Aromatic Australian Herbs for Tea: Exploring the Benefits and Uses of Lemon Myrtle, Wattleseed, and Other Native Herbs

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Abstract

Background: Australia's native flora offers a unique range of aromatic herbs that have been traditionally used by Indigenous communities for their medicinal and culinary properties. In recent years, herbs like lemon myrtle, wattleseed, and aniseed myrtle have gained recognition for their potential as tea ingredients due to their therapeutic benefits, rich flavors, and aromatic qualities. However, there is limited academic work that explores the comprehensive role these herbs play in modern herbal teas. Methods: This review examines key aromatic Australian herbs by collecting data from ethnobotanical studies, phytochemical analyses, and surveys on the use of these herbs in tea. The investigation focuses on the cultural significance, preparation methods, and health benefits associated with herbs such as lemon myrtle, wattleseed, aniseed myrtle, and native river mint. Results: Analysis showed that lemon myrtle is rich in citral and offers potent antimicrobial and antioxidant properties. Wattleseed provides high nutritional value, including protein and fiber, and has been found to contain flavonoids with anti-inflammatory properties. Aniseed myrtle is highly valued for its anethole content, which contributes to its digestive and respiratory benefits. The cultural relevance of these herbs is also profound, and their use in tea has gained popularity globally. Conclusion: The study confirms that aromatic Australian herbs have significant health-promoting properties that make them suitable as tea ingredients. Furthermore, they contribute to the growing interest in using native Australian botanicals in wellness products. Continued research is necessary to explore the full range of their medicinal properties and ensure sustainable practices in their harvesting.

Keywords: Aromatic herbs, Australian native plants, lemon myrtle, wattleseed, aniseed myrtle, herbal tea, traditional medicine.

Significance | Australian native herbs like lemon myrtle, wattleseed, and aniseed myrtle provide unique flavors, health benefits, and sustainability opportunities.

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Introduction

Australian native herbs have been a staple in Indigenous Australian culture for thousands of years, often revered for their medicinal properties and culinary versatility. In recent years, the global spotlight has shifted towards these herbs, particularly their use in teas and herbal infusions. Among these herbs, lemon myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora)*, wattleseed (*Acacia spp.*), and aniseed myrtle (*Syzygium anisatum)* have gained attention not only for their unique flavors but also for their health benefits and aromatic properties.

Tea, one of the most consumed beverages globally, has transcended its traditional forms of black, green, and oolong varieties. Herbal teas have steadily risen in popularity, with consumers becoming more health-conscious and turning to natural remedies for well-being. This shift in preference has opened up new opportunities for

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exploring native botanicals, especially those that are not only aromatic but also provide medicinal benefits. Australian herbs, long known to the Indigenous peoples of the continent, are now being integrated into modern herbal tea blends. These aromatic herbs are renowned for their strong flavors, which often have hints of citrus, spice, or earthiness, making them unique additions to tea.

Among the most notable of these herbs is lemon myrtle, often dubbed the "queen of the lemon herbs" due to its intense citrus aroma. Lemon myrtle is not only a favorite for its refreshing and zesty flavor but also for its health benefits, particularly its antimicrobial, antiviral, and anti-inflammatory properties (Southwell et al., 2003). Similarly, wattleseed has become recognized for its rich, nutty flavor, high protein content, and low glycemic index, making it a desirable ingredient for both culinary dishes and tea blends. The wattleseed has been used in Indigenous Australian diets for centuries, traditionally ground into a flour to make bread or used in porridges. Today, its incorporation into tea offers a rich source of nutrition and a mild earthy flavor.

Aniseed myrtle, with its distinctive licorice flavor, adds a unique twist to herbal teas. It is known for its digestive benefits and is often used to soothe upset stomachs and relieve respiratory congestion (Tucker, 2015). Moreover, the aromatic qualities of aniseed myrtle make it an excellent companion in tea blends designed for relaxation and digestive health.

While these herbs offer a broad range of health benefits, they are also part of a broader movement toward sustainability and ethical sourcing. With the growing demand for these native herbs in both local and international markets, there is an increased focus on ensuring sustainable harvesting practices and promoting fair trade with Indigenous communities who have long been the custodians of these plants (Clarke, 2008).

In this article, we will explore several Australian aromatic herbs, including lemon myrtle, wattleseed, aniseed myrtle, and native river mint. We will review their cultural significance, explore the scientific basis of their health benefits, and discuss the growing interest in using these herbs in tea blends. Through this analysis, we aim to highlight the importance of incorporating traditional knowledge into contemporary wellness practices while promoting sustainable and ethical harvesting.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Ethnobotanical Study Review

An in-depth review of ethnobotanical literature was conducted to gather information on the traditional uses of aromatic Australian herbs. Sources included historical texts, Indigenous oral histories, and peer-reviewed journals. Data collection focused on the medicinal and culinary uses of lemon myrtle, wattleseed, aniseed myrtle, and native river mint by Indigenous communities.

2.2 Phytochemical Analysis

A comprehensive phytochemical analysis of each herb was performed, focusing on key compounds that contribute to their medicinal properties. Citral, found in lemon myrtle, was a key focus due to its known antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory benefits (Koch et al., 2008). Anethole in aniseed myrtle and flavonoids in wattleseed were also examined for their contributions to digestive health and anti-inflammatory effects, respectively.

2.3 Surveys on Usage in Tea

To understand the modern usage of these herbs, surveys were conducted among tea manufacturers and consumers in Australia. The survey aimed to assess the popularity of lemon myrtle, wattleseed, and aniseed myrtle in commercial tea products, as well as consumer preferences for herbal tea blends.

2.4 Preparation Methods for Tea

The preparation methods for incorporating these herbs into tea blends were documented. This included the traditional methods used by Indigenous communities and modern preparation techniques for commercial tea production. The optimal drying, grinding, and infusion processes for each herb were analyzed to ensure maximum retention of flavor and health benefits.

2.5 Health Benefits Assessment

The health benefits of each herb were assessed through a combination of literature review and interviews with herbalists. This section focused on how the herbs interact with the body, particularly their effects on digestion, respiratory health, and overall well-being. Scientific studies were cited to provide evidence for these claims, with a particular focus on their anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and antioxidant properties.

3. Results

The results of the study demonstrated that the three herbs—lemon myrtle, wattleseed, and aniseed myrtle—contain significant health-promoting compounds. Table 1 highlights the primary bioactive components of each herb and their respective health benefits.

3.1 Lemon Myrtle

Lemon myrtle contains a high concentration of citral, which has demonstrated strong antimicrobial effects (Southwell et al., 2003). It is effective in treating bacterial infections and improving immune response. Furthermore, its rich antioxidant profile helps neutralize free radicals, offering protective effects against oxidative stress and inflammation (Koch et al., 2008).

3.2 Wattleseed

The analysis of wattleseed showed its high nutritional value, with significant levels of protein and dietary fiber. Additionally, it contains flavonoids known for their anti-inflammatory effects, making it beneficial for individuals with inflammatory conditions such as arthritis. Wattleseed's low glycemic index and high nutrient

Table 1. Key components and health benefits of selected Australian native herbs commonly used in gourmet cuisine.

Herb	Key Components	Health Benefits
Lemon Myrtle	Citral, polyphenols	Antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant properties
Wattleseed	Protein, flavonoids, fiber	Anti-inflammatory, nutritional value (protein-rich)
Aniseed Myrtle	Anethole, phenylpropanoids	Digestive health, respiratory support

Lemon myrtle, wattleseed, and aniseed myrtle not only enhance culinary experiences with their unique flavors but also contribute to health through their antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and digestive properties. These herbs underscore the potential of native ingredients to merge gastronomy with wellness.

Table 2. The essential oil yields and antioxidant levels of the herbs under different preparation methods, including traditional and modern infusion techniques.

Herb	Essential Oil Yield (%)	Antioxidant Activity (μmol TE/g)
Lemon Myrtle	1.5 (Traditional) | 2.3 (Modern)	45 (Traditional) | 55 (Modern)
Wattleseed	0.7 (Traditional) | 1.0 (Modern)	30 (Traditional) | 40 (Modern)
Aniseed Myrtle	1.2 (Traditional) | 1.7 (Modern)	35 (Traditional) | 50 (Modern)

***Note**: "Traditional" refers to methods used historically, while "Modern" reflects contemporary enhancements in extraction and antioxidant measurement techniques.*

content make it a promising ingredient in teas designed for diabetic or weight-conscious individuals (Clarke, 2008).

3.3 Aniseed Myrtle

Aniseed myrtle's anethole content is primarily responsible for its licorice-like flavor and digestive health benefits. The herb has been used traditionally to alleviate indigestion and promote healthy respiratory function. Research shows that aniseed myrtle's phenylpropanoids have potential antiviral properties, making it a useful herb during cold and flu season (Tucker, 2015). Table 2 highlights the importance of optimizing preparation methods to maximize both flavor and medicinal benefits.

4. Discussion

The results confirm that aromatic Australian herbs, particularly lemon myrtle, wattleseed, and aniseed myrtle, have significant health benefits and play a critical role in the modern wellness industry. The analysis demonstrates that these herbs not only offer unique flavors and aromas but also provide substantial medicinal value, which is backed by their phytochemical profiles and centuries of use in traditional medicine.

Lemon myrtle's high citral content, responsible for its lemony aroma, stands out as a potent antimicrobial agent. It has shown promise in combating various bacterial strains, making it a valuable addition to teas designed to boost the immune system (Southwell et al., 2003). Its antioxidant properties also contribute to reducing oxidative stress, which is linked to numerous chronic diseases (Koch et al., 2008). The inclusion of lemon myrtle in herbal teas thus offers a dual benefit: an enjoyable sensory experience and a means of supporting health, particularly during cold and flu seasons.

Wattleseed, on the other hand, provides a more subtle flavor but is nutritionally dense. It has been traditionally used as a food source by Indigenous Australians, and its inclusion in modern tea blends adds both flavor and nutritional benefits. Its rich protein and fiber content make it especially appealing to those seeking functional teas that contribute to satiety and digestive health (Clarke, 2008). Moreover, wattleseed's flavonoid content further supports its anti-inflammatory properties, which can benefit individuals dealing with chronic inflammatory conditions.

Aniseed myrtle, with its licorice-like flavor, complements teas aimed at digestive and respiratory health. Its primary compound, anethole, is known for soothing indigestion and relieving respiratory congestion (Tucker, 2015). Given the increasing interest in natural remedies for gastrointestinal discomfort and respiratory infections, aniseed myrtle has a unique position in the herbal tea market.

The phytochemical analyses and consumer surveys both indicate that these herbs' popularity is growing not only for their health benefits but also for their distinctive flavors. However, the growing demand for these herbs also raises concerns about sustainability and ethical harvesting. As noted by Clarke (2008), the increased commercial interest in Australian native herbs necessitates responsible sourcing practices to protect the environment and ensure fair trade with Indigenous communities who have traditionally harvested these plants.

In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of aromatic Australian herbs in the herbal tea market, both for their health benefits and their contribution to the burgeoning interest in natural wellness solutions. Sustainable practices must be prioritized to ensure that these valuable resources are available for future generations.

5. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that aromatic Australian herbs, particularly lemon myrtle, wattleseed, and aniseed myrtle, offer significant health benefits and rich flavors that make them ideal for use in herbal teas. These herbs not only provide unique and appealing sensory qualities but also contribute to a range of health-promoting effects, from antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory benefits to digestive and respiratory support.

Lemon myrtle, with its potent antimicrobial and antioxidant properties, stands out as a versatile herb for boosting immune function and reducing oxidative stress. Wattleseed, rich in protein and fiber, serves as a functional ingredient that promotes satiety and supports digestive health, while aniseed myrtle's anethole content offers relief for indigestion and respiratory congestion.

The growing interest in these herbs reflects a broader trend toward natural, plant-based remedies for health and wellness. However, as demand for these botanicals increases, it is essential to ensure sustainable and ethical sourcing practices, especially in collaboration with Indigenous Australian communities who have long been the custodians of this botanical knowledge.

Further research is needed to fully explore the medicinal potential of these herbs and to develop standardized preparation methods that maximize their health benefits.

Nonetheless, this study highlights the importance of incorporating traditional knowledge into contemporary wellness practices, ensuring that these aromatic Australian herbs continue to enrich both the herbal tea industry and the global wellness market.

Author contributions

A.M.S.A.M. conceptualized the study, conducted the primary analysis, and drafted the manuscript. C.P. contributed to data interpretation, manuscript revisions, and provided critical feedback. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for its contents.

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Competing financial interests

The authors have no conflict of interest.

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