

Did You Know You Can Eat a Pine Tree? Really! Cindy Ayres, M.H.

You can take the bark of a pine tree and grind it up and make it into flour which you then make into bread. They make bread with it in the Scandinavian countries. You can eat the pine nuts which are actually seeds. They are so yummy but contain a lot of calories, about 3,000 per pound. (I try to eat them sparingly.) The Indians took the resin and chewed on it because it freshened their breath and it helped with the bacteria and decay on their teeth. The resin also helped with throat irritation. You can make ointments with pine resin for all the “boo-boos” that are bound to happen. The needles can be made into infusions due to the high content of vitamin C in the trees. You can make cough syrup, vinegars (which tastes a lot like balsamic), and oils. The needles are good for eating, especially with the new growth that comes out each spring. My oh my! That is a plethora of good stuff.

There are around 170 different species of pine trees. There are pine, spruce and fir. How can you tell the difference? The needles of a pine have a papery sheath at the bottom of the needle and the number of needles will give you an idea. Different pines have a different number of needles. I would look it up online to check. Another way to tell them apart is that pine needles are round, spruce needles are square, and fir needles are flat. The number of needles and shape of the needles should help in identification. The only contraindication I saw was if you are pregnant, then do not use the ponderosa pine species.

What are other compounds and constituents in pine? It has Vitamin A, Vitamin C, it is drawing, protective, antiseptic, antifungal, anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory, pain relieving, expectorant, and aromatic. One of its main constituents is Shikimic acid which is the main ingredient in Tamiflu.

As I was preparing to give a presentation on pine, I was hoping to find someone with a cough so I could try out the cough syrup. Well the occasion presented itself in my five-year-old granddaughter. She was coughing at night, so I made up some cough syrup. As I was at her house, I told her I had made her some pine tree cough syrup. “Ummm,” she replied, “my favorite.” I had to laugh because she had never had it before. Pine is now one of my favorites too.

Cindy Ayres is a Master Herbalist and a recent graduate from The School of Natural Healing. She lives in the Great Salt Lake Valley and keeps busy with home, church, and her 25 grandchildren and still counting. Natural healing now has a place in her family and she is excited to continue to learn and grow in this adventure.