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Aromatic Wisdom Podcast Episode #029 On The Road With Liz - Advanced Distillation Workshop in Spokane, Washington

This is the Aromatic Wisdom Podcast, episode 29. In today's show, I'd like to share with you an experience I had in October of 2016 when I took part in a remarkable workshop called Advanced Distillation Techniques. I was privileged to be both teacher and student.

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If you're interested in learning about Essential Oils, hearing interviews with industry experts, and discovering ways to grow your own Aromatherapy business, this is the podcast for you.

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Take a deep breath and enjoy as Liz shares a dose of Aromatic Wisdom.

Hi everyone! Welcome back to another episode of the Aromatic Wisdom Podcast. Episode 29. I wasn't sure I'd make it this far. Statistically, seven episodes is about as far as most people get and then they realize it's a lot of work and stop. So I'm feeling pretty good about being at episode 29.

Of course I feel like I should have been farther by now. Oh no! Here comes Perfectionism! It's funny how last week I talked about my struggle with Perfectionism. It was interesting how many of you remarked in emails and comments on the website about how you also struggle with Perfectionism. I feel like I really hit a nerve.

I remember at one point in my life a teacher said that when a pilot flies a plane, it's never in a straight line. They are always adjusting. They go high and then they bring it down or to the right or to the left, there is constant tweaking and adjusting. It's never a straight line. That's a great metaphor for life. Just keep adjusting and tweaking and don't worry about its being perfect.



Right here at my desk is a little sign that says “Done is better than Perfect”.

Alright, let’s go into the topic for today. I’ve been wanting to share this for months. Here we are at the beginning of 2017 and I had this experience of October of 2016. What I attended was a workshop in advanced distillation techniques and the distillation of plant material, primarily for hydrosols. There is a difference when you distill whether your objective is to obtain essential oils or to obtain hydrosols.

The people who distill with the objective to specifically get hydrosols are called artisan distillers. An artisan is somebody who makes something by hand in a small quantity. It’s a very specialized crafts person. It can be jewelry or food or furniture . It’s no difference with distillation. When you have an artisan distiller they take a tremendous amount of care and pride in what they produce.

They also tend to use the finest materials. In this case it would be organic, really fresh, beautiful, vibrant plants. This was the focus of this workshop that I attended in Spokane, Washington.

There were about 41 students in attendance and about 9 guest teachers, among which I was one of them. I was so honored to be invited to be one of the teachers at this program.

The fun part was that all of us who were invited as teachers, when we weren’t doing our own classes, we were students. I had an opportunity to sit in and watch some of the most amazing people give their presentations and people who have given their lives to distillation. It was such a privilege to sit at the feet of these master distillers and watch them do their craft right in front of me.

This Advanced Distillation Workshop was organized by Ann Harmon of Botannicals.com who is my teacher and my mentor in distillation. She is the premier distiller in the United States. She was trained by Jeanne Rose about 20 years ago. Ann has really taken the art of distillation and blow in wide open here in the United States. A lot of people are learning to distill at home now which can be a really good thing.

Ann started teaching [Harvest to Hydrosol](#) in 2010 where people would learn all about the plants, about the art of distillation, all of the safety, and how to create a quality product. She’s been doing that for about 6 or 7 years that it was time for something advanced. She had so many graduates of this program that are now distilling, people like myself.

I actually took [Ann’s program](#) twice. My first time was in 2013. I fell in love with distillation, I fell in love with Ann, and I fell in love with Hydrosols. I took what I already loved to another level. I took it again in 2014 with my husband, James, who completely took to distillation like a duck to water. He is a better distiller than I am at this point.



So after all these years of teaching the introductory class, Ann knew it was time for something more advanced. She organized this incredible advanced workshop. She spent a lot of time choosing the venue, the teachers, and the topics, even the catering was spectacular.

One of the first things I'd like to share are the names of the teachers so you can understand the level of wonderfulness that was shared at these presentations. These are really remarkable teachers from around the world.

Ann Harmon did a couple of fabulous presentations on the importance of water, on botany (because she is an herbalist first and foremost), and microbiology and chemistry and some of the more advanced science aspects of what we were learning.

Dane **Jeanne Rose** who is an icon of aromatherapy here in the United State and in the world really. That was such an honor to sit in her classroom and still next to her as a student. That was really one of the highlights of this trip for me.

Rhi Lewis, the wonderful Rhiannon Lewis of **Essential Oil Resource Consultants** in France. She brought a lot of the clinical and medicinal aspects to the workshop.

Joy Mussachio and **Cindy Brownley** of **Stillpoint Aromatics** in Arizona who gave us some great presentations on the energetics of hydrosols.

Jessica Ring of **Ring Botanicals** in Oregon. This was my first time meeting her and, what a cool lady she is. She is beautiful inside and out and an incredibly distiller. Everything that comes out of her mouth sounds like poetry. She is just remarkable and creates fabulous perfumes.

Christa Obuchowski from Santa Fe, New Mexico. She is a feisty woman who's a host of specialties and did some cool distillations with resins.

Jill Mulvaney from New Zealand. She and her partner, Charlie, have a company called **Alembics NZ**. They sell really high quality copper stills out of New Zealand. He specializes in the alcohol aspect of distillation and she specializes in the more of the hydrosols and she is a brilliant speaker and hilarious.

Ann and Jud Carlton the magnificent owners of **Morning Myst Botanics**. A company that Annie Harmon started and used to sell hydrosols. Now Ann is focusing on teaching and research. They did some magnificent talks. I just love them so much.

And me! I did a talk about the therapeutic uses of the waters.



Those were the teachers. Here are some of the classes.

The first morning of the workshop, Ann shared her purpose in creating this educational experience for distillers and her mission. She then did this incredible talk on water. If that sounds boring, it is not, not to distillers. Water is such an important conversation to have when you distill. It's one of the fundamental elements of distillation.

Earth, air, fire, metal, and water. You can have the most beautiful, organic exquisite plant material to distill with. You can have the most high end thick copper still, but if you have unhealthy or dead water you are wasting your time and resources and you're not going to have a good product.

The hydrosol is only as good as what goes into the still so you really need to have excellent water. Ann did a really interesting talk about water.

Jeanne Rose did a really awesome talk on the vocabulary of odors. I personally found this fascinating. I've never been drawn to perfumery in aromatherapy or using essential oils as perfumes. I'll wear some rose to perfume myself, but the art of making perfumes is just that. It's an incredible craft. A lot of people specialize in it.

Joy and Cindy from Stillpoint did a really really awesome presentation called Magic in the Mist about the energetics of hydrosols. (They had little Bella there. I'm her Aunt Liz. Well, I guess everyone is her Aunt and Uncle).

Jessica Ring spoke about honoring the plants. Ethical wildcrafting. Something I hadn't thought about. When I distill, I grow my own plants so I don't think if my harvesting is ethical. So when you think about going out into the woods, are you just ripping trees and things apart? Or are you trying to find things that are already on the ground? How mindful are you being when you're going out into the world and you're wildcrafting to distill? So that was a really beautiful and very important presentation.

I did my little bit on hydrosol therapy - using your waters. My class is always fun because there is always a lot of activities. I talked about the therapeutic values of about 15 different hydrosols. In my classes we're always making a lot of things, very much like the class that I teach here in Pennsylvania called [Hydrosols for Health](#).

Christa Obuchowski was doing a distillation demonstration on macerations at the same time I was doing my presentation so I was disappointed I had to miss that and she had to miss mine because we were teaching at the same time. Sometimes that happens.



Rhi Lewis did a program on using hydrosols in hospice care. That was a powerful program. Rhi always does great presentations and is an incredible teacher. The name of her company is **Essential Oil Resource Consultants**. She had great pictures and records, it was a great presentation.

Ann Harmon did a talk on GCMS fractions in chemistry. I'm not going to go into that much depth because it's self-explanatory. It's very very new to the hydrosol world is this business of getting into the science of it. We aromatherapists demand it because that's what we get from our essential oils. It's not the same in hydrosols. The chemistry really isn't the same because you're working with water.

Ann Harmon also did a really wonderful talk on keeping records, the importance of records when doing distillations.

Jill Mulvaney took us outside. It was chilly because it was October so it was cool. There was one morning when it was quite chilly and Jill had us sitting outside in the sun in this stunning garden. She did a codistillation with lemongrass, chopped limes, and I think it was Douglas Fir. I think it was a local conifer. She got some of the resin from the tree. She put the lime and resin from the conifer in a pot so that was a hydrodistill. In the long column she put the lemongrass which became a steam distillation which became a codistill. Codistill is where you basically do 2 different plants or you can do the same plant but 2 different parts of the plant in the same distillation. That was a lot of fun and it was fun to be outside and Jill is just so stinkin' entertaining while being educational as well.

Another tremendous experience that I had which was one of the highlights of the trip for me as well was doing a salt paste distillation in an alquitar still. Does that sound like mambo-jumbo? It would have been to me before this experience. A salt paste is where you take flowers (tuberose, or magnolia or jasmine) and you grind it into a paste with salt. It helps to preserve the flowers so you can keep them on a shelf so you can distill them all year. It's an ancient distillation technique.

The other new part for me was doing this salt paste in an alquitar. An alquitar is another type of design of a copper still. Normally we use a traditional alembic column still. In this case Ann was doing this distillation in the cute little still. The alquitar is really suited for when your distilling botanicals that need a low temperature distillation. So flowers, roots, woods, resins, these are all suited to a longer, slower distillation at a low heat using an alquitar.

Of course I ordered one from copperstills.com and it should be coming soon. I can't wait to distill with it and I'll share that with you.

Ann and Jud Carlton did a great presentation with lots of awesome photographs of their farm where they grow a lot of plants. They have acres and acres of plants for the **Morning Myst Botanics** company. They also distill these huge 150 litre alembic stills. They talked a lot about their growing



process and I found it really, really interesting. Just to actually see how an artisan distiller, which they are still artisan even though they are commercial and a larger scale than if you were to do it at home, but to see how a commercial artisan distiller operates; that was fascinating.

Hopefully that gave you a sense of the experience of the Advanced Distillation Workshop at the [Bozarth Mansion](#).

Speaking of the mansion, I can't finish this podcast until I tell you about the facility. Our workshop was held at the [Bozarth Mansion Retreat Center](#) which is a 23 room mansion built in 1913. It sits on 9 acres. It was originally built as a home for this big shot wealthy mining and railroad tycoon, [Jay P. Graves](#). If you stop and think for a minute about 1913, that was the era of the Titanic. So you think about money and luxury for people in high society in that era. Think about what they wore and everything was made of the finest materials.

In this mansion, the floors were fabulous. There was oak everywhere. There were staircases that had thick oak banisters. Maple floors. Oak wall paneling throughout the entire building. Beautiful intricate molded plaster ceilings. I actually took a picture of the ceiling. It was so pretty. They had leaded-glass windows throughout the entire building. Ornate stone on the outside. Such a stunning building.

There was a huge beautiful fireplace in the living room and a fire in it every evening. This fireplace became a gathering place for the teachers in the evening. We'd have a glass of wine and sit around this fire and talk about the day. One of the benefits that we had as a teacher (thank you so much Ann Harmon) was when the program was over at 5:30pm, all of the students would leave the mansion and go to their hotels or Bed & Breakfasts and we teachers got to sleep at the mansion. So at 5:30pm it was a private facility just for us teachers. Oh, it was such a special part of this experience for me.

Can you imagine antique-style copper stills being used in this kind of a venue so rich in history? The facility really lent itself well to this ancient art of distillation. It was a great marriage of history and beautiful and richness. I just thought it was the perfect place. This is all to Ann Harmon's credit. I remember when she called me and told me how excited she was that found this incredible venue. I didn't appreciate then what I do now. Well done, Ann!

This particular workshop I don't think Ann is offering again until maybe 2018, even then I'm not sure. I am sure she is offering tremendous classes in distillation in 2017. If you go to [botannicals.com](#) (like "ann" in the middle) she has a list of all her classes.

By the way, if you're interesting in purchasing a copper still for your own distillation, you can go to [copperstills.com](#). You can find a really high quality copper alembic stills, cute little aquitars, you can



find kits if your just getting started. There are a lot of parts and pieces when you get started so you don't have to buy anything its all in the kit.

You know what time it is? It's time to Smell My Life!

Coincidentally the Smell My Life share this week has to do with hydrosols. It's kind of funny. I don't know if you can tell from this recording (if you listened to the podcast). I'm a bit congested because I'm at the tail end of a head cold. I don't really get sick. The last time I got a seriously bad cold was in 2014. I definitely got something going on congesting-wise.

I've been using a neti pot to clear my nose. A neti pot is something I use anyway. I don't use it everyday because I've learned that's not a great thing to do. I do use it a couple times a week. When I have a cold I use it every day for about a week. A neti pot clears out your sinus passages. It flushes out mucus and dust and pollen, whatever else you're breathing in. It's a really good practice if you're prone to allergies. In fact I did a [blog post on using hydrosols with a neti pot](#).

I take a little bit of saline and distilled water. I don't use tap water because of the chlorine. (I sleep with a c-pack and I use distilled water in my c-pack too - we'll save that for another episode).

So I take my little neti pot, I put in the distilled water at room temperature and a saline packet and about 3 tablespoons of German Chamomile hydrosol. I've been using [German Chamomile](#) in particular because I feel there is inflammation in my sinus passages. German Chamomile is great at reducing inflammation.

Normally I'll do both sides with one full neti pot. However since I've got extra mucus I do one full pot for the right nostril then I fill it up the recipe above again and do the left nostril. So that is my real life use of an aromatic this week.

That wraps it up for [episode 29](#). I hope you enjoyed hearing about my experience at the Advanced Distillation Workshop with Ann Harmon in Washington State.

Right after the distillation workshop, there was a break for a couple of days before the NAHA Conference ([naha.org](#)) in Utah. The next podcast I'm going to share with you my experience at NAHA.

You can find this podcast at AromaticWisdomInstitute.com/029.

That's it my friends!



Until next week, be happy, be well.

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