuels

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Dedication

to

Ordette Palmer

a member of the Communi-tea Cafe team,
Blackbird Leys, East Oxford

for her saving of the empty Jamaican Jerk Seasoning bottles
for the making of my Rootsman Products

The Citrus Room

Jah Lemon looks around, smiling. The room is beginning to look like he envisaged it. The walls of lemon-yellow, to counteract the grey winter days of human gloom, and to reflect the summer sun, when our golden companion is out in full glory.

Food, especially hot food, will not be eaten in there, neither will there be alcohol consumption and smoking will also be forbidden: for nothing must overpower the smell of the air freshener. In each corner of the room, on a stand or sill, will be a glass jar of water, filled with slices of lemon and lime, sprigs of rosemary and a little blessing from vanilla. A natural air freshener, to be changed every two days, whose emanations will enchant all, who step in through the doorway. And like the West African tradition, in which a kola nut is offered as a welcoming gift when someone enters a home, so Jah Lemon intends to offer a shot or a cup of citrus juice, to whoever enters the room.

His herbal medicine library will be housed there; oils will be steeped and released there: temporary additions of aroma, to what the room will always hold. A room to research; to search for solutions to problems; a place to write, furthering the citrus advocacy; a place to sit and be quiet: a place for reflection. A room for planning, such as the Citrus Celebration he is organising, in recognition of April 9th, World Health Day.

In consultation with Cindy Citrus, his mentee, the other advocate in the area, they've been thinking about the feasibility of approaching the local media (radio as well as press), to help with the promotion of open invitations to all communities; to have a stall, demonstrating citrus use in their respective countries. He imagines a Trinidadian Citrus Oven Roasted Chicken; Russian Lemon Pie; Greek Lemon and Dill Bread; Brazilian Lemon and Lime Marinated Fish; Japanese Matcha, Lime and Chocolate Tiramisu; a New Zealand Lime, Sweetcorn and Tomato Salsa and so on.

The thinking for this celebration was in some way generated by a book Jah Lemon bought, on one of his happy trips around the local charity shops, buying books. This particular one is a celebration of Russian cuisine, in which he was surprised by the amount of citrus that is used in that country, especially lemon.

He and Cindy Citrus think it would be a shame if World Health Day came and the opportunity wasn't taken. So they've spoken to the Food Bank, who are happy to help: they have mainly lemons and oranges to offer. And as part of the inter-generational setting, two students from the local F.E. College, have agreed to do citrus face painting; the options of fruit, or the citrus tricolour of orange, green and yellow.

They have ideas for all-day drop-in workshops, using interactive cartography, a cloze exercise, anagram, hangman, connections exercise and a quiz.

Each stall to have the flag of their country behind it and the representatives apparelled in national dress or colours. The largest hall in one of the community centres, emblazoned in colour, with an open invitation to all, to step in and celebrate each other.

Jah Lemon

What will you bring to the table, woman of Jamaica?

Jamaican

A Salad of Orange, Pineapple and Avocado, with a dressing of Ginger.

Jah Lemon

And what will come from Mexico?

Mexican

Orange Chicken with Cinnamon and Cilantro

Jah Lemon

And what will you bring Algerian?

Algerian

A Lentil Soup with Spinach and Lemon

Jah Lemon

Tell us, what will India offer?

Indian

A Limbu Pani, of Limes and Cucumber.

Jah Lemon

And the representative of Italy?

Italian

Animelle con Limone e Capperi

Jah Lemon

Man of China, what will you bring to the festivity?

Chinese Man

Mandarin Sesame Duck with Pepper and Honey.

Jah Lemon

And American, what will you make?

American

Lemon Poppy Seed Pancakes

Jah Lemon

What will you bring Norwegian

Norwegian

Cookies of Lemon and Cardomon.

Jah Lemon

What will you bring French woman, on that day?

French Woman

A Meyer Lemon Creme Brulee

Jah Lemon

And you sir, from the United Arab Emirates?

Emirati

With Orange and Lemon Juice, a Citrus Vinaigrette

All these ideas remind Jah Lemon of the Spanish proverb, "If God has given you lemons, apply yourself to making lemonade." Yes, if its there, use it! Jah Lemon thinks it would be something akin to sacrilege, to have the citrus nearby and not to make use of it: for their medicinal potential, as well as culinary fulfilment.

A day of awareness, of all the benefits that the *Rutaceae* family can bring. Whether it be pomelo, kumquat, tangarine, bhudda's hand or yuzu, all the members of the Citrus Clan, carry what we need. Each fruit is a true treasure house for human enhancement, full of vitamins and minerals, our essentials; counteracting and combating infection and disease. Jah Lemon gives thanks everyday for Creation, for the gifts that citrus give us: wanting to share that goodness with all. So the invitation goes out to all; to participate and to celebrate, all that the Clan gives us.

A day of spreading the good word of Citrusanity: the belief that all should have daily access to citrus. Based on the Four Gospels of Citrus; Citron, Mandarin, Pomelo and Papeda: the four ancestors of all existing citrus fruits. Let them know, that the citron became known through the Jewish faith and their use of it - which they call *etrog* - in their thanksgiving ceremony called Sukkot: The Feast of the Tabernacles. Inform the attendees, that although the monks – especially those of the Benedictine Order – were the first great herbalists in Europe, the first citriculturists on this continent, were the Arabs, who brought it into Spain, during their residency of eight centuries in *Al-Andalus*.

Tell them of ugli and ortanique, two members of the Clan, endemic to Jamaica. That Ras Tafari, who set up the first agricultural colleges in Ethiopia, was presented with an ortanique by the government of Jamaica, when he made that monumental visit in 1966.

Tell them of grapefruit, a descendent of pomelo, first known in Barbados. Of yuzu, which the Chinese and Japanese bath with, in hot springs and public baths on Winter Solstice.

So much to share, to give thanks for. Let the children be given big sheets of paper, or a blank wall and let them create whatever, in orange, green and yellow. Let them be the squeezers of grapefruit and the sprinklers of sugar. Let them know as soon as possible, that the immune system needs all the help it can get – and that citrus will give it a boost.

Let them know of the thymus, the spleen and bone marrow and the bolstering from clementine, calamansi and all the other *Rutaceae* members it gets. Let patience and the joy of teaching, be brought to the learning area.

Around the table in the room, Jah Lemon and Cindy Citrus sit; talking excitedly, ideas bouncing off each. The list is growing; of ideas, who to contact, fundraising ventures, schools and youth club liaison, publicity campaign, venue viewing and so on and so on.

Let the children dress up in orange, green and yellow. Let them wear badges saying "I Believe In Citrus." Let them jump around and dance, because they are healthy: and because they are learning, that citrus will help keep them that way.

In a place of lemon-yellow walls, above a carpet coloured lime-green, Jah Lemon and Cindy Citrus sit, planning and laughing, as they make notes in their pads, on an orange table, as bright as their shared vision. Like the aroma, their dream begins to emanate from the Citrus Room.

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