

## THYME-LEAVED SAVORY



### *Satureja thymbra*

**Family:** Labiatae

**Names:** pink savory, Goat thyme, goat oregano, za'tar parsi, Persian za'tar, az'tar, Roman za'tar; Kanadisk Peberurt (Dutch); Thrumbi, Thrumba (Greek); Tragoriganum

**Description:** grows in a low compact bush 1-1 ½ feet high. The young branches are covered with white hairs. The sessile, hairy, oblong leaves taper to each end and fold lengthwise. Whorls of pink flowers are in interrupted spikes. The corolla is 2 lipped with a flat upper lip and a 3 parted lower lip. The bracts are oblong and as long as the calyx. The calyx has long-pointed teeth and white hairs. The whole plant has a pleasant odor. It blooms from April through September and is an important honey-producing plant. It is found on dry rocky hills.

**Cultivation:** Requires a sunny position in a well-drained soil. Plants are intolerant of soils that remain damp. Prefers a neutral to alkaline soil. This species is not very hardy outdoors, plants suffer damage at temperatures below

freezing but they can be grown as annuals, flowering and setting seed in their first year. Plants will be hardier in soils that are very well drained and also if the soil is a bit on the poor side. Surface sow seed in April in a greenhouse. Do not allow the compost to dry out. Germination can be slow and erratic but usually takes place within a month. Prick out the seedlings into individual pots as soon as they are large enough to handle. It is usually possible to plant out into their permanent positions during the summer, but if the plants have not grown sufficiently, or if you live in an area of cold winters, it might be best to grow them on in a cold frame for their first winter and plant them out in late spring or early summer of the following year. Cuttings of half-ripe wood, 5 - 8cm taken at a node, July/August in a frame. Pot up in autumn and overwinter in a frame, planting out in late spring or early summer of the following year. Cuttings of young wood, preferably with a heel, April/May in a frame. Plant out in the summer if the plants grow well, otherwise overwinter them in a cold frame and plant out in late spring or early summer of the following year. Division in early spring as growth commences. This works best if soil has been mounded up into the bottom 20cm of the plant early in the previous summer. Pot up the divisions and grow them on in a cold frame until they are established. Plant them out in the summer.

**History:** Pink savory was known to the 17<sup>th</sup> century herbalists Gerard and Parkinson, who called it Wild Time of Candy, "time" being thyme, and "candy," the then name for the island of Crete. The herb is also known as goat thyme, and Roman, Greek and European hyssop and barrel sweetener. In Crete, a strong infusion of the herb was used to clean and

freshens wine barrels in the fall in preparation for the new vintage.

**Properties:** Antibacterial; Aromatic; Digestive; Expectorant; Tonic.

**Medicinal Uses:** A pungent, aromatic herb that improves digestion and has bactericidal and expectorant effects. Internally, in countries of origin, as an infusion to relieve minor digestive discomfort and bronchial congestion. Oil, rich in carvacrol, and thymol is distilled from the leaves for the pharmaceutical industry.

**Other Uses:** A strong infusion of the herb is used in the autumn to clean wine barrels in preparation for the new vintage. An essential oil is obtained from the plant, it contains 19% thymol and is also rich in carvacrol. It is used in the pharmaceutical industry..

**Culinary Uses:** Leaves have a thyme/oregano flavor and may be added to savory breads, meat, and legume dishes. Hot spicy flavor makes it a substitute for pepper. The leaves and young shoots are used as a tea substitute. It is said that this make one of the best-tasting of all herb teas.

#### **Recipes:**

##### **White Bean Dip with Red Caviar and Pink Savory**

- 1 15 oz can white cannelloni beans
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 1 Tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp finely chopped fresh pink savory leaves
- red pepper sauce to taste
- 1 four-ounce jar red lumpfish roe caviar

Strain the cannelloni beans, and reserve the liquid. In a medium mixing bowl, combine the beans and garlic. With the back of a large spoon, crush cannelloni beans against the sides of the bowl, mixing well with the garlic. Add the lemon juice, olive oil, pink savory, and the red pepper sauce. Combine well. Thin the mixture with some of the reserved bean liquid if a thinner consistency is desired. Gently fold in the caviar, taking care not to crush the caviar

eggs. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour to allow the flavors to meld. When ready to serve, spoon mixture into a serving dish. Serve with crackers or petals of Belgian endive. (Exotic Herbs)

#### **References:**

[Herbs of Greece](#), Alta Dodds Niebuhr, 1970;  
[Encyclopedia of Herbs and Their Uses](#), Deni Bown, Dorling Kindersley, 1995; ISBN: 0-7894-0184-3

[Exotic Herbs](#), Carole Saville, Henry Holt, 1997; ISBN: 0-8050-4073-0

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