

Introduction

Today you can buy a special remedy to treat just about every health and beauty problem under the sun, from sunburned skin to strained muscles, skeeter bites to sleepless nights, and dry hair to dingy teeth. But until the Fabulous Fifties, most of these miraculous cure-alls (that we now take for granted) didn't even exist. Instead, folks relied on the same methods their ancestors had used for centuries to heal their wounds, cure their ills, and improve their looks.

Well, guess what? Here in the 21st century, everything old is new again. Study after study is showing just how effective those homemade healers can be—at a fraction of the cost of commercial concoctions and with none of the potential side effects.

In this book, I've gathered the top 25 health and beauty megastars, all of which you'll find in your kitchen, garden, or local supermarket (or, often on the Internet). For ease of use, each chapter is divided into two sections. One presents scads of time-tested—or, in some cases, cutting-edge—health remedies, while the other zeros in on superbly simple beauty secrets.

In addition, I've rounded up close to 100 more heroic healers in the “Best of the Rest” sections in each chapter. This supporting cast is closely related to the stars of our show, and they provide a boatload of additional ways to tap into the amazing power of Mother Nature's medicine chest and beauty kit.

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These pages are crammed full of terrific tips and tricks that show you how to prevent, cure, or heal your most annoying health and beauty dilemmas—quickly, safely, and cheaply. For instance, you'll learn how to:

- Banish arthritis pain with honey and vinegar.
- Cure carpal tunnel syndrome with chamomile tea.
- Ditch the itch of hemorrhoids with a baking soda mix.
- Make age spots fade with onion juice.
- Deflate puffy eyes with a DIY salt solution.
- Detox your overstylized hair with carrots.
- Look years younger with a delicious Smooth-Skin Smoothie.

CAUTION



While all of the homemade healers featured in these pages are among the healthiest substances you can put on or into your body, there are some things you need to keep in mind:

- None of the information in this book is intended to replace professional medical care. Always consult your doctor before you use any of the remedies presented here. That's especially important if you are taking drugs of any kind or if you are pregnant or think you might be pregnant.
- Even the safest products may irritate your skin, so before you try any topical health or beauty remedy, always test it on a small patch of skin before you use it on a larger area.

- When a tip or a potion calls for a specific amount of any ingredient, don't assume that more is better. Follow the directions and stick to the proportions given in the text. (The exception, of course, is food recipes, where artistic tinkering is the hallmark of a creative cook!)
- Essential oils, which are used throughout this book, are very potent. So always dilute them in water or another carrier oil before you apply them to your skin.
- This goes without saying (I hope!), but when any remedy specifies hot water, always make sure it is comfortable to the touch—not burning hot.

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But that's not all! You'll also find fantastic features like **You Don't Say!**, which contain the fascinating and sometimes bizarre stories behind some of our most potent homemade healers.

Just to pique your curiosity, here are a couple of fabulous factoids that you can toss around at your next neighborhood barbecue: The United States is the only country in the world where moo juice is the most popular kind of milk (page 355), and until the 1920s, avocados were considered such powerful aphrodisiacs that most respectable folks refused to eat them (see page 21).



YOU DON'T SAY!



In **Healthful Hints**, I'll show you hundreds of super-simple—and super-cheap—ways to improve your health. Sneak preview: When you peel onions, hang on to the skins. Then toss them into soups, stews, or rice (wrapped in a cheesecloth pouch) to tap into what's been called a “medicinal gold mine” (see page 253).

Beauty Secrets deliver the same kind of out-of-the-box tricks as *Healthful Hints*, but with a cosmetic twist. For instance, I'll clue you in on making a carrot facial mask that'll fight off wrinkles and improve the texture of your skin better than fancy commercial creams (see page 68).



POTENT POTION

Potent Potions include fast, fun, and foolproof formulas for making health and beauty remedies, ranging from cough syrups to skin toners, and muscle liniments to mouthwash. A quick sampling: You'll learn how to ease the itch of eczema, hives, or a



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**FIVE-MINUTE
ALL-STAR
MARINADE**

This delicious marinade will not only enhance the flavor of your favorite meat or poultry, but will also deliver the powerful health and beauty benefits of more than a half dozen of the Top 25 Homemade Healers.

½ cup of red-wine vinegar

2 tbsp. of chopped fresh oregano

2 tbsp. of chopped fresh rosemary

2 tbsp. of olive oil

4 garlic cloves, chopped

1 bay leaf

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Mix all of the ingredients in a shallow bowl, and pour over your meat or poultry. Let the meat sit, covered, in the refrigerator for 30 minutes to eight hours. Then carry on with your usual grilling or broiling routine.

YIELD: ENOUGH FOR 1½ TO 2 POUNDS OF MEAT OR POULTRY

poison-plant rash by soaking in a “cocktail” made from green-tea bags and a trio of common essential oils (see page 303).

Finally, **Fabulous Food Fixes** consist of easy-to-prepare recipes that not only taste great, but can also improve your health or your looks—or both! Just to whet your appetite, you can whip up this Five-Minute All-Star Marinade that can turn even the toughest steak or chicken into the most tender Cordon Bleu—plate special. And while you’re at it, check out the Fettuccine Sweet and Hot dish (page 89) that delivers a potent load of disease-busting antioxidants, the Get-Up-and-Go Honey Bars (page 157) that give you a powerful energy boost, and the tasty Curried Yogurt Dip (page 353) that’ll make your skin softer, smoother, and younger looking.

With all this good stuff inside, what are we waiting for? Time’s a wastin’, so let’s hit the road to good health and good looks!