



Top 10 Culinary Essential Oils

by Dorene Petersen, BA, Dip.NT,
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About the Author

Dorene Petersen

Dorene Petersen is the Founding President of American College of Healthcare Sciences (ACHS), an accredited institution specializing in online integrative health and wellness education. Petersen graduated as a New Zealand trained Naturopath from the South Pacific College of Natural Therapies in Auckland, New Zealand and ran a busy clinic for 15 years before moving to the United States and establishing ACHS in Oregon in 1989.



Read more about Dorene at:

<https://achs.edu/staff/dorene-petersen>

Introduction

Julia Child said, “*Learn how to cook - try new recipes, learn from your mistakes, be fearless and above all have fun.*” When I started adding certified organic (or at the very least pesticide-free) essential oils to my cooking, the “learn from my mistakes” and “fearless fun” began! Perhaps you’re ready to use essential oils in your recipes but are feeling too anxious to try them out. Just in case, I’ve put together this *Top 10 Culinary Essential Oils* eBook with a few tips to get you started!



A few of my top tips for cooking with essential oils:

- Remember to use the “taste test” as you add essential oils to your food.
- Always start small and add to taste! You can always add more—it’s more difficult to fix if you add too much.
- Dilute your essential oils by creating flavorful extracts¹. For our purposes, an extract is a flavoring ingredient created by diluting essential oil with an edible light oil such as certified organic sweet almond oil. This is not the same as the concentrated, undiluted essential oil. There are recipes for extracts within select essential oil sections, e.g. anise *Pimpinella anisum* (L.), clove *Syzygium aromaticum* (L.), ginger *Zingiber officinale* (Roscoe), neroli *Citrus aurantium* (L.) var. *amara*, nutmeg *Myristica fragrans* (Houtt.), and thyme *Thymus vulgaris* (L.).
- For most of the baking recipes, I start with a ½ teaspoon of a prepared extract or one to two drops of the concentrated undiluted essential oil and then taste. You can always add more!
- Try to add your essential oil—extract or concentrate—towards the end of cooking when it makes sense for the recipe.
- Experiment—it’s fun! Maybe you’ll discover some new essential oils or a new use for a long-time favorite. Who knows!

A microscopic image of anise seed cross-sections, showing the characteristic cellular structure and oil glands. The image is dark blue with a lighter blue overlay.

Section 1

Anise

Pimpinella anisum (L.)

1. Anise

Pimpinella anisum (L.)

Did you know...

Anise essential oil is so powerful it can mask the flavor of cod liver oil and other strong flavors, particularly if combined with sweet orange *Citrus sinensis* (Osbeck) oil.



And did you know you can...

- Add anise as a flavoring agent to beverages such as soda.
- Make your own tooth powder using anise, peppermint *Mentha x piperita* (L.) oil, and baking soda.
- Blend it with peppermint *M. x piperita*, and use as an insect repellent!
- Add it to cake and cookie recipes for a sweet licorice-like flavor. Start with 1 drop and taste the dough as you go.
- Add anise oil to vodka or distilled wine to prepare a Greek ouzo or Turkish raki-like cocktail.
- Prepare an anise extract by adding 5 milliliters [2] to 100 milliliters [3] of certified organic sweet almond oil for cakes and cookies where you would use vanilla extract. The suggested use level in food is 5.0-10.0 mg% [4]. For instance, try using ½ to 1 teaspoon of anise extract in place of fennel seed in a fennel tea cookie recipe. These cookies are perfect for the black licorice lovers in your life.
- Use anise essential oil orally in small amounts as it is on the FDA Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) list.



[2] One milliliter is approximately 20 drops.

[3] One ounce is approximately 30 milliliters.

[4] The term milligrams percent (mg%) expresses the number of milligrams of substance dissolved in 100 milliliters (ml) of liquid. It can be used to denote the concentration of a drug or natural substance in a biologic fluid, an active constituent in an essential oil or tincture, or an essential oil in a preparation. For example, the statement that the concentration of anise oil in a blend is 5.0 mg% means that each 100 milliliters of the blend contains 5.0 milligrams (mg) of anise oil.

Section 2

Basil

Ocimum basilicum (L.)

2. Basil

Ocimum basilicum (L.)

Did you know...

In Italy and Spain—where fresh salad greens can be purchased at local markets as a bunch of various vegetables, weeds, and herbs—basil is always a main ingredient. It is not unusual to see basil growing in window boxes or in terracotta pots on terraces and lining doorways in Greece, Italy, and Spain. It is thought to guard a house from evil energy.



And did you know you can...

- Add basil to all tomato and pasta dishes. But if you don't have fresh herbs, don't worry—use basil essential oil. Remember, start with one drop and keep tasting. Also, try to add your essential oil towards the end of cooking. If you have made the basil cooking oil outlined below, use that in the pan to stir fry your onions and tomatoes.
- Prepare a sauce for fish or meat. Again, add small amounts and keep tasting.
- Prepare a basil cooking oil by adding 1 milliliter to 100 milliliters of organic virgin olive oil, and use it as a salad dressing and for stir frying. The suggested use level as a flavor is 0.30-1.00 m%.
- Use basil essential oil orally in small amounts as it is on the FDA Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) list.



Section 3

Bay

Laurus nobilis (L.)

3. Bay

Laurus nobilis (L.)

Did you know...

Bay essential oil is effective in a vaporizer to combat infectious bacteria in rooms.



And did you know you can...

- Add bay essential oil when you are cooking meat, bean stews, and soups (you can even add a few drops to canned soups to spice it up).
- Use dried bay leaves for keeping insects out of medicinal herbs and grains. To strengthen the effect spread bay leaves flat, and then spray them with bay essential oil. Layer the essential oil-impregnated bay leaves between the herbs or grain in 1 to 2-inch layers and store as usual.
- Prepare a bay cooking oil by adding 1 to 2.5 mls to 100 mls of organic virgin olive oil, and use it as a salad dressing and for stir frying. The suggested use level as a flavor is 1.00-2.50 mg%.
- Use bay essential oil orally in small amounts as it is on the FDA Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) list.



Section 4

Chamomile Roman

Chamaemelum nobile (L.) All

4. Chamomile Roman

Chamaemelum nobile (L.) All

Did you know...

As an alternative to chamomile herbal tea, you can place a few drops of organic chamomile essential oil into a cup of hot water for a refreshing sedative. Mix it into a little honey first, this will help it dissolve more readily in the water.



And did you know you can...

- Add 1 drop of chamomile essential oil to your water while you are eating a meal, and it will soothe and improve your digestion. If you do this while you are having your evening meal, it will also get you in the mood to nod off early.
- Add 1 drop to your bowl of ice cream or plain yogurt, stir, and enjoy.
- Use chamomile essential oil orally in small amounts as it is on the FDA Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) list.



Section 5

Clove

Syzygium aromaticum (L.)

5. Clove

Syzygium aromaticum (L.)

Did you know...

Pomanders are made by sticking an orange with whole cloves, rolling the orange in orris root powder, and leaving it to dry. Pomanders give off a pleasant scent in wardrobes and drawers, and help to repel chewing insects.



And did you know you can...

- Add clove essential oil to curries and pickles. The antiseptic and preservative action is as useful as the spicy flavor.
- Add 1 drop of clove oil to stewed apples when you are making apple pie. Start with 1 drop, taste, and then add another drop if needed.
- Prepare a tooth powder with clove oil by adding a few drops to baking soda.
- Add a few drops to pumpkin and Vietnamese soup (pho). Do the taste test and add more if needed.
- Prepare chai tea by adding 1 drop of clove essential oil and 1 drop of cardamom *Elettaria cardamomum* (L.) essential oil to your cup of tea.
- Bake sweet breads and add clove essential oil into the dough.
- Prepare a clove extract by adding 1 to 3 milliliters to 100 milliliters of certified organic sweet almond oil. For a change of flavor, use it when a recipe calls for vanilla extract. The suggested use level for flavoring is 1.00-3.00 mg%.
- Use clove essential oil orally in small amounts as it is on the FDA Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) list.

Section 6

Ginger

Zingiber officinale (Roscoe)

7. Ginger

Zingiber officinale (Roscoe)

Did you know...

Ginger cookies and ginger beer are usually flavored with ginger oleoresin and ginger essential oil.



And did you know you can...

- Prepare a ginger green tea by adding 1 drop of ginger essential oil into a cup of green tea. Add honey or stevia and a slice of lemon.
- Add 1 to 2 drops to your morning smoothie made from fruits such as mango, pineapple, oranges, and pears.
- Whip up a yummy salad dressing with 1 to 2 drops of ginger essential oil, chopped garlic, organic extra virgin olive oil, freshly squeezed lemon juice, and your favorite salt (my favorite is Hawaiin pink sea salt). Drizzle over salad or add pineapple juice and use it as a marinade.
- Bake spicy cookies and muffins by adding 1 to 2 drops to your mix. Remember to taste. If you are feeling really adventurous, add 1 drop of anise and 1 drop of clove.
- Prepare a ginger extract by adding 0.30 to 1.50 milliliters of ginger essential oil to 100 mls of certified organic sweet almond oil. Use it to bake the spice cookies or muffins above or whenever a recipe calls for vanilla extract. The suggested use level for flavoring is 1.00-3.00 mg%.
- Use ginger essential oil orally in small amounts as it is on the FDA Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) list.

The background of the slide is a microscopic image of citrus cells, showing a grid-like pattern of hexagonal and pentagonal cells. The cells are stained, with some appearing darker and others lighter, creating a textured, organic look. The overall color palette is dark green and brown, with some orange highlights.

Section 7

Neroli

Citrus aurantium (L.) var. *amara*

7. Neroli

Citrus aurantium (L.) var.
amara

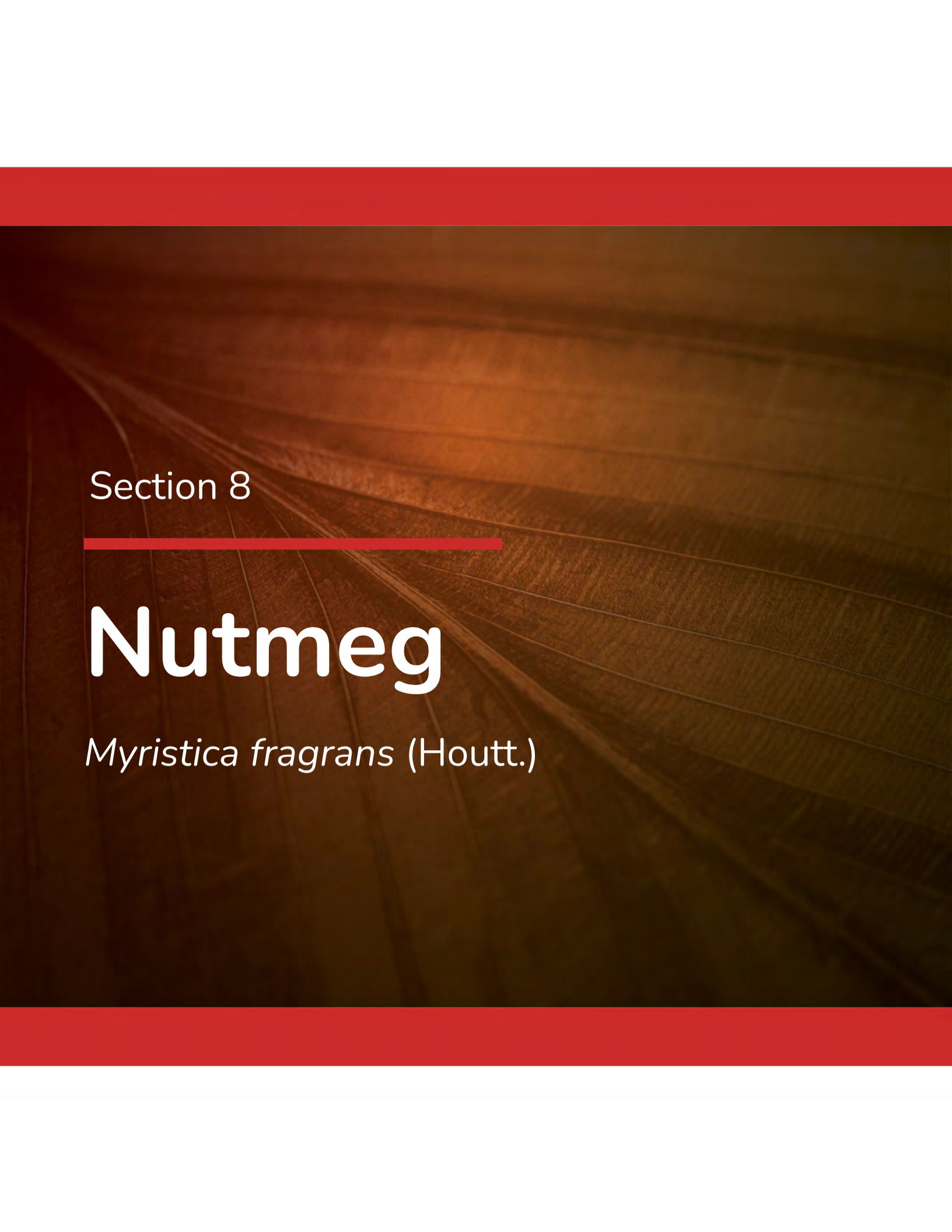
Did you know...

Neroli peel and oil are used in orange liqueurs, such as Grand Marnier and Curacao.



And did you know you can...

- Use neroli flower water (also known as orange blossom or flower water or hydrolate) or the essential oil to flavor whipped cream, custards, cookies, pancakes, cakes, and jams.
- Prepare a neroli extract by adding 1.50 milliliters of neroli essential oil to 100 milliliters of certified organic sweet almond oil. Use it to bake cookies or muffins above or whenever a recipe calls for vanilla extract.
- Use neroli essential oil orally in small amounts as it is on the FDA Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) list.



Section 8

Nutmeg

Myristica fragrans (Houtt.)

8. Nutmeg

Myristica fragrans (Houtt.)

Did you know...

Nutmeg essential oil has the ability to mask the odor of sulfur, which is useful in the kitchen when cooking cabbage.



And did you know you can...

- Add 1 drop of nutmeg essential oil to your favorite adult beverage or even a fruit juice for extra zing.
- Add 2 drops to a baked custard.
- Add 2 drops to stir-fried fresh kale.
- Make spicy cookies and cakes if you blend nutmeg with cinnamon *Cinnamomum zeylanicum* (Blume) and cardamom *E. cardamomum*.
- Prepare a nutmeg extract by adding 1.50 to 3.00 milliliters of nutmeg essential oil to 100 milliliters of certified organic sweet almond oil. Use it to bake the cookies or muffins above or whenever a recipe calls for vanilla extract. The suggested use level for flavoring is 1.50-3.00 mg%.
- Use nutmeg essential oil orally in small amounts as it is on the FDA Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) list.



Section 9

Patchouli

Pogostemon cablin (Benth.)

9. Patchouli

Pogostemon cablin (Benth.)

Did you know...

Patchouli leaves and essential oil are often used for potpourri.



And did you know you can...

- Use patchouli essential oil to cover up musty smells, and if you mix it with lemongrass *Cymbopogon citratus* (DC.) Stapf, it will actually kill mold.
- Use it as a natural moth repellent among your linens and wool.
- Make breath sweetening flavored toothpicks with 1 drop of patchouli essential oil, 1 drop anise *P. anisum* and 1 drop clove *S. aromaticum*. Dip your toothpick and use after a meal to sweeten your breath and support healthy digestion. Try preparing a larger quantity of the blend using the same ratio and soaking toothpicks.
- Experiment with patchouli in cooking. Always start with a tiny amount. I have seen it used with cooked beets. Patchouli does not appear on the FDA GRAS list, and there is no suggested use level.

Section 10

Thyme

Thymus vulgaris (L.)

10. Thyme

Thymus vulgaris (L.)

Did you know...

Thyme essential oil is being researched for activity to protect stored grain against insect damage and it has been shown to have the ability to inhibit and destroy some molds in foods. Plus it also exhibits an antioxidant and preservative action.



And did you know you can...

- Add thyme essential oil to sauces, dressings, pickles, soups, pizza, stuffing, and stews.
- Add 2 drops of thyme essential oil to 8 ounces of organic extra virgin olive oil for a tasty base for salad dressings and stir-fry.
- Add 2 drops to a fruit pie made with freshly harvested blackberries (experiment with other fruits).
- Prepare a thyme extract by adding 1.00 milliliter of thyme essential oil to 100 milliliters of certified organic sweet almond oil. Use it to bake cookies or muffins above or whenever a recipe calls for vanilla extract for a savory twist.
- Use thyme essential oil orally in very small amounts as it is on the FDA Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) list.

The background of the slide features a dark, textured pattern resembling marbled paper or stone, with shades of brown, green, and black. This central area is framed by solid orange horizontal bars at the top and bottom.

Section 11

Notes and Disclaimers

Notes and Disclaimers

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FIGURE 2: Culinary herbs at the spice market in Bali, Indonesia. Image by Dorene Petersen. © 2013

FIGURE 3: Anise. Image by Steven Foster. Reproduced under license.

FIGURE 4: Basil. Image by Dorene Petersen. © 2009

FIGURE 5: Bay. Image by Dorene Petersen. © 2005

FIGURE 6: Chamomile Roman. Image by American College of Healthcare Sciences. © 2001

FIGURE 7: Cloves dried in a bowl. Image by Dorene Petersen. © 2012

FIGURE 8: Ginger. Image by American College of Healthcare Sciences. © 2014

FIGURE 9: Neroli flowers, Italy. Image by Filippo Badalamenti. Reproduced with permission.

FIGURE 10: Whole nutmegs split, Indonesia. Image by Dorene Petersen. © 2013

FIGURE 11: Patchouli. Image by Dorene Petersen. © 2004

FIGURE 12: Thyme still in Greece. Image by Dorene Petersen. © 2006

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