

21

Sickle Cell Disease

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Occupational Gift

Occupational gift for the reader: bush tea

The preparation of bush tea, particularly first thing in the morning, is a tradition of breakfast making, originating in the countryside and farming communities of the Caribbean. When prepared in its own simple way, it aimed to fortify you for the rest of the morning before going to school or the farm. The combination and visuals seem basic in preparation. Water from the river stored in a calabash poured in the large pot. The pot located on some stones shaped to form a stove-like base on flat ground with a steel grill to steady the pot. Coconut fibre and small splinters of wood chopped with a cutlass to create the tinder to ignite the firewood material. The pot is then heated after the matches are struck to create the fire and ultimately the burning flames.

The connection of the Caribbean to natural and herbal remedy is strongly displayed in our response to ailments such as the common cold, indigestion or constipation. The dosage is almost scientifically obtained, often by matriarch figures. It could be one or two leaves or a small stem. Getting the dosage right seemed to be important.

Families have passed on encyclopaedic knowledge through generations on which herbs they have experienced to provide relief in periods of sickness. Peppermint, thyme are grown in back gardens or windowsills for quick access. Cerasee (leaves of bitter melon plant), Bissy (from the Kola nut) among others are kept dried ready to boil and drain for use or bought in tea bag form from home islands and sent to family members living in the UK. Here bush tea now becomes a remembrance to the younger generation, particularly if they get the opportunity to return to the land of their ancestors to learn how these things are authentically manifested.