Experimenting with new ingredients for health: Asian plants in women's recipe books in early modern Britain

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Abstract
This paper explores the role of early modern British women in incorporating the use of Asian plants into healthcare practices. As plant circulation across Eurasia increased, knowledge of medicinal ingredients evolved, especially those from Asia. While physicians and botanists copied and translated recipes into printed books, household recipe manuscripts – often compiled by women – suggest different ways of using foreign ingredients. Rather than directly transcribing printed sources, women adjusted ingredients and methods, demonstrating practical engagement with these plants. This study retraces the use of galanga, camphor, and cardamom and their roles in domestic medicine. By examining women's manuscripts alongside botanical and medical texts, this paper highlights how these plants were adapted and integrated into daily practice. It argues that early modern women actively participated in knowledge-making by experimenting with and refining medical recipes. Their contributions shaped household medicine and influenced broader understandings of Asian plants in early modern Britain.

Keywords
household recipes, healthcare, Asian plants, empirical knowledge

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Introduction

The early modern period witnessed an increasing exchange between Europe and Asia, so that Asian plants became a group of common trading products. Although textual and visual knowledge of Asian plants had been recorded and circulated since antiquity across Eurasia, it was actually since the late fifteenth century that maritime activities provided Europeans with more opportunities to reach foreign plants and study their features and medical values.[1] Comparisons with existing discussions and popularisation of herbals and medical works took place in parallel with the flourishing of the printing trade.[2] While knowledge of Asian plants in botany and medicine became increasingly available towards the end of the seventeenth century, it is uncertain to what extent they reveal the actual use of Asian ingredients in Britain. As the access to expensive plant materials – such as spices – was still limited, were the remedies more about catering to curiosity about foreign materials than about practical use?[3]

A direct way of looking for the use of Asian plants in medicine is to trace specific materials as case studies.[4] This includes how plants received English names, how their material features helped assign them medical values in the systems of knowledge and belief, how their recipes were passed down through the centuries, and so on. As women at home played a vital role in monitoring the health conditions of family members and making remedies for ailments, the recipes they compiled demonstrate not only the influence of printed materials, women's familial and social connections but also the integration of practical needs, and their

1 See Andrew Dalby and Annette Giesecke, eds., *A Cultural History of Plants in the Early Modern Era* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023); Jennifer Milam, ed., *A Cultural History of Plants in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023); Pamela Smith and Paula Findlen, eds., *Merchants and Marvel* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

2 *Ibid*. Also see Giulia Rovelli, *Popularizing Learned Medicine in Late-17th-Century England: The Art of Physick made Plain and Easie* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2024).

3 For the discussions on the validity and use of remedies in printed herbals or medical works, see Sarah Neville, *Early Modern Herbals and the Book Trade: English Stationers and the Commodification of Botany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 168-172.

4 Numerous studies have explored specific Asian plants in early modern period, although not necessarily focusing on their knowledge and use at home. See, for instance, Heasim Sul, *A Global History of Ginseng: Imperialism, Modernity and Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 2022); Erika Monahan, "Locating rhubarb: Early Modernity's Relevant Obscurity", in *Early Modern Things: Objects and Their Histories, 1500-1800*, ed. by Paula Findlen, Second edition (London: Routledge, 2021), 297-322. In addition, there are other studies focusing on certain materials in household recipes, see Amanda E. Herbert, Jack B. Bouchard and Julia Fine, "Colonizing Condiments: Culinary Experimentation and the Politics of Disgust in Early Modern Britain", *Global Food History* 11, 1 (2024): 42-71; Hillary M. Nunn, "Local Waters and Notions of Home in Early Modern Recipe Manuscripts", *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 20, 1 (2020): 59-82.

thoughts of different recipes after experimentation.[5] These manuscripts provide a window onto empirical knowledge, that I would like to apply to the case studies of Asian plants.[6] This paper tries to follow three Asian plants from women's perspective at home and, at the same time, to pay attention to the differences between them in household recipes, popular herbals, and medical works in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The comparison can provide insight into how women selected, adapted, and shaped the knowledge of Asian ingredients.

In this paper, I would like to choose galangal, cardamom, and camphor as case examples. A primary reason is that they were less common compared with other more affordable Asian plants and spices such as cloves, nutmegs, and ginger, etc.[7] Whether and how these materials were recorded in household recipes could offer valuable clues about the use of Asian plants, and their understanding beyond a mere curiosity for foreign ingredients. Moreover, each of the plants has unique material features in its way. They also shared similarities when it came to practical uses. Their applications in daily healthcare can reveal different aspects of the understanding of Asian medicinal plants. Although less common than ginger and clove, at least in Eurasia these plants had already been circulated since the ancient or medieval period.[8] Earlier compiled knowledge of them laid the foundation for later publications that

5 There is a considerable number of studies on making knowledge at kitchen in early modern Britain, for example, see Elaine Leong, "Collecting Knowledge for the Family: Recipes, Gender and Practical Knowledge in the Early Modern English Household", *Centaurus* 55 (2013): 81-103; Elaine Leong, *Recipes and Everyday Knowledge: Medicine, Science, and the Household in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); Elaine Leong and Sara Pennell, "Recipe Collections and the Currency of Medical Knowledge in the Early Modern 'Medical Marketplace'", in *Medicine and the Market in England and Its Colonies, c. 1450-c. 1850*, ed. by Mark S.R. Jenner and Patrick Wallis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 133-152; Sara Pennell, "Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England", in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. by Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 237-258; Wendy Wall, *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

6 For empirical knowledge, see P. H. Smith, "Epistemology, Artisanal", in *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. by Marco Sgarbi (Cham: Springer, 2022), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-14169-5_1182, 1117-1125; Pamela H. Smith, Amy R. W. Meyers, and Harold J. Cook, eds., *Ways of Making and Knowing: The Material Culture of Empirical Knowledge* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014); Leong, *Recipes and Everyday Knowledge.*

7 A list of the prices of herbs and spices for domestic healthcare use can be found in Gideon Harvey, *The Family-Physician and the House-Apothecary…* (London: T. R., 1676). See note 11.

8 Cardamom was already known in antiquity, see Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, trans. T.A. Osbaldeston and R.P.A Wood (Johannesburg: IBIDIS, 2000), 6, 20. Galangal and camphor can be found in medieval texts on trade or medicine, see Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, *La Pratica Della Mercatura*, ed. by Allan Evans (Cambridge, MA.: The Mediaeval Academy of America,

were available to the public for daily use in seventeenth-century Britain.[9] For instance, these three plants received detailed discussions in the herbal *Colóquios dos simples e drogas da India* (1563), written by the Portuguese physician Garcia da Orta (1501-1568) and published in India, which was influential in early modern Europe.[10] Generally, galangal, cardamom, and camphor were categorised into 'roots', 'seeds', 'resins', and 'gums' in seventeenth-century herbals and medical works. In the 1670s, their prices were relatively high compared with other listed ingredients, although not the highest in each one's category.[11] In the next section, I will introduce each plant's material features and medical functions, then provide a general picture of each one in printed texts and household manuscripts.

Using Asian plants in a selective way

First is galangal, the aromatic rhizome of certain Asian plants of the ginger family.[12] Its stem is of a similar appearance to ginger, as is commonly found in markets today but with paler colour and rounder shape, being widely used in Southeast Asian cuisine. In English records, galangal can be traced back to the fourteenth century, which suggests a long-term exchange between Britain and Asia.[13] It was also spelled as 'galingale' or 'galanga' in the seventeenth century. Like other Asian spices, galangal was believed to be 'hot' in the Galenic system to treat coldness in the human body. It also "strengthens the brain … releeves faint hearts, takes away windiness of the womb…"[14]

1936, first publication date unknown), 65, 196; Claire Burridge, "Incense in Medicine: An Early Medieval Perspective", *Early Medieval Europe* 28 (2020): 219-255.

9 There is a large body of research on the global circulation of plants and their knowledge before the seventeenth century. For more recent works, see note 1; Federica Rotelli, "Trade and Exploration", in *A Cultural History of Plants in the Post-Classical Era*, ed. by Alain Touwaide (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), 59-78; Florike Egmond, "Shapes of Knowledge: Images and the Identification of Exotic Plants by European Naturalists in the Sixteenth Century", in *Epistemic Practices and Plant Classification in Premodern European Botanical Knowledge: An Interdisciplinary Treatment*, ed. by Fabrizio Baldassarri (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2025), 205-236. For common spices in seventeenth-century Britain, see Jillian Azevedo, *Tastes of the Empire: Foreign Foods in Seventeenth Century England* (Jefferson, NC.: McFarland, 2017), 101-108.

10 Garcia da Orta. *Colloquies on the Simples & Drugs of India*, translated with an Introduction and Index by Sir Clements Markham (London: Henry Sotheran and Co., 1913, first published 1563), 86-112, 208-212.

11 The prices: four shilling per pound for galangal and cardamom, eight shilling per pound for camphor, see Harvey, *The Family-Physician and the House-Apothecary*, 116, 120, 124.

12 *Oxford English Dictionary*, "galangal (*n.*)", December 2024. https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1004360963.

13 *Oxford English Dictionary*, "galangal (*n.*)"; Paul Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 19-25.

14 Royal College of Physicians of London. *A physicall directory, or, A translation of the London dis-*

In *Pharmacopœia Londinensis* (first published in 1618), the official pharmacopoeia of the Royal College of Physicians in London and one of the most influential medical works in seventeenth-century Britain, galangal can be found in several remedies.[15] As the English versions of the book enjoyed several reprints since the mid-seventeenth century, its influence on medical knowledge provides a general background for how medicinal plants like galangal were understood.[16] Galangal most frequently appears in the sections on compound water,[17] electuary,[18] and powder.[19] Most of the recipes for compound water were developed more recently, starting from the sixteenth century. In contrast, the part on electuary and powder has a longer history: many are borrowed from the medical works by medieval physicians such as Masawaiyh (777-857 AD) and Nicholaus Myrepsus (c. 1240-1280). The latter two types of use outnumbered those of galangal in compound water, indicating the dominant role of early medical works.[20] Mixing numerous Asian plant materials in one remedy was common, and cardamom frequently appeared along with galangal probably because of their similar medical properties. Besides, there are a few recipes to transform galangal into pills or plasters for external uses.[21]

To what extent did women at home borrow from these recipes when recording and making remedies? A search for 'galangal' (or 'galanga', 'galingale') in household manuscripts compiled in the seventeenth century unveils a fascinating picture.[22] Among the twenty-two household recipes that contain galangal, only three are used to make powders, and seventeen of them are compound waters.[23] There are recipes for balm water and Dr.

pensatory made by the Colledge of Physicians in London… by Nich. Culpeper, Gent (London: Peter Cole, 1649), 11.

15 It is worth noting that *Pharmacopœia Londinensis* was not the first work to cover the medical recipes of these Asian plants. However, it served as a good example of influential institutional works in the seventeenth century, which is why this essay heavily draws on it to contrast with household recipes. Another influential English work in sixteenth-century Britain is John Gerard, *The Herball, or, Generall Historie of Plantes, Gathered by John Gerarde of London, Master in Chirurgerie* (London: By John Norton, 1597).

16 See Clare J. Fowler, *Pharmacopoeia Londinensis 1618 and Its Descendants* (London: Royal College of Physicians, 2018).

17 Compound water: a distilled water made from multiple ingredients, rather than a single plant.

18 Electuary: "medicinal preserve or paste, ingredients being mixed with honey or syrup". Cited from Juhani Norri, ed., *Dictionary of Medical Vocabulary in English, 1375-1550: Body Parts, Sicknesses, Instruments, and Medicinal Preparations* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 332.

19 Royal College of Physicians of London, *A physicall directory*, 80-81, 88-91, 114, 124, 133, 148-150, 152-154, 157-158, 170-171, 184, 313.

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 The search of manuscripts relies on Perdita Manuscripts database. https://www.perditamanuscripts.amdigital.co.uk/

23 Women's manuscript books that contain galangal (not exhaustive): FSL, V.a.20, f. 11*r*: "Aqua

Stephen's water.[24] *Aqua mirabilis* ("miraculous water") occurs nine times, thus becoming the most popular galangal-made water in households [Fig. 1]. The quantity of different types of remedies suggests a selective assimilation of herbal and medical knowledge from existing remedies. It would be an oversimplification to claim that recipes of rare Asian plants were driven by curiosity rather than conscious practical use based on empirical knowledge. Women in household medicine might have used galangal more often as a medicinal drink than electuary or any powder of diverse ingredients. Household recipes show a shift in focus from dried or semi-dried remedies to liquid ones.

Camphor is another good example to show the differences between medieval texts and seventeenth-century domestic healthcare practices. Today camphor refers to a white, crystalline substance with a strong, penetrating aroma. It is extracted from the wood of the camphor tree (*Cinnamomum camphora* (L.) J.Presl), which is native to East Asia.[25] The wood will be chopped and boiled in water, and the camphor obtained from the steam will condense and crystallise in cooler areas. Today, the substance is more often used in medicine to treat inflammation and as a moth repellent for daily use. Camphor was also found in medieval English texts, interchangeably with the word 'camphire'.[26] Different from hot plants like galangal and cardamom, camphor was thought to be 'cold', and ideal as a cooling ingredient. [27] Because of its crystalline appearance, camphor was often included in medical works among amber, mastic, and other natural resins and gums.

Compared with galangal, the ways of using camphor were more diverse. In *Pharmacopœia Londinensis*, in addition to the three types of remedies discussed above, camphor

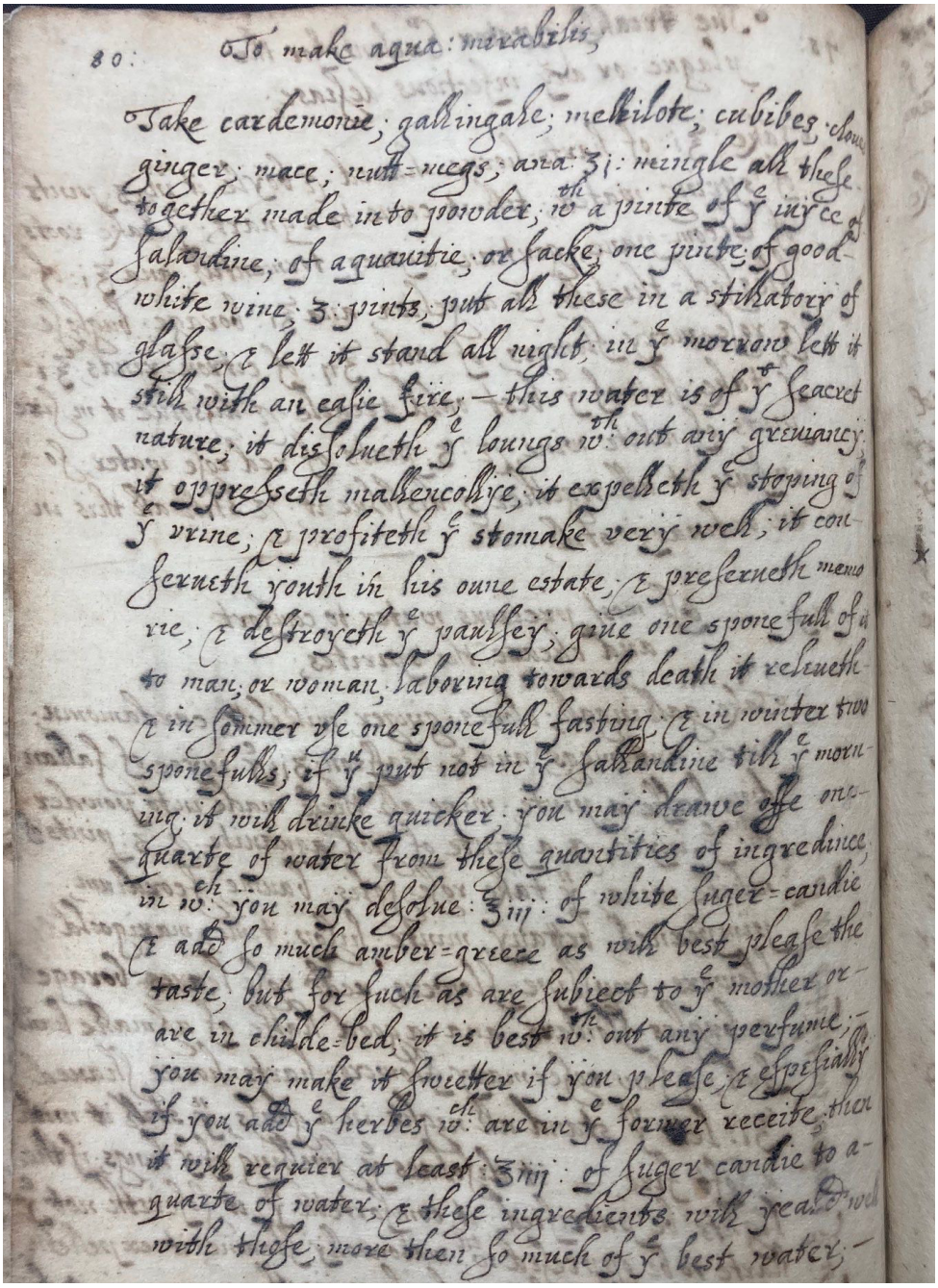
Mirabilis"; FSL, V.a.215, p. 97: "Rosa Solis"; FSL, V.a.669, p. 10: "To make Aqua Mirabilis a Slighter way"; FSL, V.b.14, p. 26: "Aqua=mirabilis"; FSL, V.b.363, p. 20: "Powder against Wind in the Stomach"; FSL, V.b.366: see next section on Winche's recipes; FSL, V.b.380, p. 84: "Balme Water"; BL, Add. MS. 27466, see note 70; BL, Add. MS. 45196, f. 81*r*: "How to make Aqua mirabilis w[hi]ch is good against any Surfeit, distemper or fainting"; BL, Add. MS. 57944, f. 15*r*: "Aqua Mirabilis. Parry"; BL, MS. Egerton 2197, f. 15*v*: "A specill powder to be drunke in wine, to helpe digestion"; BL, MS. Sloane 2485, f. 41*r*: "To make aqua mirabilis"; BL, MS. Sloane 2486, f. 22*v*: "To make aqua mirabilis"; BL, MS. Sloane 3842, ff. 24*r*-24*v*: "To make Aqua Mirabilis", "Aqua Mirabilis and the vertues of it".

[24] Balm water is a distilled water made with lemon balm, sack wine, and a few other herbs and spices. Dr. Stephen's water, also known as "Aqua Stephani", is another distilled water made using various spices, herbs, flowers, and Gascoigne wine.

[25] Hamidpour, Rafie, Soheila Hamidpour, Mohsen Hamidpour, *et al.*, "Camphor (*Cinnamomum camphora*), A Traditional Remedy with the History of Treating Several Diseases", *International Journal of Case Reports and Images* 4, 2 (2013): 86-89. doi:10.5348/ijcri-2013-02-267-RA-1.

[26] The word "camphire" could refer to henna, another type of plant which was often used as a dye. According to Miczak, camphire in early modern Britain referred to camphor rather than henna. See Marie Anakee Miczak, *Henna's Secret History: The History, Mystery & Folklore of Henna* (San Jose: Writers Club Press, 2001), 247-250.

[27] Royal College of Physicians of London, *A physicall directory*, 67.


80: To make aqua: mirabilis,

Take cardemome, gallingale, melilote, cubibes, cloues
ginger, mace, nutt-megs, ana 3j: meingle all these
togeather made into powder, wch a pinte of ye iuice of
Saladine, of aquauitie, or Sacke, one pinte; of good
white wine, 3: pints, put all these in a stilatory of
glasse, & lett it stand all night, in ye morrow lett it
still with an easie fire, — this water is of ye Secret
nature, it dissolueth ye lounge wch out any greuiancy;
it oppresseth melancollye, it expelleth ye stoping of
ye vrine, & profiteth ye stomake very much, it con-
serueth youth in his owne estate, & preserueth memo
rie, & destroyeth ye paulsey, giue one spoone full of it
to man, or woman, laboring towards death it releueth
& in Sommer vse one spoone full fasting, & in winter two
spoone fulls, if yu put not in ye Saladine till ye morn-
ing: it will drincke quicker: you may drawe offe one-
quarte of water from these quantities of ingredience,
in wch you may dissolue 3iij: of white Suger-candie
& add so much amber-greece as with best please the
taste, but for such as are subiect to ye mother or
are in childe-bed, it is best wth out any perfume; —
you may make it sweetter if you please, & especially
if you add ye herbes wch are in ye former receite, then
it will require at least 3iij: of Suger candie to a-
quarte of water, & these ingredients with yeast well
with these more then so much of ye best water; —

Fig. 1 – An *aqua mirabilis* recipe in Margaret Baker's recipe book, with detailed procedure and medicinal effects, 1650. From the British Library Collection: MS Sloane 2486, f. 22*v*. Photo by the author.

also appears in recipes for troches, ointment, cerecloth, and plaster. However, a similar feature is that most recipes provided with Latin names are transmitted from Masawaiyh, Rhasis (865-925), and Myrepsus.[28] For instance, there are *Diarhodon Abbatis*, *Philonium Persicum*, and *Laetificans,* all of which are electuaries or powders that contain camphor for a cooling function.[29] While medieval tradition occupies ample space in the official medical works, household recipes provide a contrast: camphor was not a rare ingredient in women's recipe books but was much more common in external remedies like ointment and plaster.[30] Troches or electuaries of camphor are hard to find, which suggests its limited use in daily life. Like galangal, camphor was used in daily healthcare, but in a selective way.

Cardamom had a similar situation that combines certain features of the knowledge and uses of galangal and camphor. It refers to the aromatic seeds of several plants belonging to the ginger family. The seedpod can be green or black in different species. Cardamom is native to the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and Africa, and is used in cuisine, medicine, and perfumery.[31] Similar to galangal and camphor, its earliest appearance in English records was in the fifteenth century. It was sometimes spelled as 'cardamum' throughout the early modern period. Apart from being a 'hot' plant for treating coldness, it was believed to clean the human body and provoke urine.[32]

Cardamom enjoys the most diverse type of medical uses among the three plants in

[28] Keeping Latinate terms might be due to its popularity at the time, avoiding misunderstanding, helping the readers get familiar with specialised terms, or translators' lack of knowledge, see Rovelli, *Popularizing Learned Medicine in Late-17th-Century England*, 84-86.

[29] Norri, 297: "*Diarhodon Abbatis*: Electuary containing roses and syrup of roses, attributed to Abbas Curiae…" *Philonium Persicum*: Persian philonium, an electuary containing pepper, opium and camphor; *Laetificans*: a powder made of spices, aromatics, and silver and gold leaf. Royal College of Physicians of London, *A physicall directory*, 159, 161, 180.

[30] Women's manuscript books that contain camphor (not exhaustive): FSL, X.d.457 (1-19), f. 5*r*: "Lotion for the Teeth"; FSL, V.a.215, p. 270: "Mr Beekitts infalibell healing oyntmentt for a sore brestt…"; FSL, V.a.430, pp. 46-47: "An excellent approoued plaister for the spleene which hath cured divers giuen ouer by the Phisitians", "A Receipt to take away the red spotts out of the Face after the small pox are gone"; FSL, V.a.456, f. 24*v*: "To heale a Tetter. M.r Corsley"; FSL, V.a.388, p. 257-258: "A receipt of a white playster against the bytings of venamus beasts"; FSL, V.b.301, f. 59*r*: "to Stew a leg of Beefe"; BL, Add. MS. 27466, f. 6*v*: "A water to take Sunburne off the Face & hands", see Fig. 5; BL, MS. Egerton 2197, f. 21*r*: "A medicine good for all matter of aches & sores"; BL, MS. Sloane 2486, f. 16*v*: "For an extrame heat in a womans brest".

[31] For introduction, see Kaliyaperumal Ashokkumar, Muthusamy Murugan, M.K. Dhanya, *et al*., "Botany, Traditional Uses, Phytochemistry and Biological Activities of Cardamom [Elettaria cardamomum (L.) Maton] – A Critical Review", *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 246, 112244 (2020): 1-10.

[32] Royal College of Physicians of London, *A physicall directory*, 63; John Pechey, *The Compleat Herbal of Physical Plants Containing All Such English and Foreign Herbs, Shrubs and Trees as are Used in Physick and Surgery…* (London: Red Lyon, 1694), 226.

Pharmacopœia Londinensis. Apart from those mentioned above, it can also be used in syrup and compound oil. Again, most recipes are powder, electuary, and troches copied from Masawaiyh and Myrepsus, with a few from Galen, Avicenna, and Jean François Fernel (1497-1558).[33] In household recipes, however, cardamom often appears in compound water, most of which are *aqua mirabilis*. Another common use is in *rosa solis*, a type of cordial drink made primarily with the flowers of *rosa solis* (sundew) and *aqua vitae*.[34]

Such shift of use also shared similarities with publications written or complied by apothecaries who aimed to popularise medical knowledge for a wider public. These include Nicholas Culpeper (1616-54), who first translated *Pharmacopœia Londinensis* into English in 1649. In a medical instruction written by Culpeper himself and published in 1659, galangal appears in only one recipe for electuary with simplified ingredients for digestion issues.[35] There are still four compound water recipes using galangal, including *elixir vitae*, *aqua mirabilis*, *aqua vitae composita*,[36] and celestial precious water.[37] The last type can also be externally used as eye drops after being mixed with herbal water, thus suggesting its versatile function.[38] However, the use of cardamom and camphor are even less frequent in the book. The latter was recommended in two types of compound water and an ointment added with hogs-grease only.[39] As Culpeper preferred simple, affordable, and accessible ingredients, the restrained use of foreign ingredients, especially costly ones, is perceivable here.[40] Nevertheless, his work corresponds to the daily use of galangal and cardamom in compound water drawn from household recipes: not as widely used as other common ingredients, but still employed in making remedies primarily of compound water.

The similarities between household recipes and popular medical books can also be found in works by William Salmon (1644-1713), a successor to Culpeper in the second half of the seventeenth century. Working as an apothecary opposing the monopoly of

[33] Royal College of Physicians of London, *A physicall directory*, 80-81, 85, 87-90, 127, 135, 136, 149, 152-155, 157-159, 161-164, 240, 244, 246, 249, 265, 269, 309.

[34] A brief introduction to the use of *rosa solis* in early modern recipes can be found in Jennifer Sherman Roberts, "Revisiting Jennifer Sherman Roberts' Little Shop of Horrors, Early Modern Style", *The Recipes Project*, July 30, 2020, https://doi.org/10.58079/td9t.

[35] Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper's school of physick, or, The experimental practice of the whole art wherein are contained all inward diseases from the head to the foot, with their proper and effectuall cures, such diet set down as ought to be observed in sickness or in health…* (London: N. Brook, 1659), 99-100.

[36] *Aqua vitae composita*: *aqua vitae* mixed with herbs, spices, or other medicinal ingredients.

[37] Culpeper, *Culpeper's school of physick*, 407-409, 442-445, 457-461.

[38] *Ibid*., 460.

[39] *Ibid*., 152, 450-451, 457-461.

[40] For his life and works, see Michael JG. Farthing, "Nicholas Culpeper (1616–1654): London's first general practitioner?", *Journal of Medical Biography* 23, 3 (2015): 152-158. https://doi.org/10.1177/0967772013506687.

medical practices by the Royal College of Physicians, Salmon earned success in popularising knowledge of medicine, alchemy, art, and botany.[41] In *The family dictionary, or, Household companion* (1696), one of his guidebooks for medicine and cooking, galangal and cardamom are included in the same six recipes, with five on compound water and one on powder.[42] In terms of camphor, the diversity of uses was preserved but focuses more on plaster, ointment, and compound water compared with *Pharmacopœia Londinensis*.[43] Like galangal and cardamom, the types of use were limited – a feature in the domestic practice of using Asian plants.

However, do the similarities between medical publications and household recipes suggest that women were users or transmitters – even if competent or informed ones – rather than producers of knowledge? It is worth briefly considering these women's background and how much they knew about the plants. The women authors cited in this essay (whose names are known)[44] came from the gentry class or the nobility, some of whom have been discussed by scholars on empirical knowledge making. Access to ingredients and textual knowledge (from other women in the social circles and publications) was available, which granted space for experimentation with recipes. Although women tended to prefer instructions over descriptions of individual plant in their manuscripts, evidence of the latter is still traceable, such as in Elizabeth Freke's (1642-1714) recipe book, in which she recorded each plant as a separate entry, briefly listing its medicinal effects and uses.[45] However, to what extent women were aware of and appreciated the foreign origins of these plants remains difficult to establish, given the current state of research.

As already touched upon above, a general look at what had (not) been borrowed from printed books to manuscripts already reveals a different answer: the influence of the physicians' authority was selectively assimilated into daily practices using Asian plants. This once again highlights women's identity as chemical medicine practitioners.[46]

41 Craig Ashley Hanson, *The English Virtuoso: Art, Medicine, and Antiquarianism in the Age of Empiricism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 111-113.

42 William Salmon, *The family dictionary, or, Houshold [sic] companion wherein are alphabetically laid down exact rules and choice physical receipts for the preservation of health…* (London: 1695), page unnumbered.

43 *Ibid*., page unnumbered.

44 For their names, see Bibliography – Manuscripts at the end of the essay. For their individual background, see Patricia Pender and Rosalind Smith, eds., *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); The Recipes Project also covers a considerable number of blog entries on them, see https://recipes.hypotheses.org/.

45 BL, Add. MS. 45718, f. 254*r*: "Camphire. Takes pains of the Head coming of Cold, takes away inflammations. Cooling any place itt is applied to. Itt resists putrefactions & poysons…"

46 For women's involvement in distilling and chymistry, see Jayne Elisabeth Archer, "Women and Chymistry in Early Modern England: The Manuscript Receipt Book (c. 1616) of Sarah Wigges", in *Gender and Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Kathleen P. Long, Second

As for recipes in popular medical books, they were not entirely or exactly copied in household manuscripts. Although the Galenic system of classifying temperaments of plants was widely accepted in daily practice, women's selection and transmission of knowledge placed highly value on practicality. The goal was to make the recipes feasible and accessible, which means that empirical experience not only ran through the process but was also the ultimate aim. Therefore, it is common to see paraphrasing of instructions, supplementation of details to the procedure, and adjustment of ingredients and distilling methods according to need, as will be unfolded in the following sections. More importantly, when formulating new ideas, women drew inferences from existing knowledge of plants and integrated their sensory experiences of the materials. We will see that women created new recipes utilising material features of these Asian plants, even not necessarily for medical function, but for more pleasant sensory effects in daily life. Compared with printed books, these recipes reveal realistic aspects of using and making knowledge.

Practicality, adjustment, and elaboration

Apart from selectively using recipes from publications, women at home made adjustments based on the formulas. This can serve as another clue for the actual uses of Asian plants. Among all household recipes that contain one or more of the three Asian plants, *aqua mirabilis* is the most common type. Therefore, I would like to take it as the first example of domestic use.

Aqua mirabilis is a type of cordial water made with spices and strong alcohol. It was one of the two popular drinks that employed various spices in the seventeenth century.[47] Early recipes of *aqua mirabilis* in printed materials can be found in *A right profitable booke for all diseases called…* (first published in 1582), a medical work written by the physician and surgeon Peter Levens (active 1552-1587), which was reprinted several times until 1664. The recipe contains several Asian plants, including galangal and cardamom:

> ¶ Take of Galingall, Cloues, Maces, Cucubes, Ginger, Cardomomum, Nutmegs, Millilot, Saffron, Egrimony water foure vnces, and beat all these into powder the quantity of a dram and somwhat more: then take of the iuice of Selondine, and a pint of M. *George Kebels* water of the best and the first: put of the same water beeing well mingled in a stillatory of glasse, and let it be stopped well and close, and so let it stand for the space of foure and twenty houres, and then distill them with a soft fire for the space of a naturall day.[48]

edition (Abingdon – New York: Routledge, 2016), 191-216.

47 Azevedo, *Tastes of the Empire*, 101-102. Another popular drink is Dr. Stephen's water.

48 Peter Levens, *A right profitable booke for all diseases called, The pathway to health. Wherein are to be founde most excellent & approued medicines of great vertue… First gathered by Peter Leuens…* (London: Edward VVhite, 1596), 112-113.

Apart from galangal and cardamoms, other soaked plants are also from Asia, and all botanical ingredients, including the juice, are of hot quality. The method involves soaking spices in juice and alcohol, then distilling the liquid through heat.[49] Another popular medical work that contains the recipe of *aqua mirabilis* is *Pharmacopœia Londinensis*. The recipe in the first English edition shows less variety of ingredients: "Take of Cloves, Galanga, Cubebs, Mace, Gardamoms, Nutmegs, Ginger, of each one drachm, juyce of Chelondine,[50] half a pound, Aqua-vitae, a * pound, White Wine three pints (or three pound which you please) Infuse them twenty four hours, and then draw a quart of water from them, by an Alembick".[51]

Here, the proportion of alcohol is higher than in the first recipe, removing a few ingredients, including agrimony, saffron, melilot, and celandine. The drink can heat cold stomachs, purify lungs, prevent apoplexies, and restore speech loss.[52] In a later edition of *Pharmacopœia Londinensis* translated by Culpeper in 1653, *aqua vitae* was replaced by spirits of wine, which is more refined and stronger.[53] The two widely circulated recipes from *A right profitable booke* and *Pharmacopœia Londinensis* served as representative versions of *aqua mirabilis* recipes, with revised versions published in other medical works in the seventeenth century.

In household recipes, different versions of this recipe demonstrate a higher level of detail on the procedure and the pursuit of more practical instruction, such as adjusting ingredients for different levels of medicinal strength. This is mostly obvious in the recipe book compiled by Rebeckah Winche (d. 1713) [Fig. 2], who was from a medical family and married Sir Humphrey Winche, a politician and member of the Parliament between the 1660s and 1680s.[54] Winche's recipe book was compiled in 1666, in which a recipe from the 1653 English edition of *Pharmacopœia Londinensis* was included, titled as "Aqua Mirabilis the strongest sort".[55] Winche added that: "…you may if you please put aqua vite instead of the spirit of wine & destill itt in a cold still & itt will be hot enough".[56] This means Winche was aware of both versions of ingredients, and she had probably tried both to added a comment. In addition, she was familiar with distilling methods. While the recipe in *Pharmacopœia Londinensis* suggests hot distillation, Winche noted that the cold still – a

[49] "M. George Kebels water" probably refers to an alcoholic drink, but it is unknown what ingredients it consists of.

[50] Chelondine: calendine

[51] Royal College of Physicians of London, *A physicall directory*, 90.

[52] *Ibid*.; Levens, *A right profitable booke…*, 112-113.

[53] Royal College of Physicians of London, *Pharmacopœia Londinensis*. 67.

[54] For Winche's life, see anonymous, "The Winche Project", *emroc: early modern recipes online collective,* https://emroc.hypotheses.org/ongoing-projects/the-winche-project.

[55] FSL, V.b.366, p. 11.

[56] *Ibid*.

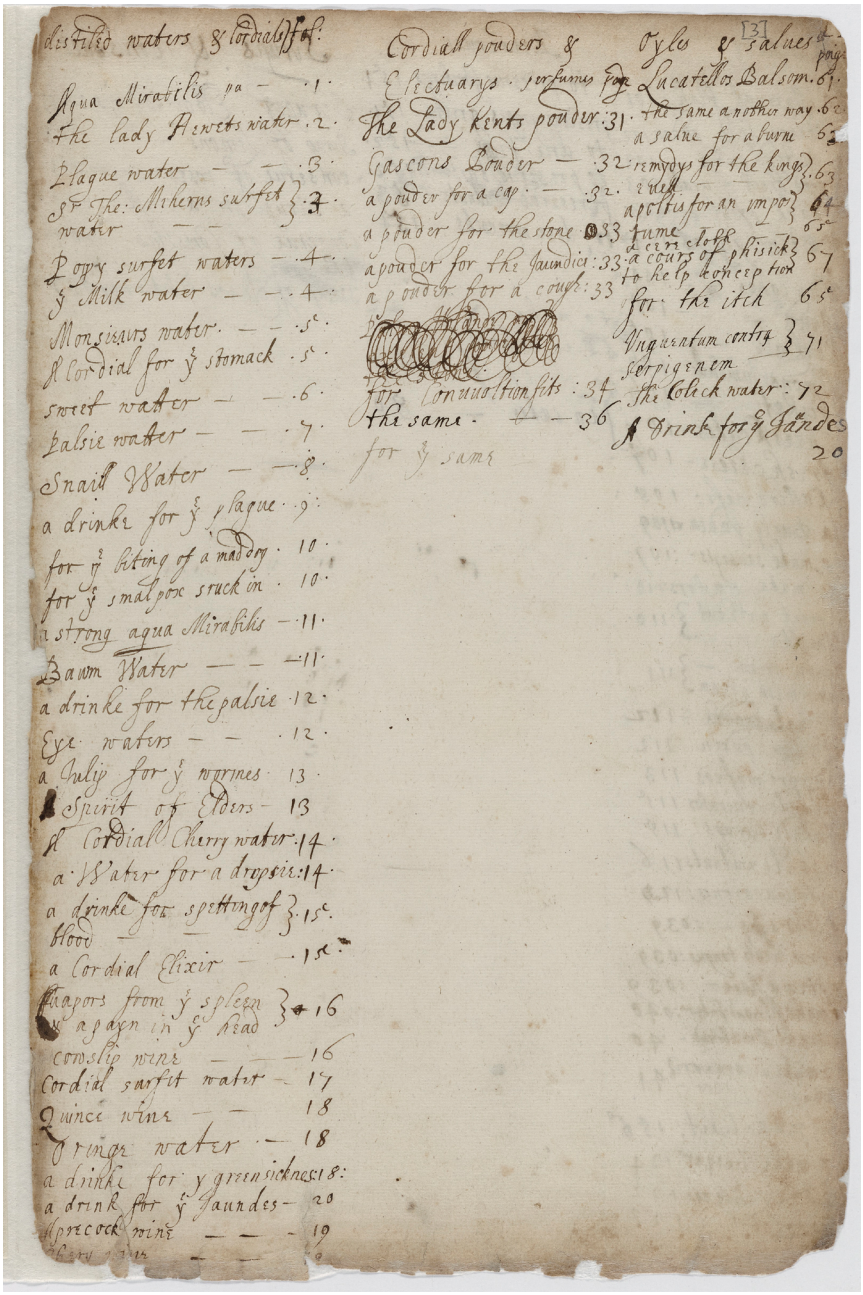


Fig. 2 – Table of contents in Rebeckah Winche's recipe book, ca. 1666. It contains three entries of *aqua mirabilis*: two on the same folio, and "a strong aqua Mirabilis" on the other folio. From Folger Shakespeare Library Collection: V.b.366, p. [3].

method without heating but relies on slow evaporation and condensation of ingredients – would be enough for achieving a desired 'hot' drink. Here, hot refers to the Galenic quality, which is one of the reasons for employing Asian plants. Combining the theory and practical experience, Winche added comments to the recipes that she found helpful.

While the recipe from the institution seems too strong, Winche recorded two more versions of *aqua mirabilis* and placed them before the most potent recipe, which suggests their lighter medicinal effects [Fig. 3]. The first is titled "aqua mirabilis" with a sidenote, "Mrs. Hobby", suggesting the source of information.[57] The recipe includes more floral and herbal materials than *A right profitable booke* and *Pharmacopœia Londinensis*. Based on existing spices and alcohol, there are sack wine, melilot flowers, rosemary flowers, cowslip, borage, bugloss, marigold, a pint of the juice of lemon balm, half a pint of the juice of spearmint.[58] To make the drink, Winche recommended to: "…bruse the spices & seeds & steppe all these together all night: the next say distill itt in an ordinary still. laying hartstongue leaves in the botom of the still & let itt drope on suger candy or double refine suger:/ iff you put in more minte itt will taste too much of it".[59]

Compared with the previous versions, this recipe contains more local plants, which are more accessible than Asian ones. With sugar and added ingredients, the distilled water will be diluted and taste lighter than the original version. It suits the need for a gentler drink with a more pleasant taste. More importantly, this also helps lower the cost. An earlier printed version can be found in *The Queen's closet opened…* , a book of physick and food preservation recipes, which were claimed to be "presented to the Queen" Henrietta Maria.[60] It is highly possible that Mrs. Hobby referred to this version of *aqua mirabilis*, which is said to be "Sir Kenelm Digby's way" in the printed book.[61] While the ingredients are almost the same, the recipe in *The Queen's closet* includes angelica water and red-rose water, but only mentions "sugar one pound" following the juices.[62] The version by Mrs. Hobby is more detailed about using sugar and notes the overuse of mint affecting the taste, which indicates the sign of experimenting the recipe from the publications.

The third version of *aqua mirabilis* in Winche's recipe book follows the same way of adjusting: adding more local ingredients and liquid from Britain or continental Europe. In

[57] FSL, V.b.366, p. 1.

[58] *Ibid*.

[59] *Ibid*.

[60] Elizabeth Spiller, "Introductory Note", in *Seventeenth-century English Recipe Books: Cooking, Physic and Chirurgery in the Works of Elizabeth Talbot Grey and Aletheia Talbot Howard*, ed. by E. Spiller (London: Routledge, 2016), xxxviii-xxxix.

[61] W. M., *The Queen's Closet opened: incomparable secrets in Physick, Chirurgery, Preserving, Candying and Cookery, as they were presented to the Queen… Transcribed from the true copies of her Majesties own receipt books…* (London: Christ. Eccleston, 1662), 290-291.

[62] *Ibid*.

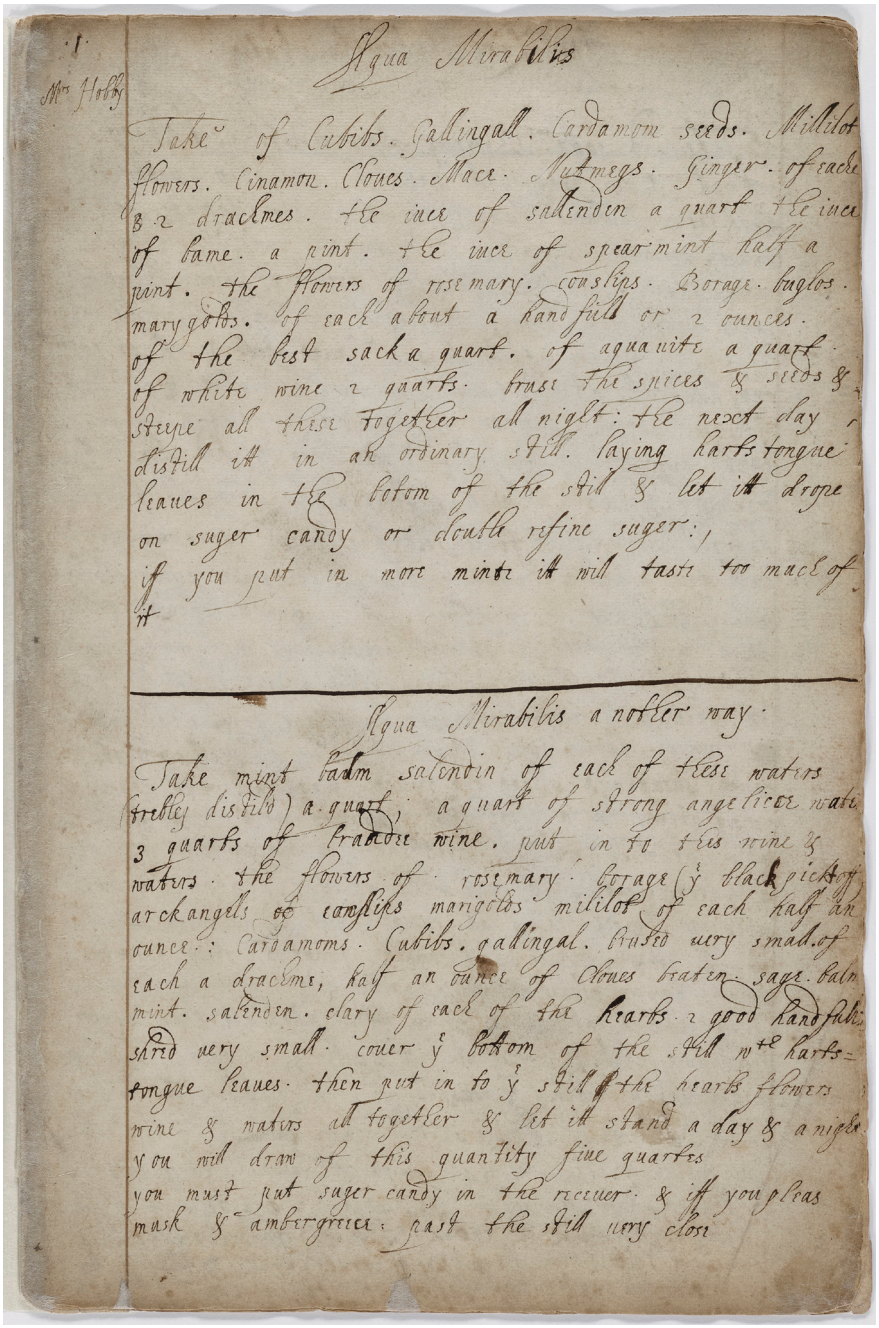


Fig. 3 – Two *aqua mirabilis* recipes of lighter effect. From Folger Shakespeare Library Collection: V.b.366, p. 1.

addition to the ingredients mentioned in Mrs. Hobby's version, a quarter of strong angelica water is added. Three quarts of brandy replaced white wine and aqua vitae in previous recipes.[63] The change of alcohol is likely to be a creation by women at home since recipes published before 1670 did not mention the use of brandy for *aqua mirabilis*. In terms of spices, nutmeg and mace are removed, however, the quantity of cloves increases from one drachm to half an ounce.[64] The adjustment made on the ingredients means Winche probably encountered the version by Digby but did not entirely copy it – a sign of experimenting and improving the recipe.

Among the three recipes, the third one has the most detailed procedure. This is demonstrated in the selection and processing of materials. The required parts of the plants and flowers are noted: "…the flowers of rosemary. Borage (the black pickt off), arckangels of cowslips…"[65] These materials should be "shred very small" before being put into the bottle.[66] Sugar is noted as compulsory, and aromatic ingredients like musk and ambergris can be added according to one's need.[67] The diversity of materials with a higher proportion of local plants, details of processing ingredients, and optional choices of adding aromatics well demonstrate the pursuit of the practicality of making and using medicinal drinks with Asian plants at home. Women's versions in household manuscripts further prove the actual use and experiment with different ingredients.

The adjustment of the recipes in Winche's recipe book is not the only case, as adjustment of *aqua mirabilis* from printed materials can be found in other seventeenth-century household recipes compiled by women.[68] In fact, it is more difficult to find the exact identical versions of recipes circulated in publications [Fig. 1]. Women at home often had certain ingredients removed, replaced, added, or adjusted the proportion. This could be a result of pursuing a better taste, desired effects, or subjected to the availability of ingredients, which formed a part of experimental science at home.

In another anonymous manuscript recipe book, "Cordial waters simple waters and

63 FSL, V.b.366, p. 1.

64 *Ibid*.

65 *Ibid*.

66 *Ibid*.

67 *Ibid*.

68 Other examples: FSL, V.b.380, p. 86: apart from the ingredients commonly seen in printed recipes, the author (an anonymous lady) noted to add "what cordial flowers you please… in a cold still…"; FSL, V.b.342, pp. 1-2: the recipe resembles Mrs. Hobby's version in Winche's recipe book. It has "Juice of mint, & balme of each a pint, Buglas, Burag, & cowslips…", and requires cold still; BL, Add. MS. 27466, f. 10*r*: this recipe is similar to the third version in Winche's recipe book, using spices and various local plants. However, it does not include *aqua vitae* but only white wine and "strong angelica water" with flat still. Another trace of experiment is that Mary Doggett (the author) commented on the effect and usage: "this is most excellent water for many diseases inwardly, In the Summer use one Spoonfull a week in the winter 2".

syrrups" compiled around 1680, there is one recipe for making "Aqua Mirabilis a Slighter way".[69] It is noted to be from "Lord Paulet's daughter: Mrs. Warton".[70] The ingredients largely follow the version in *A choice manual of rare and select secrets in physick and chyrurgery,* a printed collection of recipes compiled by the Countess of Kent, Elizabeth Grey (1582-1651): "Take three pints of White wine, one pint of Aqua vitae, one pint of juice of Salandine, one drachm of Cardamer, a drachm of Mellilot flours, a drachm of Cubebs, a drachm of Galingal, Nutmegs, Mace, Ginger and Cloves, of each a drachm, mingle all these together over night, the next morning set them a stilling in a glass Limbeck".[71] Grey made adjustments to the version in *Pharmacopœia Londinensis* by increasing the proportion of juice of celandine and adding melilot flowers.[72] Compared with the recipe in *A choice manual*, the quantity of each type of ingredient was doubled in Mrs. Warton's version, probably to suit a higher need in her family. To make the drink lighter, Mrs. Warton did not add any juice of other plants, flowers, or other new ingredients but simply replaced the hot still method (heating the liquid) with the cold still.[73] Using or noting the optional gentler way was still a common method of adjusting recipes in this case.

This also appears in other household recipes of *aqua mirabilis*.[74] Sometimes it is cold still, or something between the cold still and alembic still, as shown in an *aqua mirabilis* recipe in Mary Doggett's (date of birth and death unknown) recipe book compiled in 1682. Her recipe is based on the one from *The Queen's closet opened*, which recommends using "an ordinary or glass still", namely a hot still.[75] This was also copied in the recipes in Winche's book as discussed above.[76] However, Doggett chose 'flat still', a type of still with a broader base than alembic still and suitable for a moderate heat: it is stronger than cold still but gentler than alembic still.[77] The adjustment shows that women at home had different considerations and ways of altering the strength of the drink, and this was undoubtedly based on the knowledge of distillation.

Mrs. Warton's and Mary Doggett's versions of *aqua mirabilis*, together with the ones mentioned above, show the flexibility of assimilating foreign ingredients into remedies.

69 FSL, V.a.669, p. 10. See note 23 for the complete recipe.

70 *Ibid*.

71 Elizabeth Grey, *A choice manual of rare and select secrets in physick and chyrurgery collected and practised by the Right Honorable, the Countesse of Kent, late deceased…* (London: W.I., 1653), 4-5.

72 *Ibid*.

73 FSL, V.a.669, p. 10.

74 For example, FSL, V.b.342, pp. 1-2: "Aquamarabilliss my Lady Lockhartt"; BL, Add. MS. 27466, f. 10*r*: "A very good aqua Mirabilis wat[e]r". The recipes in these manuscript books chose cold still or flat still.

75 W. M., *The Queen's Closet opened…*, 291.

76 FSL, V.b.366, p. 1.

77 BL, Add. MS. 27466, f. 10*r*.

Besides ingredients and distilling methods, the way of describing the instruction also differs between authors/compilers, which means the recipes are not the products of simply copying and pasting from books or other household recipes but went through thinking and practice, and eventually displayed with personal preference and considerations of practicality.

From recipes of *aqua mirabilis* in women's manuscripts, we can be certain that galangal and cardamom were used to make this drink. The recipes in early publications like *Pharmacopœia Londinensis* were too strong for daily use. However, not being directly put into daily use does not mean Asian plants existed more as curiosities in texts. To achieve the desired effects, women revised the recipes to make the medicinal drink milder by adding other herbal and floral ingredients, increasing the proportion of gentle ones, reducing the usage of strong alcohol, or applying a softer distilling method. This was a combination of information exchanges between women at home and the borrowing and revising of existing recipes from publications, which were also updated during the process.

Creating new ways of using Asian plants

In recipes of *aqua mirabilis*, galangal and cardamom existed in the first place. We can infer the actual use of two plants from changes made in household recipes. The encounter between new ingredients and the domestic space also took place conversely – Asian plants were added to existing recipes to update ingredients or even create new recipes. This section will take all three plants as examples, showing how they were utilised thanks to women's creativity and their knowledge of plants, medicine, and cookery.

Another cordial drink, which was less popular than *aqua mirabilis* but gradually integrated Asian plants, is *rosa solis*, which in English means the dew of the sun. It also refers to the plant *rosa solis* (sundew) itself. The plant received the name because the shiny and sticky droplets on the leaves resemble morning dew.[78] Blossoming only in summer months, it was a valuable plant for making drinks, commonly with *aqua vitae*.[79] *Rosa solis* was believed to cure the consumption, diseases of the lungs, shortness of breaths, comfort the heart and weak spirits.[80]

In the late sixteenth century, there were already different ways of using *rosa solis* as a medicinal drink. As early as 1588, cookery and medical books published recipes for put-

[78] Marcus Harrison, *Plants and the Plague: The Herbal Frontline* (Lostwithiel: Marcus Harrison, 2015), 212.

[79] See Roberts, "Revisiting Jennifer Sherman Roberts' Little Shop of Horrors…".

[80] William Turner, *The first and seconde partes of the herbal of William Turner Doctor in Phisick, lately ouersene, corrected and enlarged with the thirde parte, lately gathered…* (Collen: Arnold Birckman, 1568), 79; John Parkinson, *Theatrum Botanicvm: The Theater of Plants. Or, An Herball of Large Extent…Vol. II.* (London: Tho. Cotes, 1640), 1053.

ting sundew flowers into *aqua vitae*. A simple version is to put flowers of *rosa solis*, gold leaf, rosemary flowers, and sugar into a pint of *aqua vitae*, which should be distilled and stored.[81] A more complicated version is to have dates and spices, including ginger, nutmeg, aniseeds, and liquorice beaten into powder, which will be added into *aqua vitae* for a cold still.[82] As putting gold leaf into drinks is costly, the luxurious quality of *rosa solis* drink was more distinct than *aqua mirabilis*.

In the same period, *rosa solis* was sometimes used to make rare and curious drinks, as instructed in books for housewives. The recipe is called 'water of life' and contains several local plants like lemon balm, burnet, rosemary, tormentil, red roses, carnations, and hyssop. There are also common spices including cinnamon, ginger, nutmegs, cloves, and saffron.[83] Along with various ingredients including mutton, pigeon meat, egg yolk, sugar, etc., three gallons of wine will be added to the alembic for a hot still.[84] The recipe is claimed to be a panacea for numerous diseases whether hot or cold ones, which could serve to cater to the curiosity for spices and herbal medicine. However, besides the diverse ways of making *rosa solis* drink, precious spices like galangal and cardamom were not found among them.

The diversity of making *rosa solis* was well extended throughout the seventeenth century, and in *Pharmacopœia Londinensis*, galangal and cardamom were added as new ingredients: "Take of Nutmegs, Annis seeds, Coriander seeds, of each an ounce, Galanga, Ginger, Cloves, of each half an ounce, Red-rose leaves a handful, Ros-solis six handfuls, Liquoris two ounces, Cardamoms, Zedoary, Grains of Paradice, Calamus, Aromaticus, of each a drachm, Yellow Sanders two drachms, Red Sanders, Cinnamon, of each an ounce and an half, Of the best Aqua-vitae, twelve pints, make an infusion of them for eight daies, then strain it and ad to the liquor, a pound and an half of Sugar".[85]

Apart from galangal and cardamom, a variety of spices are added. As *rosa solis* was considered a hot plant, new ingredients of the cold property were added, such as yellow and red sanders. Culpeper noted that it is the drying and binding quality of *rosa solis* being valued here, and the ingredients were more targeted at the lung disease rather than hot and

81 John Partridge, *The widowes treasure plentifully furnished with sundry precious and approoued secretes in phisicke and chirurgery for the health and pleasure of mankinde…* (London: Edward White, 1588), page unnumbered.

82 *Ibid*.

83 Thomas Dawson, *The good husvvifes ievvell VVherein is to be found most excellent and rare deuises for conceits in cookerie, found out by the practise of Thomas Dawson… and the way to distill many precious waters, with diuers approued medicines for many diseases…* (London: Edward White, 1587), 47-48.

84 *Ibid*.

85 Royal College of Physicians of London, *A physicall directory*, 90.

cold qualities.[86] The balance of hot and cold ingredients, together with the cold still method for a mild distillation, suggests a gentle approach. Another similar recipe appears in *Pharmacopœia Bateana* (1694), a medical work purportedly translated by William Salmon from the Latin texts by George Bate (1608-1669).[87] The use of multiple spices in *rosa solis* drink became common in the seventeenth century. The changes made in the publications were also embodied in household recipes. When it came to the mid-seventeenth century, *rosa solis* in household recipes began to include galangal, cardamom, and other uncommon spices, too [Fig. 4].

However, the relationship between printed texts and household recipes was not a straightforward copy from publications to manuscripts. New ingredients were often added, at times even replacing those found in printed texts authored by physicians and apothecaries. Sometimes, the revision overlaps with the update in publications, thus complicating the picture. Household recipes of *rosa solis* compiled around 1600 selectively combine the published ones in the late sixteenth century.[88] In a recipe from the manuscript book originally owned by Margaret Baker (date of birth and death unknown)[89] with a signed date of 1650, there is a recipe of *rosa solis* which shares more common ground to those in the late sixteenth century. However, it contains cardamom, which is hardly seen in recipes before mid-seventeenth-century English sources except for *Pharmacopœia Londinensis*.[90]

Although Baker's recipe book was compiled about one year after the publication of *Pharmacopœia Londinensis*, it is hard to determine that the latter influenced Baker's inclusion of cardamom. The two recipes are different in terms of ingredients: Baker's recipe lacks some spices, including zedoary, grains of Paradise, aromatic calamus, and red and yellow sanders, and it contains white pepper and raisins – ingredients which are not to be found in other recipes of *rosa solis* drink but only in those of the syrup of *rosa solis*.[91] Moreover, Baker's recipe contains a unique ingredient which no other recipes have: *manus Christi* (hand of Christ), a type of medicinal confection made of sugar, rose water, gold leaf, and aromatic ingredients.[92] The high-level adaptation and inventive combination of ingredients lead to different possible explanations: Baker might have accessed to the *Pharmacopœia Londinen-*

86 *Ibid*.

87 George Bate, *Pharmacopœia Bateana, or, Bate's dispensatory translated from the second edition of the Latin copy, published by Mr. James Shipton: containing his choice and select recipe's, their names, compositions, preparations, vertues, uses, and doses, as they are applicable to the whole practice of physick and chyrurgery by William Salmon …* (London: S. Smith and B. Walford, 1694), 734.

88 FSL, V.a.388, p. 157.

89 See Anonymous, "The Baker Project", *emroc: early modern recipes online collective,* https://emroc.hypotheses.org/ongoing-projects/the-baker-project.

90 BL, MS. Sloane 2486, f. 24*v*.

91 Partridge, *The widowes treasure*, page unnumbered.

92 Peter Brears, *Cooking and Dining in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (London: Prospect Books, 2015), 563.

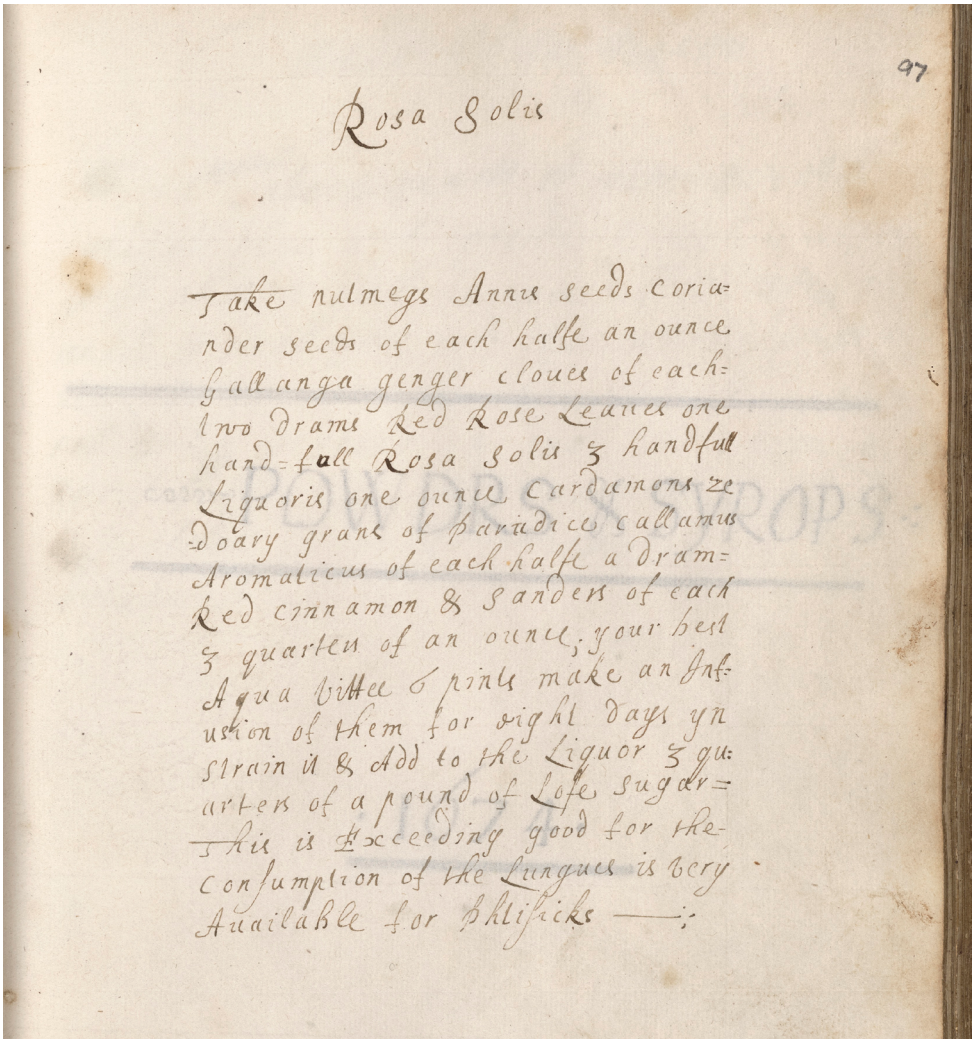


Fig. 4 – *Rosa solis* recipe in Susanna Packe's cookbook, 1674. From Folger Shakespeare Library Collection: V.a.215, p. 95.

sis and borrowed cardamom, which she found to be valid; or, Baker added cardamom based on her consideration and knowledge of plants and spices. In the discussions below, I will go back to her recipe book, which further reveals her creativity in using Asian plants.

While *rosa solis* shows a somewhat blurry and complex image of new ways of using Asian plants, other recipes are more distinct in showing the creativity of medicine making and cookery by women at home. Camphor serves as a good example because of its mate-

rial features and versatile uses. In the Introduction, we have seen that camphor was often recommended in recipes for inflammation because of its cooling property. External uses like unguent and plaster for sores and aches were common. One group of the remedies is to use camphor for toothache and gum issues.

The inclusion of camphor in treating teeth can be found in several seventeenth-century medical publications. In a relatively early example, published in *A rich storehouse, or treasure for the diseased* in 1631, the authors, who were medicine practitioners, recommended boiling camphor, vinegar, honey, a few other herbs, and spices in *aqua vitae* until the liquid becomes hard substance, which the patient could then put between the teeth to ease the pain.[93] The tooth-pain relieving feature was well utilised at home, as women also used camphor to make lotion for the teeth. Here, 'lotion' means medicinal washes in the seventeenth century. In Jane Staveley's (fl. seventeenth century) recipe book dated between 1693 and 1694, she dissolved two drachms of camphor in four ounces spirit of wine, then added one ounce of tincture of myrrh and tincture of bark each, which is diluted by twelve ounces of distilled water.[94] The liquid ingredients used here are antiseptic or astringent, which are ideal for easing inflammation and preventing infections. Although camphor occasionally appeared in published recipes for mouthwash for toothache,[95] the combination of the tinctures and spirit of wine was rarely seen in printed materials written by physicians.

The material feature of cooling and alleviating inflammation was also utilised for other human body parts. Another way of using camphor, which is less common in medical works, is for facial treatment, which assigns camphor both medicinal and cosmetic value. The use is easier to trace in popular recipe books such as Girolamo Ruscelli's widely circulated work *De Secreti del reverend donno Alessio Piemontese* (1555) (*The Secrets of the Reverend Maister Alexis of Piemont* in English version). Ruscelli recommended using camphor, brimstone, cuttlebone, and rose water to make an ointment for burnings or scurf on the face.[96] Camphire also appeared in a recipe to "remedie spots and markes" on the

[93] George Wateson and A. T. *A rich storehouse, or treasure for the diseased … First set forth … by G. W. And now seuenthly augmented and inlarged by A. T. practitioner in physicke and chirurgerie* (London: Philemon Stephens and Christopher Meredith, 1631), 310.

[94] FSL, X.d.457 (1-19), p. 5. There are several pages marked as f. 1v. in the online catalogue, including the cited folio here.

[95] For example, William Salmon, *Synopsis medicinæ a compendium of physick, chirurgery, and anatomy: in IV books: shewing the signs, causes, judgments, and various ways of curing all diseases…* (London: Th. Dawks, 1681), 634-635; Anonymous, *The Country-mans Physician. Where is Shew'd by a Most Plain and Easie Manner, how Those that Live Far from Cities, Or Market Towns, and Cannot Have the Advice of Physicians, May be Able of Themselves, by the Help of this Book, to Cure Most Diseases Happening to the Body of Man…* (London: Richard Chiswel, 1680), 24-25.

[96] Girolamo Ruscelli, *A verye excellent and profitable booke conteining sixe hundred foure score and odde experienced medicines apperteyning unto phisick and surgerie, long tyme practysed of the expert and Reuerend Mayster Alexis, which he termeth the fourth and finall booke of his secretes… Trans-*

human body, with several skincare ingredients including ceruse, roots of several plants, oil, pigeon's dung, egg white, and orange juice.[97]

While it is hard to know if these recipes were actually used in practice, household recipes provide evidence of experimentation and creativity in harnessing the material properties of camphor. In a manuscript book owned and passed down by women in the Granville family, many recipes were written down between the 1660s and 1680s. Among them, there is one using camphor for removing the red spots on the face after the recovery from small pox. Fumitory water, tansy water, sulphur vivum, and powder of camphire should be boiled together. When the liquid gets cold, strained lemon juice can be added, followed by a pint of white wine. The liquid should be left under the sun for five or six days before use.[98]

The materials used here significantly differ from those in the publications, which could be due to the availability of materials and personal preference. Based on the ingredients, this is likely to be used on the face since sulphur and lemon were usually for external use, and the latter was often applied to alleviate blemishes. Adding camphor would help cool down and remove the spots left by small poxes, which was a detailed and practical application of the material. Following this recipe is a simplified and gentler version of the remedy for the same purpose: a pint of milk replaces fumitory water, tansy water, and sulphur. Together with white wine, the liquid will be boiled with camphor.[99] To develop the recipe, the women of the Granville family drew on their knowledge of the medicinal properties of camphor and common treatments for skin conditions. And they were not the only ones who tried making use of the cooling quality, as Mary Doggett, in her recipe book, also noted a recipe that employs camphor for the sunburn on the face and hands [Fig. 5].[100] This new use shares similarities with camphor-based teeth lotion: while the purpose remained the same, the remedy's format or function was adapted to meet a specific need. This well reveals the use of camphor in practice – women experimenters not only followed the existing recipes but also invented other uses based on the material features and practicality.

In addition to external use, camphor was also applied for internal use by women, which is rarely seen in printed works or remedies developed by physicians. There are household recipes for drinks containing camphor, and a rarer type of using camphor is cookery.[101]

lated out of Italian into Englishe by Richard Androse (London: 1569), 25.

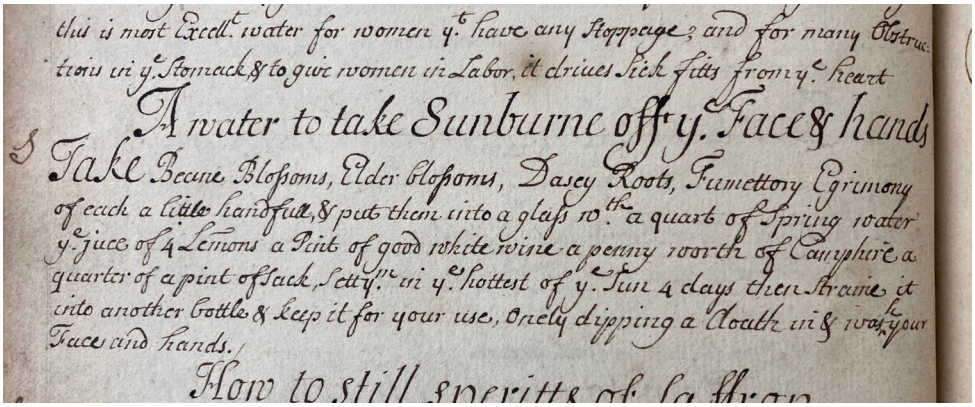
97 *Ibid*., 32-33.

98 FSL, V.a.430, p. 47.

99 *Ibid*.

100 BL, Add. MS. 27466, f. 6*v*. Another example from Mary Hookes' recipe book, FSL, V.b.342, pp. 19-20: "To make the Faice look young", a water made with calves' feet, milk, rice, bread, butter, egg, camphire, and alum.

101 It also appears in publications, such as in Levens, *A right profitable booke…*, f. 50v. There is a recipe for a decoction to drink with wine, treating hematuria due to the rupture of a vein inside the body, particularly the liver, kidney, and bladder.


this is most Excell.t water for women y.t have any Stoppage & and for many Obstruc-
tions in y.e Stomack & to giue women in Labor, it driues Sick fitts from y.e heart

A water to take Sunburne off y.e Face & hands

Take Beane Blossoms, Elder Blossoms, Dasey Roots, Fumettory Egrimony
of each a little handfull, & put them into a glass to.th a quart of Spring water
y.e juice of 4 Lemons a Pint of good white wine a penny worth of Camphire a
quarter of a pint of Sack, Sett y.m in y.e hottest of y.e Sun 4 days then Straine it
into another Bottle & keep it for your use, Onely dipping a Cloath in & wash your
Face and hands.

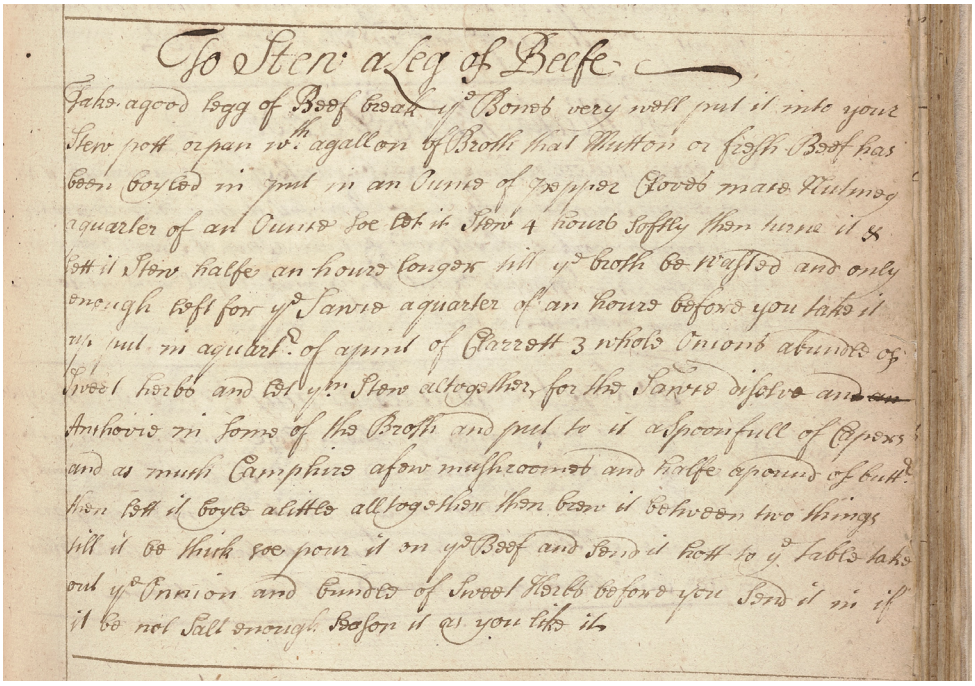
How to still spiritts of [illegible]

Fig. 5 – Recipe "A water to take Sunburne off the Face & hands", in Mary Doggett's recipe book, 1683. From the British Library Collection: Add. MS 27466, f. 6*v*. Photo by the author.

As an aromatic material, camphor was sometimes used with other aromatic spices to add flavour and pleasant scents. The cookbook of Grace Blome (1674-1750), dated 1697, contains recipes ranging from preserving food, clearing wine, and making desserts to main courses of meat and vegetables.[102] There is more than one recipe for stewing beef leg. One instructs to make stuffing with suet, eggs, breadcrumbs, with herbs and spices like parsley, nutmeg, and pepper, which are to be put into the beef leg and slow-stew in wine or cider.[103] Another recipe differs in method and ingredients: it does not contain stuffing but directly stew the leg with a broth of mutton or fresh beef, followed with adding red wine.[104] The pursuit for adding depth to the flavour is shown in adding anchovy, with more spices and different herb and vegetables [Fig. 6]. Besides pepper and nutmeg, there are cloves, mace, "a spoonfull of Capers and as much Camphire a few mushroomes and halfe a pound of butter".[105] While using camphor in cookery might not be a common practice today, its usage for cooking beef for its olfactory feature reveals a different dimension of camphor's values: it was not merely medicinal, precious, exotic, but also integrated into local cuisine as an aromatic element.

Camphor is a unique example of the assimilation of Asian ingredients because it refers to both the trees and the resinous product processed from them in the context of herbal and cookery. The way of processing camphor is thus another aspect that could

[102] According to Wall, Blome was likely to be Mary Castillion Randolph. Wall, Recipes for Thought, 204.
[103] FSL, V.b.301, f. 27*v*.
[104] FSL, V.b.301, f. 59*v*.
[105] *Ibid.*


To Stew a leg of Beefe

Take a good legg of Beef break y^e Bones very well put it into your Stew pott or pan w^th a gallon of Broth that Mutton or fresh Beef has been boyled in put in an Ounce of pepper Cloves mace Nutmeg a quarter of an Ounce soe let it Stew 4 hours softly then have it & lett it Stew halfe an hours longer till y^e broth be wasted and only enough left for y^e Sauce a quarter of an hour before you take it w^th put in a quart^t of a pint of Claret 3 whole Onions a bunch of sweet herbs and let y^m Stew altogether, for the Sauce dissolve an Anchovie in some of the Broth and put to it a Spoonfull of Capers and as much Campshire a few mushrooms and halfe a pound of butt^r then let it boyle a little altogether then beat it between two things till it be thick soe pour it on y^e Beef and send it hott to y^e table take out y^e Onion and bunch of sweet herbs before you send it in if it be not Salt enough Season it as you like it.

Fig. 6 – Recipe "To Stew a leg of Beefe", in Grace Blome's cookbook, 1697. From Folger Shakespeare Library Collection: V.b.301, f. 59*r*.

help reveal its actual use in households. Mary Doggett's recipe book, apart from providing several recipes for making salve and ointment with camphor, contains a brief guide for making "camphire ball": "Take half a pound of bitter almonds half an Ounce of camphire 4 musk balls, and half an Ounce of white Lead beat them altogether in a morter while they are well mixed and then make them up in balls & dry them".[106] The format differs from those listed in publications by the institutions or apothecaries. In fact, it is seldom seen in English printed materials, in which we can only know camphire ball is for washing one's body.[107] This matches the ingredients used in camphire ball: bitter almonds were often included for skin-cleansing properties; white lead was well-known for whitening; and musk was often added to skin products for a pleasant scent. It is unknown if Doggett came up with the ingredients or borrowed the recipe from others. However, the existence of the recipe here demonstrates the practical knowledge as a way of confirm-

[106] BL, Add. MS. 27466, f. 38*v*.

[107] In Early English Books Online database, there are only six printed materials that mention "camphire ball", for instance, Thomas Deloney, *The gentle craft A discourse containing many matters of delight, very pleasant to be read…* (London: Robert Bird, 1637), page unnumbered.

ing the integration of foreign materials through daily use, which is more difficult to spot among the institutional knowledge on medicine and healthcare. Moreover, camphor is a good example of Asian plants playing roles between medicine and food, as many other plants did. It was not necessarily used to cure diseases, but as a healthcare product or sensory enrichment in food culture. All of these fell into the health domain and were closely associated with daily life activities.

In addition to different formats of use of Asian plants and spices, there are also recipes named after women, which directly give credit to those who created the recipes. One example is "Lady Hewet's water", which can be found in a few recipe books compiled in the second half of the seventeenth century. One is from Rebeckah Winche's manuscript book: it contains over sixty ingredients ranging from plants (red sage, spearmint, pennyroyal, lavender, rosemary, etc.), resin (amber), animal materials (bezoar, red coral, musk, ambergris, pearl), to precious metal (gold).[108] In addition, there is a medicinal powder *aromaticum rosatum*, which appeared as early as 1543 in English medical works and frequently seen in medical publications in the seventeenth century.[109] It is made with roses and other spices for comforting the stomach and the heart. For making the water, herbs should be washed and placed with the spices, including galangal and cardamom, which need to be soaked in sherry sack wine and distilled in an alembic, then added with animal materials and gold leaf.[110] Winche noted that, in order to preserve the cordial properly, the bottle needs to be shaken every day for the first two weeks.[111]

Lady Hewet's water also appears in another manuscript recipe book by Penelope Jephson (1646-1725) in the 1670s. To make the recipe more straightforward for reading and use, she made a categorised list of the ingredients according to the dosage and the ingredient type.[112] Compared with Winche's version, Jephson also mentioned taking this drink once a day, and the dosage of some ingredients differ those in Winche's. Similar to the ways of making *aqua mirabilis*, it is from adjustments of the ingredients that we can find hints of experimenting with ingredients. The traces of sorting information and adapting to Jephson's use can be noticed in this recipe.

Although neither Winche nor Jephson recorded the medicinal effect of Lady Hewet's water, it was undoubtedly a luxurious drink considering the cost of ingredients and their believed medical values. Many ingredients (red sage, spearmint, rosemary, ginger, cardamom, etc.) are useful for digestive issues. Moreover, the use of galangal and cardamom

[108] FSL, V.b.366, p. 21.

[109] Giovanni da Vigo, *The most excellent workes of chirurgerye, made and set forth by maister John Vigon, heed chirurgie[n] of our tyme in Italie, translated into english…* (London: 1543), page unnumbered.

[110] FSL, V.b.366, p. 21.

[111] *Ibid*.

[112] FSL, V.a.396, ff. 39*r*-41*r*.

was not specifically for their hot property, as the ingredients in this recipe are partly hot and partly cold. The mixture results in a more balanced effect, which could be for a restorative function as a general healthcare drink rather than targeting certain illnesses. Although costly to make, the recipe of "Lady Hewet's water" was circulated well into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and included in publications for housewives, which suggests its long-lasting popularity.[113]

To create a recipe like this, one requires knowledge of each ingredient's medicinal properties, processing various ingredients, other common remedies in use, distillation and storage methods, and also new ingredients coming into use. Moreover, there are other foreign materials besides galangal and cardamom: China root and sassafras, which were introduced from China and North America respectively in the sixteenth century.[114] The inclusion of new plant materials in household recipes suggests women's familiarity with the market, with which they tried new and precious herbal ingredients in the homemade drinks. Galangal and cardamom were certainly not the only two examples here.

Camphor was also included in drink recipes named after the woman inventor. Margaret Baker recorded one titled "My Lady Paget's water… to heal a sore without any salve".[115] The main ingredients include bole ammoniac, white copperas, and camphor, which need to be beaten thin and boiled together, strained in running water and then dried to be powder.[116] This will be added in water and stored in a glass bottle. When in use, one can warm the clearest part of the water and wash the sore with it or wet a piece of linen cloth with this water and bind it around the sore.[117] Bole ammoniac is astringent and white copperas is antiseptic like camphor. The combination helps dry out the wound and protect the sore from inflammation. This shares similarities with the mouthwash made with camphor, but here created and used on the external skin – another example of the versatile utilisation of camphor's cooling and antiseptic properties.

[113] For instance, Eliza Smith, *The Compleat Housewife: Or, Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion: Being a Collection of Upwards of Six Hundred of the Most Approved Receipts in Cookery, Pastry, Confectionary, Preserving, Pickles, Cakes, Creams, Jellies, Made Wines, Cordials…* (London: J. and J. Pemberton, 1739), 233-234; Hannah Glasse and Maria Wilson. *The Complete Confectioner, Or, Housekeeper's Guide to a Simple and Speedy Method of Understanding the Whole Art of Confectionary…* (London: J. D. Dewick, 1800), 247-248.

[114] Anna E. Winterbottom, "Of the China Root: A Case Study of the Early Modern Circulation of Materia Medica Get access Arrow", *Social History of Medicine* 28, 1 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/hku068, 22-44; Clare Griffin, "Disentangling Commodity Histories: Pauame and Sassafras in the Early Modern Global World", *Journal of Global History* 15, 1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022819000305, 1-18.

[115] BL, MS. Sloane 2486, f. 40*v*.

[116] *Ibid.*

[117] *Ibid.*

However, more often, women's creative uses of foreign ingredients were not named after their creators. Baker's recipe book serves as a good example, as all recipe titles focus on the ailments to be treated or the intended effects of the remedies. For less common recipes like "Lady Paget's water" above, Baker added medicinal function in the title for clarification. In other cases, the specific function and format are the only key terms for a recipe title. For instance, there is a recipe "For an extreme heat in a womans breast", which instructs to wash the best birdlime in white wine, then temper it with camphor and apply it to the breast.[118] Highly specific and practical for women members at home, the recipe was likely to be used rather than just catering to curiosity for public readers as some publications did.

The same happened to galangal and cardamom. Baker included a recipe of a water, which is not *aqua mirabilis* or *rosa solis* but contains ingredients from both waters. Rather than giving or recording the water's name, Baker simply noted the desired effect: "A most precious water to comfort and cheer the spirits":

> Take galingale; cloves; ginger; millilot; cardamomu; mace; nut=megs; ana ʒ i: saffron; ʒ i: the juice of sallendin; halfe a pinte; mixe all these made into powder w[it]h: the juice; and a pinte of good aquavite; and 3 pints of white wine; t[he]n take rose=solis; baume; scordium; pimpernell; bettany; minte; hisop; time; marigold flowers; cowslipe=flowers; redd rose leaves;borage and buglos=flowers; ana a good halfe of a smalle handfull; a few rose=mary flowers; harts=horne shaved ʒ i: lett t[he]m stand all night in a glass; t[he]n stirr it with a soft fire… [119]

Since there are recipes of *aqua mirabilis* and *rosa solis* in her recipe book, Baker was certainly aware of the similarity of this unnamed recipe to the other two: it is more like a selective combination of the two recipes. This resembles what she did in *rosa solis*'s recipe: selectively combined the ingredients and methods in existing recipes and added her elements to them. There is an exaggeration of the effects of the water, as she noted several effects: it is good for lungs, the heart, melancholy phlegm, expel urine, help preserve a good colour, youth, and memory; "distroyeth the paulsy", and "a spoonful be given at the point of death; it reviveth the spirits…"[120] But interestingly, she also commented at the end: "… strangly of all artificial waters, t[hi]s is the best".[121] Although it is hard to know in which way the water is "strangely the best", the comment suggests her rich experience in making and testing different medicinal waters.

[118] BL, MS. Sloane 2486, f. 16*r*.
[119] BL, MS. Sloane 2486, f. 22*r*.
[120] *Ibid*.
[121] *Ibid*.

Apart from the above examples, the novelty of using Asian plants was not always embodied in including them for making a remedy or cuisine. On other occasions, they were used as a supplement, which indicates another level of integration of Asian plants into daily healthcare. In a recipe titled "Pills to be taken an honer before supper to helpe degestian", Baker recorded aloe, rose, and myrrh, which were all digestive ingredients.[122] Galangal was included not for making the pills but in the instruction of use: Baker recommended drinking wine mixed with galangal powder before taking the pills.[123] This is a simple way of using galangal but relies on one's familiarity with the medical properties and common ways of use of the ingredients. Galangal was no longer a curious or strange material that could be known only through books passed down from the medieval period, or texts provided by institutions or professionals, but was within reach and adapted to a comprehensible instruction for a common health issue. The wide applicability of Baker's recipe book also highlights its practical use rather than the commercial value often emphasised in printed recipe books. It thus provides a window onto the understanding and actual everyday use of Asian plants in domestic healthcare.

Conclusion

Household recipes involving rare Asian plants were not simply for curiosity about the East, as shown in women's recipe books. Retracing the materials in recipes in published books and manuscripts, this paper shows that galangal, camphor, and cardamom were used at home as healthcare materials, ranging from medicine, restoratives, cosmetic products, to food. The wide range of uses suggests a broad concept of health, in which rare Asian plants did play a role. Although well-circulated knowledge of medicine already provided recipes using these plants, women's application of remedies was selective, pursuing feasibility and practicality. This was first embodied in the format of remedies: compound water was a principal type of application for galangal and cardamom, whereas camphor mostly appeared in external remedies. This differed from their records in medieval texts and institutional publications, and was more aligned with vernacular medical works. The adaptation was also shown in ingredients, ways of description, and methods of making: women chose to replace, add, or alter the amount of ingredients, provided more detailed and accessible instructions, and adjusted the distilling method according to the desired strength of the remedies. Traces of experiments suggest women's testing the medical value and ideal ways of using Asian ingredients.

Most importantly, women created new recipes for these Asian plants with different formats based on their material features and medicinal effects. The adjustment and inven-

[122] BL, MS. Sloane 2486, f. 57*v*.
[123] *Ibid*.

tion well demonstrate how these precious ingredients came into use in daily life, which required not only updated information about plants, medicine and the market, but also the experience of balancing knowledge and practicality. Although the three plants cannot exhaustively represent the past of Asian plants in daily use in early modern Britain, their presence in household manuscripts offers insight into the understanding and uses of Asian ingredients in medicine and healthcare practice.

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