

# A Note on Folklore and Medical Discovery

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It has been shown that animals made sick by a food will no longer eat it if the sickness follows closely after the consumption of the food. A coyote made sick by lithium-treated rabbit meat will no longer hunt rabbits. Perhaps the reverse is also true. If any animal feels much better after consuming any food, it may develop a liking, or even an addiction, for that food. These two principles probably made it possible for man to adapt to a large variety of foods and to learn to avoid a much larger variety of poisonous foods. Curative or therapeutic foods were also discovered long before physicians made similar discoveries.

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Recently I was shown a handwritten "Recipes

and Cures" - a gift from Lady Twysden to Miss Twysden. It was written in 1752. I was particularly impressed with the remedy for "The Scurvey."

"Take one handful of scurvy grass, half as much water cresses, same quantity of brook lime, put em unbruised into a quart of good brandie and let stand for two days. Drink two spoonfuls every morning with as much juice of Seville orange; spring to fall for six weeks."

Of course Lady Twysden could not have known that the vitamin C in the water cresses, grass, and the oranges was the curative factor, nor even, which was more important, the green leafy foods or the citrus fruit, for Sir James Lind did not publish his "Treatise on Scurvy" until 1753, one year later.