



SHOWNOTES Episode #5

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Serving Practical Magic to nourish your inner life.

On the menu today: Spirit Spoons and Garden Gifts

Do you need protection? Eat basil.

Do you seek abundance? Have some mint.

Do you want to help your family find peace? Serve coriander.

Herbs and spices are full of magical properties and lend themselves to rituals.

Spirit Spoons

I believe food tastes best when the chef works while holding loving thoughts for those who will eat the food. That's the idea behind spirit spoons. The spoon itself can be made of any material. The spirit is added by the cook.



All my spirit spoons are made of wood. I bought two of the spoons and a grand ladle at an art show in Pensacola. I live in CT. I was in FL with my younger sisters Eileen and Laurie to celebrate Laurie's birthday. Every time I use those spoons or the ladle, I remember how gratifying it was to spend those days with my sisters. Our mother died when we were young. A well-meaning neighbor warned us that because our dad was in the Navy and often at sea, we might be split up and sent to foster homes. Though that didn't happen, the fear took root. Our sibling bonds grew both strong and fierce. Now, nearly 55 years later, the

bonds are stronger than ever.

Stir Up the Sun

From the 1700s, if not before, the Celts considered clockwise movement to be the movement of the sun. Since the sun was seen as the bringer of life, anything that followed the sun's path of east-to-south-to-west-to-north was considered auspicious. Counter-clockwise movement, what the Celts and Germans called *widdershins*, is said to cause disruption and chaos.

The sun's movement is behind a ritual I created called **Stir Up the Sun**. This is a simple ritual for the everyday moments in life. **Ritual: A visible act performed with invisible intent.**



The intent is to add auspicious energy to the food in the pot. The visible act is to stir... clockwise, to intentionally follow the path of the sun.

I stir with one of various spoons I consider “spirit spoons.” In addition to the ones I told you about earlier (the ones I purchased when I was with my sisters), I have several other wooden spoons. My friend Carol Chaput used a wood burning tool to etch assorted designs into the spoons. One spoon has a burst of stars. I use it when I’m celebrating something or simply feeling happy. Another spoon has a fanciful owl. I use that one when I need wisdom. I use that one a lot! Does cooking discolor the spoon? Yes. I prefer to think that cooking anoints the spoon.



You can make your own spirit spoon. In fact, you can use any spoon. Your intent is what gives it energy. That said, if you want to purchase a nice spoon for yourself or as a gift (wedding shower, housewarming, hostess gift) I’ll soon have my version of spirit spoons on Etsy. The shop is called Moon River Rituals. I start with a high quality wooden spoon, then create the design and burn it into the wood. I’m still practicing so the spoons aren’t available yet.

A Game of Thrones

Having your own spirit spoon can enhance your own cooking and your connection to the television series, *A Game of Thrones*. You see, one of my favorite cookbooks is [A FEAST OF ICE AND FIRE, the official companion cookbook to George R. R. Martin’s A Game of Thrones](#). Co-authors Chelsea Monroe-Cassel and Sariann Lehrer include a section titled “Feasting in Style” for readers who want to travel back in time and imagine themselves at Winterfell or King’s Landing or places around and in-between. They know that some of the original recipes call for exotic ingredients. Rather than dampen anyone’s enthusiasm or imagination, they encourage readers to aim for historical atmosphere, not historical accuracy. Their suggestions range from the color of a tablecloth to using plants and vegetables as decorations. And they encourage the use of pewter tankards, wooden bowls, and hammered flatware over crystal, china, and sterling.

The authors were interviewed on a podcast called “[Podcast of Ice and Fire](#).” In episode #58, Sariann freely admits that she had no formal training in cooking, that their blog is for others who don’t have formal training, that their enthusiasm for the cookbook was the key to their success. [Their website is Inn at the Crossroads](#).



I'm honored to share a personal connection, too. In September of 2017, Sariann and her Scotsman fiance, David, said "I do" at her parents' mountain-top home. I was their officiant. They met years earlier in a pub in a small village in England. David was a chef. Sariann was on a working sabbatical following the success of her cookbook. In the midst of all the usual challenges that come with planning a wedding, David and Sariann made all the food that was served at the reception! And -- barely two months later, they moved to Richmond, Virginia, where they opened a restaurant, [The Broken Tulip](#). This couple believes in the ability of food to nourish more than the body, and that a restaurant should be a place where people of all kinds can break bread together. The energy they raise to nourish a community is the same energy you can raise when you cook with a spirit spoon.

Garden Gifts

Here's a substantive ritual for a rite of passage such as a wedding, a milestone birthday, or retirement celebration. It's visually interesting and can be adapted for any gift-giving occasion. I call it **Garden Gifts**.



I've used this ritual for several weddings. While the overall structure is the same, the selection of herbs and spices varies depending on the couple.

Here's how the ritual works in a wedding. Because the guests don't expect the ceremony to involve herbs and spices, much less their magical properties, I give a little explanation. To give you an idea of how it works, imagine you're at a wedding taking place in a garden.

As the officiant, I'm standing with the couple. I've tweaked their positions a little so that they're standing side by side on my right. On my left is a small table. The gift-bearers for the ritual have been identified in advance. I've spoke with each one and given him or her the gift they'll present during the ritual. ...Here's an excerpt from one of my weddings:

For as long as couples have gotten married, friends and family have shown their support by giving gifts. Couples today might receive anything from crystal to airline miles. In earlier times, wedding gifts symbolized qualities desired in a marriage. Harkening back to those days, and in honor of how much our couple loves to cook, I now invite the presentation of four garden gifts—each an echo of the cultures our couple brings together in their marriage.



Then, in a nice loud voice, I say:

I call for COMPASSION, the gift of TARRAGON.

At this point, a gift-bearer, chosen before the ceremony begins, walks up to the couple carrying either a live plant wrapped in colorful foil or a spice jar decorated with streaming ribbons. (To ensure uniformity, I always provide the plants or jars.) The gift-bearer

stands facing the guests while I say something about the gift itself. For instance...

Long associated with the feminine, tarragon offers the magical blend of compassion with independence. This delicate herb teaches how to give of the self without losing the self. Please accept this symbol of compassion for your marriage – and for hearty Irish potato soup.



Now the gift-bearer shows the gift to the couple, places it on a small table in the ceremony space, and returns to his or her seat. The gift-bearer doesn't speak. That removes the stress gift-bearers might feel, especially they don't know about their role prior to the ceremony.

You can incorporate any number of garden gifts for the ritual. I like to use four. In numerology, four represents stability – nice energy for a ritual aligned with the home. This ritual also lets the couple honor four people who, for whatever reason, couldn't be in the wedding party.

Here's another Garden Gift:

I call for PROTECTION, the gift of BASIL.

Long known for its ability to protect, basil has been used in ritual baths to purify a person before an initiation. No matter how perilous the path ahead, basil would provide the courage to face fear and the fortitude to move forward. Best of all, the protection basil provides is for the entire family. Please accept this symbol of protection for your marriage – and for Native American fish soup.

Here's another:

I call for FERTILITY, the gift of the ORANGE.

The orange tree is one of the most prolific. Because the tree blooms and bears fruit at the same time, oranges have long been associated with fertility, the blossoms worn at weddings. But there is an older meaning. From the time of the ancient Greeks, oranges were given to strengthen a person on a quest and to reward the victorious. Some Greek scholars believe that the story of the golden apple really referred to an orange. Please accept this symbol of both strength and fertility for your marriage – and for a refreshing dessert of Puerto Rican orange pudding.

You get the idea. Here are a few more, some chosen because of the couple's interests or heritage... or because the gift would be particularly useful in their relationship.

I call for SERENITY, the gift of LAVENDER

From ancient times, it was believed that lavender would help calm the nerves so a person could think clearly, and in so doing, make his dreams a reality. Please accept this symbol of serenity for your marriage – and for fragrant sugar cookies.

I call for GOOD HEALTH – The Gift of OREGANO

In the mountains of rural Greece, newlyweds would be crowned with wreaths of oregano to bring joy to their marriage. The all-purpose herb was known to bring a zest

for life, to sooth aching joints, to bring luck and protect against negative energy of any kind...and to give psychic awareness. No wonder it was used at weddings! Please accept this symbol of good health for your marriage – and for flavorful soups.

I call for HOLISTIC HEALTH - The Gift of CILANTRO

In Ancient Greece the oil derived from cilantro was used as in perfumes. In India, it has been used for centuries to ease digestion. Today, naturopaths see its ability to regulate blood sugar, reduce anxiety and support safe and peaceful sleep. Please accept this symbol of holistic heath for your marriage – and for healthy salsas, soups, and salads.

I call for FAMILY PEACE – The Gift of CORIANDER

Artifacts from ancient Egyptians show the use of coriander. Gathered in the harvest season, bundled and decorated with ribbon, people hung coriander in the home to bring peace and security to all who lived within. Many also believe in the power of coriander to promote the astral nature of love and to help lovers find each other across many lifetimes. Please accept this symbol of family peace for your home, your marriage – and for crispy roasted potatoes.

I call for MENTAL STRENGTH - The Gift of DILL

Found in many kitchens, dill is known not only for bringing mental strength and clarity to the cook but also for bringing good fortune to those who enter the home as guests. Please accept this gift of Mental Strength for yourselves, your marriage, and for all you invite into your home.

You can eliminate the culinary association with the herbs and spices in the ritual and, instead, evoke a blessing. For example, here are the herbs in the song “Scarborough Fair” made famous by Paul Simon and Art Funkle:

I call for SUCCESS, the gift of PARSLEY

In the ancient world, both the Greeks and Romans believed that feeding parsley to their horses would increase their speed and agility. A pregnant woman would bathe in water sprinkled with parsley for a quick labor and a healthy child. Please accept this gift of Success. May every adventure in your future bring the rewards you desire.

I call for WISDOM, the gift of SAGE

From ancient times, people believed sage would bring wisdom to those tasked with important decisions. Some say the health of the sage plant itself reflects the health of business affairs since wisdom is essential for success that nourishes the soul. Please accept this gift of Wisdom. May every decision in your future be made with insight and understanding.

I call for FIDELITY, the gift of ROSEMARY.

For centuries, rosemary has been used in celebrations. People believed rosemary will strengthen the memory. The plant’s association with fidelity comes from the belief that couples who never forget why they fell in love will always remain faithful to each other.



Please accept this symbol of fidelity. May you remember the love you feel at this moment with every act of kindness, generosity, respect, and passion.

I call for BRAVERY, the gift of THYME

In the days of chivalry, a lady would present her knight with a scarf she had embroidered. Most often the design featured a bee hovering over a sprig of thyme since thyme was the herb most associated with bravery. Roman soldiers exchanged it as a sign of respect. Today, many believe that if thyme is grown in the garden, the faerie folk will help the gardener confront any adversity. Please accept this symbol of bravery. May you always face the future arm-in-arm, heart-to-heart, knowing the roots you put down today will hold you fast.

Of course, there are many other herbs and spices you can use. Don't be surprised if your research suggests alternate meanings for each. One meaning does not discount the other. On the contrary, I think different meanings suggest different ways to engage with the energy of the plant.

When all the herbs and spices have been presented to the couple, I close the ritual with these words: *Later this evening, you'll share your first meal as a married couple. Whatever is on the menu, know that you are nourished by the gifts of –* and then I name the herbs or spices used in the ritual.

As you can imagine, the Garden Gifts ritual can easily be adapted to celebrate a birthday, a retirement, a new home, or a croning to acknowledge the wisdom of an elder woman, or a saging to acknowledge the wisdom of an elder man. I'll tell you more about those rituals in future episodes.

For now, you might be wondering where I get the information about these herbs and spices? In addition to an extensive library on herbs, flowers, and trees, I drew on two key sources for this ritual. One is my daughter, Laurie Neronha, an accomplished herbalist and esthetician, owner of [Viriditas Beautiful Skin Care Therapies](#) in Providence, RI. The other source is the book [A Compendium of Herbal Magick by Paul Beyerl](#).

Source for Spices

The Spice Mill in Manchester, CT, is my go-to source for freshness, variety, and education. Check out their website: <http://espicemill.com> I have no affiliation with the Spice Mill. I'm just lucky to live in the same town.

Food and My Sisters



Two years ago, my little sister, Eileen, lost her husband to cancer. Just as the three sisters had often gathered at happier times, Laurie and I went to Virginia to surround Eileen. We spent most of the time in her kitchen. We cooked. We ate. We laughed. And we cried. Among the

many dishes we made were my chicken soup and Laurie's lemon pasta. There was something life affirming about cooking for each other. We slurped resilience from the soup. We tasted joy in the creamy lemon sauce. We served love with every dish.

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When I talk about Ritual Recipes, I define it as a podcast full of practical magic to nourish your inner life. That's what Spirit Spoons and Garden Gifts are all about. I hope you've been inspired to dedicate a spoon and "stir up the sun."

Thanks for joining me! Ritual Recipes is a "side dish" of MoonRiverRituals.com (the mother website) where I've worked since 2012 as a certified Life-Cycle Celebrant to officiate more than 100 weddings, bless babies, perform vow renewals, conduct funerals and memorial services, and create seasonal rituals for private circles and public gatherings. For more about these rituals, visit the website: MoonRiverRituals.com. Click on the [Ritual Recipes tab](#). You'll find a dropdown menu with the show notes. This is Episode #5.

Visit me on Facebook.com/MoonRiverRituals – also the home of Ritual Recipes. I'd love to know what cooking rituals, or holiday food rituals you use.

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I believe in the power of ritual. If you do, too, or you just want to know a little more, please join me for the next episode. Tell your friends. It's like sharing a recipe – a Ritual Recipe!