

Spruce Newsletter – Christmas 2007

Crookedstane Kindling Ltd™
Crookedstane Rig Elvanfoot, Biggar ML12 6TJ
tel: 01864 505277

This is a rapid roundup of all the recent developments.

Some of you will know some of it already –sorry to repeat it, but things have been moving very fast.

Just to recap:

In 2007 my family and I started to pilot a food and drink range using our spruce shoots, brash and essential oil.

Having trialled various foodstuffs through the year (see product list at end), we decided to focus initially on the commercial production of spruce-based drinks, in particular soft drinks, because all the ingredients can be sourced locally, we can make it ourselves on site, and because we believe there is a niche for a new, locally - made, healthy, delicious, zero carbon, 'green' beverage.

We now have a grant from south Lanarkshire Business Enterprise to develop our recipes.

We are working with the ICBD (International Centre for Brewing and Distilling) at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh and Branding Boutique in Glasgow . This grant will enable us to invite potential stockists, customers and other interested parties to a drinks tasting in Edinburgh early in 2008.

In 2008, we intend to seek additional finance for businesses such as ours located in remote rural locations. This additional funding will enable us to move to small scale commercial production.

We have orders for our spruce flavourings from Uncle Roy's (Moffat-based) 2008 gourmet condiments range to be sold in Waitrose.

We are due to complete our organic registration (Soil Association) of our spruce trees in May 2008.

We hope to provide employment in our area and we are actively looking for an outlet where visitors can buy our spruce products and perhaps see the brewing process.

We have had encouraging feedback from the Forestry Commission at a 'preview' tasting in Nov 2007.

We believe that a new, natural soft drink associated with all the benefits of the forest will go well both with the campaign for fitness in the forest, mountain biking etc as well as appealing to urban/metropolitan drinkers.

ICBD Heriot-Watt will also be carrying out tests to validate any health/nutritional claims we can make for our drinks.

Branding Boutique in Glasgow are working on a design and brand identity for our spruce products, packaging and labelling.

Spruce is traditionally used in all the countries where it grows, to flavour food and drink. Various species of spruce grow all over the northern hemisphere. Our Crookedstane™ spruce trees were named after the seaport of Sitka in Alaska. Sitka spruce grows only on the coast, beside the fast-flowing rivers running into the Pacific, in close relationship with five types of Pacific salmon which return annually to them to spawn.

Our pilot Crookedstane™ spruce products (see full list at end) were made from: either spruce essential oil eg our spruce and lemon ice cream; the fresh shoots or buds (new growth) eg our non-alcoholic, lightly fermented drink, or from infusions of spruce needles eg our spruce jelly; spruce beer.

Spruce has a delicious, subtle, refreshing and unique taste - a bit like ginger, toffee, a hint of lemon....

Our spruce and lemon ice cream is very well received. We sold it at many fairs in Scotland this summer 2007 and to one of our local hotels in Moffat, the Buccleuch Arms, and a specialist fish and game shop in Dumfries (Dumfries Fish and Game). Our spruce jelly is available from Harvest Time deli in Moffat.

- How did we end up owning an organic spruce forest and making spruce-flavoured food and drink? In 1983, one of our directors planted 100ha of spruce here in the southern uplands of Scotland. In 1994 she built a house in the forest.

In 1999 on a working visit to Kargopol in the Arkhangelsk region of northern Russia she spotted a plaque explaining that it was the birthplace of Alexander Baranov, 'founder of the port of Sitka in Alaska'. Her curiosity about the trees growing at Crookedstane was kindled and in 2001, during an enforced absence from the forest because of the Foot & Mouth outbreak, she went to Sitka in Alaska. With the help of the US Forestry Service, she spent time with Native American guides and other residents and learned more about this remarkable tree. Further research led to the use of all this material for a booklet in the Sage Press collectors tree series (copies available by post).

- Spruce beer was a regular import to Britain, probably from Germany, in the 16th century. Evidence of this trade endures in the expression: 'Would you like a spruce?', used in Northamptonshire to this day when offering a cold drink. There are many historical descriptions of recipes for spruce beer as brewed in 16th, 17th & 18th century. There is evidence that spruce was used to maintain health of sailors on long sea voyages and for the army in the winter in N. America eg in Boston.

We began by making our yeast-fermented spruce beer in 2litre plastic recycled mineral water bottles, literally on the kitchen table.

We are also planning to start a small unit raising pigs here in the forest for high quality spruce- flavoured free range pork and bacon.

A Lanarkshire herbalist gave us the following information:

Spruce mixes well with Ambrette Seed, Basil, Chamomile (Roman), Ginger, Juniper, Lemon, Marjoram, Rosemary, Thyme (White). We have wild thyme growing here at Crookedstane Rig.

American Indians made a tisane from spruce bark to cure fever and infection.

Spruce Essential Oil is: Antiseptic, Warming, Astringent, Soothing, Calming, Relaxing, Good for Sprains, Stiffness and Pain, Poor Circulation, Cellulite, Rheumatism, Coughs & Colds,

Anxiety and Stress. Used to treat: Arthritis, Rheumatism, Anxiety, Cellulite, Chillblains, Circulation, Colds, Fluid Retention and Stress.

Crookedstane Kindling Ltd™ product list Dec 2007

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For further details contact: info@crookedstanekindling.com

Spruce & lemon ice Cream

Made to our own exclusive recipe by Cream O’Galloway -

delicious with winter puddings, after spicy oriental or fish dishes

Gourmet vegetarian spruce sausages made for us

by Wicken Fen in Duns, flavoured with our very own organic Crookedstane™ spruce shoots

***Vegetarian spruce mini bites* – perfect for festive occasions through Christmas and on into 2008**

Ayrshire Pork Sausages with Crookedstane™ spruce shoots

**wonderful traditional sausages with a twist: up to 90 per cent meat
locally made in Thornhill**

***Speyside Beef Spruceburgers* (in packs of 2)**

up to 90 per cent beef, with Crookedstane™ organic spruce shoots

Spruce Jelly in 275ml jars made for us by the Leadhills Jam Factory

Spruce soda - very refreshing, a new 'green' non-alcoholic health drink, flavoured with our own organic spruce shoots

Spruce beer and spruce liqueur – in development

Crookedstane™ Kindling Box – an original, planet-friendly gift containing kindling, cones, tinder, a juniper and pine scented candle and either Burns poems or a booklet on spruce

Kindling in bags

DVD – 4,000 years of the tree history of the Daer Valley in 10 minutes

The Little Book of Spruce – 1,000 useful bits of information about the 'sociable tree' (John Evelyn)

Dark, milk or white chocolates filled with spruce flavoured ganache

Spruce teabags

Fresh spruce shoots to use as herbal flavouring

Do let us know if you would like to be taken off the circulation list for future newsletters.

Wishing you a Happy Christmas and a Very Sprucey New Year

from

Elizabeth Roberts and family

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