

Oma's Kartoffel Rosti

One of the most simple and enjoyable lunches Oma prepares in a flash is Kartoffel Rosti and salad. We convinced her to make it one more time during our last week in Oehringen, but challenged her to do so in slow motion so Sebastian and I could learn. While slowing Marianne down in the kitchen is no easy task, she is a fabulous teacher and can break down the steps of her tried and true recipes in such a way that even us novices can feel successful. Ready to make your own Rosti?

1. Wash and peel 3.5 pounds potatoes. (Here in the U.S. you will want to use Yukon Gold or Red potatoes.)
2. Shred with a food processor or by hand.
3. Chop one medium onion.
4. Heat enough sunflower or coconut oil to just cover the bottom of two skillets, dividing the onion evenly between them. Add salt & pepper to taste. Cook over medium heat for 2-3 minutes.
5. Add enough water to each so that there is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in the bottom and divide a cube of veggie bouillon between the two skillets. When the water is boiling add handfuls of the grated potatoes, careful not to pack the skillet, just gently fill it.
6. Place a lid on the skillet, reduce heat to low, and cook



8-10 minutes.

7. Remove the lid and check the underside of your Rosti with a spatula. It should be crispy and the grated

potatoes on the top will have begun to soften. If this is true, use a plate to aide the flipping process, returning the Rosti to the pan, cooked side facing upwards.

8. Cover the Rosti once again for another 4-5 minutes, then remove the lid and cook another 5 minutes until crispy.
9. Serve alongside a hearty green salad for an ideal lunch or supper.

*Serves 4

Help Texas Today

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No doubt you, along with the rest of our nation, are more than well aware of the devastation that hit Texas, particularly parts of the Gulf Coast and Houston, over this past weekend. When faced with the horrific images and narrative of disasters, we are instantly reminded of two things, regardless of our belief system.

- Everything that exists, material or mental, is impermanent
- Nature possesses one powerful and unpredictable force

The emotion that often then arises is a sense of helplessness or powerlessness and the question of, "*What can I possibly do?*" Well, I'm going to help you out here, because there is something you can do. In fact, there are two things you can do and by doing them you will not only shift your own energy and emotional state but also those whose lives your actions impact.

1. Make a financial donation, whatever you can afford, share what you can, but do it now. Don't wait! Texas Monthly suggests this excellent list of Donation Centers by topic. If that feels overwhelming, may I suggest one of these straightforward options? The Red Cross or Team Rubicom, a nonprofit who deploys volunteer vets trained in search and rescue.
2. Commit to spending 5, 10, or 15 minutes a day practicing Tonglen meditation. Tonglen is the simple practice of sending and receiving. Learn how directly from Pema Chodron in less than 5 minutes. You and those whose lives you touch will benefit from your practice.

Like most of the families in south Texas, we took some time to prepare Friday for what promised to be a whopper of a storm. We stocked up the kitchen, bought our supply of Mary candles and flashlight batteries, filled a reserve water supply, and secured the house and outside garden for the high winds expected. And when early thunderstorms threatened, I closed up

the office and saw that Aaron and Aubrey got out the door and home to their families. Then we all settled in for a weekend of watch and wait. Having had the past 10 years of experiences with Texas drama, I know it would be an all or nothing deal. Here, politics and weather all always extreme.

The steady downpour began about 3am Saturday and, with only intermittent pauses continued, until just this morning. We had high winds and heavy rains with the downing of whole trees and limbs, but, unlike Houston, Austin sits on rolling hills. We have our problems with low water crossings and in populated areas south of the city along the river, but there is no way the entire city could ever flood. What the towns along the coast and Houston have experienced is devastating and will be for weeks and months to come. So, I ask you each today as you sit in your dry comfortable setting, to take action. Share what you have in the form of a financial donation and set aside time for meditative moments throughout your day.

“Generosity is the most natural outward expression of an inner attitude of compassion and loving-kindness.”

– Dalai Lama XIV

French Adventures: Part II

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Home again and adjusting to the 100 degree temps, fuller days, and all that it takes to live right in the heart of a city with nearly one million people; I am inclined to reflect on

more of my experiences in the Pyrenees. (Read Part I here!) There are undoubtedly some stark contrasts between the village of Ilhat, nestled in the foothills of mountains, and this bustling place in Texas that I call home. Yet, surprisingly, there are similarities as well.



Both Ilhat and Austin offer a sunrise and sunset with unique beauty each its own, both are filled with native birds that begin each day in song, and, while vastly different in species, the Pyrenees region and Austin are both homes to magnificent trees. While sitting with my tea each morning on my porch these past few days, I have given myself the opportunity to marvel at the beauty and resilience of our Texas trees. These wonders continue to thrive against all odds in this inhospitable heat and unpredictable supply of water. What strength they have! (Which I surely call upon as I struggle to keep myself from melting into a puddle before the end of each day.) While I was captivated by the misty and mystical Beech tree forests deep in the Pyrenees, the canopy of shade from my Mexican White Oak, here in my Austin garden, provides a welcome daily respite.

I've taken to having my tea underneath this powerful Oak these past few jet lagged mornings, granting myself time to witness the awakening of each day. It's been a good way to reground

myself in Austin and appreciate the beauty I often take for granted. Too often the scenery of our daily lives becomes merely the backdrop for our to-do lists and the purposeful act of observing it with fresh eyes can be revealing. I've been a lover of trees all of my life, but for different reasons at various times. Of course now, with all I have learned about the healing gifts the buds of trees hold for our bodies, my passion has obviously grown.



When I was 11, my parents moved us from the bustling California Bay Area to a farm in the Sacramento Valley. Far removed from neighbors and my childhood friends, I turned to nature for comfort. I would ride my bike along the canal road that lined our property and sit for hours alongside a wild and ungroomed stretch of **Putah creek**. When that was not an option, I found solace deep inside the curved branches and shady thick leaves of a Fig tree. There's no telling how many adolescent hours I spent up inside that tree, but, now reflecting on the fact that the buds of the Fig tree support digestion on a physical and emotional level, it is no surprise that this tree provided me with exactly what I was in search of.

Sadly, I outgrew my tree-climbing and for many years life seemed to separate me from what trees had to offer. It wasn't until I moved to Heidelberg, Germany and began to share hikes with Joachim that the importance of trees came back into my

life. From that point onward, they played a profound role in both my physical and emotional healing, leading me eventually to study the benefits of the extracts made from tree buds that we call Gemmotherapy.

This summer I learned even more about trees from my new dear friend and colleague **Stephane Boistard**, who I met this past year over our shared curiosity and intrigue with Gemmotherapy. Both practitioners and authors, we each bring an entirely different set of experiences and perspectives to the topic and it was a true gift to spend time in one another's presence.

Stephane told of how his interest in trees began when he was a young child and his parents arranged for him to escape the city and spend his summers with families who worked in the French forests. Later, he would join them in their work as forest caretakers, learning both the practicalities and the mysteries of caring for trees. His passion grew and he eventually chose to leave his study of architecture and pursue an advanced degree in forestry. It was his research here that led him to discover the natural healing powers of the forest itself.

Ten years ago, Stephane came upon Gemmotherapy and immersed himself in the subject and is now the leading expert in France. He is an outspoken and respected proponent of ethical care of forests in his home country and this informs his own line of Gemmotherapy products. He has formed a small collective of bud pickers and producers in the area, allowing for a successful cottage industry with a line of 40 extracts sold to individuals and Naturopaths throughout France. Having now tried their product, I can say it surpasses any extract I have experienced! Stephane is also the author of, **Gemmotherapie Les Bourgeois Au Service De La Sante' Guide Praticque et familial**, which is currently the top seller in natural healthcare for Amazon France.

So, where might this friendship and love for Gemmotherapy and trees lead the two of us? Thus far, into some pretty exciting territory that includes translation and distribution of my books in France, all new teaching exchanges throughout the coming year, and the vision for a Gemmotherapy Summer School in the Pyrenees Summer 2018.



When it comes to trees, following my curiosity and wonder has definitely proven to be a very good thing for me!

French Adventures: Part I

French Adventures: Part I

Have you ever had a holiday in which each and every day stands out with defined, unique, and rich characteristics all on its own? This has been exactly the case for me these past two weeks. It all began when, accompanied by my family, our flight from Frankfurt, Germany touched down in Toulouse, France. There, three generations of Hubeles, from 82 to 15 years of age, embarked on quite the adventure! I knew in advance that

this would be a trip to remember, but now, upon reflection, I see there may still be lessons that have yet to reveal themselves.



So, why the Pyrenees you may ask? Truth be told, the idea came by way of an unexpected email that landed in my inbox early last January. The sender was a complete stranger to me, Stephane Boistard of Lavelanet, France. I would soon learn that Stephane is the leading French expert in the field of Gemmotherapy, particularly the tree-to-bottle experience, and he was seeking a like minded colleague who shared his passion. An author, scholar, and producer of Gemmotherapy extracts, Boistard reached out to see if we might learn from one another. Our mutual curiosity and openness led to the development of an online friendship.



We would meet monthly on Skype and share our current challenges, plans for the future, and exchange ideas regarding the extracts and their healing capabilities. It soon became clear we should meet in person and since my family traditionally spends some of our summer holidays in France, why not add the Pyrenees this year? The opportunity to explore a new location in France known for its rugged spectacular beauty AND meet Stephane was certainly too good to pass up.

As a family, we have learned over our years of travel that we prefer to settle in to one home base and then explore day by day from there. We found just the perfect setting for that on the outskirts of the sleepy village of Ilhat, home to less than 30 residents. Our home for ten days sat at the end of the road and there we were rewarded with 360 degrees of splendid mountain scenery. The sunsets were as spectacular as the morning fog that rolled in over the mountain tops. A terraced lush garden was filled with raised vegetable beds and fruit trees. Lucky for us, the Mirebelle trees were bursting with juicy ripe fruit throughout our entire stay. (And, by the way, Mirebelle plums happen to be my all-time favorite fruit!)

A trail just beyond our driveway led straight up to the mountain ridge, offering vistas like I have never before experienced. While our location was remote, the bustling town of Lavelanet was a mere ten minutes away, and there we would find a twice weekly market and two fully stocked organic grocery shops.

As if this all was not enough, we had the ultimate privilege of sharing our home with Titi, truly the soul of the property. Ear-less from an early encounter with skin cancer she was truly one of the loveliest cats that I've met (don't tell Ruby.) Titi led the life we all dream of; she spent her mornings lounging on the sunny deck or garden table, moved to the shade of a fruit tree in the afternoon heat, and made her way each evening to a cozy kitchen chair to retire for the evening.



While I will save sharing my conversations with Stephane for a follow-up post, please let me indulge in some gushing over our most memorable daily excursions.

We arrived in Ilhat at nightfall and, with some help from the locals, found our way up the gravel path to our house. As darkness comes quickly in the mountains, the only exploring we did was inside the ancient stone walls of the three story building that would be our home away from home for the days to come. Bedrooms divided up and luggage unpacked, we met around the kitchen table for a simple snack and tea before heading off to bed.

The next day began with the promise of rising summer temperatures so, after an early breakfast of fruits, we took to the path we had spotted the night before. Up we climbed for over an hour before reaching a magnificent ridge trail that offered views of what appeared to be endless layer upon layer of higher and higher mountains: the Pyrenees. After a strenuous hike, we were rewarded with an invitation for an amazing vegan lunch prepared by Sabine, Stephane's wife. Following lunch, the hiking maps were spread across the table and our days ahead began to take shape.



Day two took us to the highly recommended Mirepoix Market, famous in the area for its mix of local craftsman and international food. I was immediately surprised by the number of booths advertising vegan menus. This was not the France I had experienced in years past! The find of the day was the falafel booth run by a Syrian family with a proud sign announcing that the products sold were both gluten free and vegan! As you probably know, the next thing I would want to find is a fresh juice stand, and of course I did.

The following day, thinking we would tackle the easiest local hikes first, we scheduled what we thought would be short morning walk around the perimeter of Lac de Montbel. Appearing as if it is from another world, Montbel, is an absolute gem of well preserved nature. Let me sum up our experience with this one statement: The pure magic we experienced those first three hours of solid hiking dwindled rapidly once we discovered we were only halfway around the lake, out of water, and the afternoon sun had increased the temperatures!

Roquefixade is the quintessential mountain village, home to the ruins of a Cathar Castle, without any of the tourist kitsch. It had every perfect component, including a teeny market square, a travelers inn for hikers, a bevy of curious cats, and breathtaking views. Our hike to the chateau and

summit took us through lush forests and along narrow ridges to reach a point in which one has vistas of Spain to one direction and Toulouse to the other.



Nebias, home to a magical forest and green labyrinth, was also highly recommended by my friend Stephane. His descriptive explanations placed it high on our list and he did not fail us in the least. This forest is straight out of *The Lord of the Rings* and one can be sure there are fairies lurking just behind the trees. I'd revisit that forest again and again, but the labyrinth was another story for me. Somewhere tucked away deep in my memory bank was a less than pleasant encounter with a labyrinth in England, chapters ago in my life. Funny how those memories came flooding forth when I became turned around among the giant moss covered stones. Full disclosure, a bit of panic I hadn't experienced in years paid a short but unwelcome visit, soon to disperse once I spotted the forest trail just beyond the exit.

Up a winding mountain road from the small village of Monteferrier is the entryway to the St. Barthelemy Trail. The climb takes one through a timeless enchanted forest of Beech trees before reaching the high grassy mountain ridge. We chose this hike after having enjoyed the higher elevation of Roquefixade and wanted one more similar experience before

returning to Germany. This was truly a matter of saving the best for last and I believe it was everyone's favorite outing.



Please be sure to check back in next week for Part Two that includes our follow-on visit to Murten & Laupen, Switzerland!