



Peonies - not just for Gardens!

by
Pat Holloway

Peonies not only command center stage in old fashioned bouquets, the roots are also used in medicine (yes, they even have antioxidants), and they were used as a starchy accompaniment to meat and in stews, as well. Here are two unusual recipes from years gone by. We at the GBG believe they should be kept in the vase!

Peions istued (Stewed Peonies)

A cookery book in verse transcribed in 1986 by Richard Morris*
Liber Cure Cocorum

Take peions and hew him in morselle smalle,
Put hom (them) in a erpyn (earthen) pot, pou (thou) shalle;
Take pilled garlek and herbys anon,
Hack hom smalle er pou more don (this is done)
Put hom in po pot, and per (then) to take
Gode (good) brothe with wyte (white) greece, pou nost forsake (do not forget)
Do (to) powder them to and gode verius (powder them very well)
Colour hit with saffron and salt inow (enough)
Pou (then) put in pote pese pyngs alle (all these things)
And stue py peions pus pou shalle (and stew the peonies thus you shall)

Piony Water

Hannah Glasse, The Complete Confectioner, J. Cooke, 1782*

Take 18 piony roots fresh gathered, six ounces of bitter almonds, the leaves of rosemary, rue, wild thyme and flowers of lavender dried, of each three ounces; of cinnamon, cubebs, seeds of angelica, coriander seeds, carraway and aniseeds, each half an ounce, one gallon of rectified spirits of wine, with five gallons of soft water, and draw of three gallons by distillation.

This water is strong and powerful that it cannot be taken without the assistance of some other thing; but when dropt on crumbs of bread and sugar, you must take it the first thing in the morning, at four in the afternoon, and the last thing at night; you must not eat for an hour either before or after you take it. It is exceeding efficacious in all swoonings, weakness of heart, decayed spirits, palsies, appoplexies, and both to help and prevent a fit. It will also destroy all heaviness and coldness in the liver, restores lost appetite, and fortifies and surprisingly strengthens the stomach.

*From Nerhling, Arno and Irene. 1960. Peonies outdoors and in. Hearthside Press, Inc. New York.

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