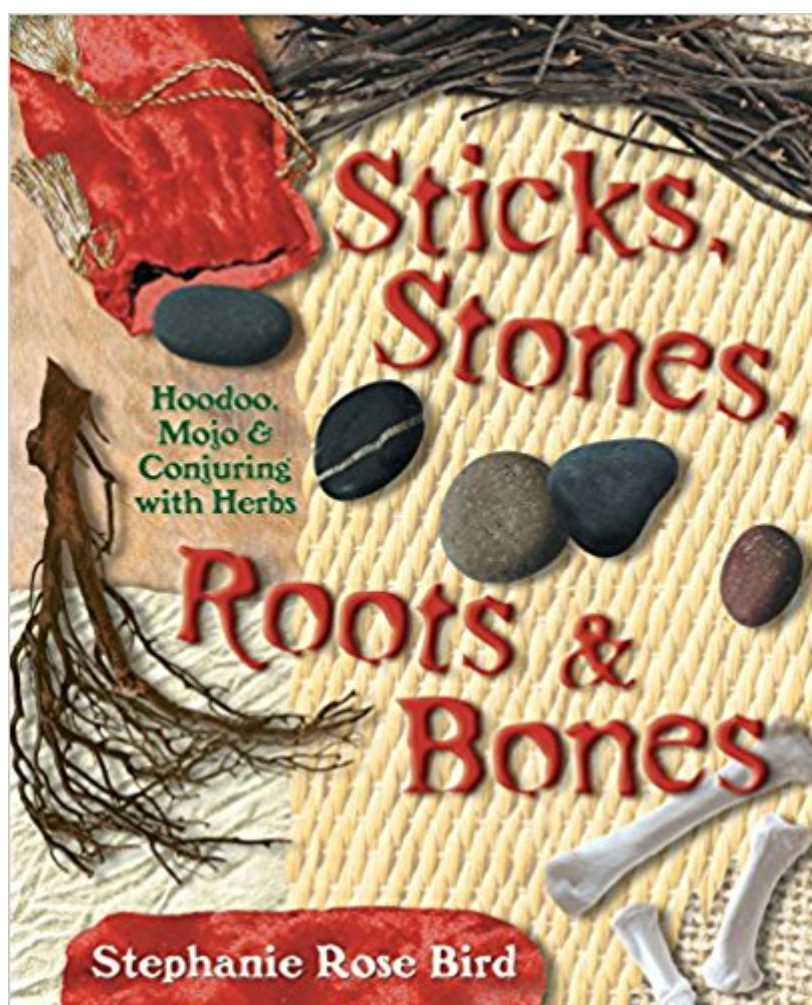


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Sticks, Stones, Roots & Bones: Hoodoo, Mojo & Conjuring With Herbs



Synopsis

2005 Coalition of Visionary Resources (COVR) Winner for Best General Interest Book! Hoodoo is an eclectic blend of African traditions, Native American herbalism, Judeo-Christian ritual, and magical healing. Tracing Hoodoo's magical roots back to West Africa, Stephanie Rose Bird provides a fascinating history of this nature-based healing tradition and gives practical advice for applying Hoodoo magic to everyday life. Learn how sticks, stones, roots, and bones - the basic ingredients in a Hoodoo mojo bag - can be used to bless the home, find a mate, invoke wealth, offer protection, and improve your health and happiness.

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Customer Reviews

Stephanie Rose Bird is a hereditary intuitive, contemporary rootworker, solitary green witch and visionary. She has been involved with mysticism, symbology, spiritualism and the occult for thirty years. Bird is inspired by her ancestors, in particular her grandmothers, one of which was a psychic and the other a spiritualist minister and herbal healer. Her uncle, a Santeria priest, Babalawo of Shango, taught her the Ifa traditions of the Yoruba people. Bird studies healing, magical and divination traditions of indigenous people around the world with a focus on Africa. Her passions include keeping the ancient traditions alive and updating them so that they evolve with us, suiting our current environment and lifestyles. She is a member of the American Folklore Society, the Herb Research Foundation and the Handcrafted Soap Maker's Guild. Bird holds a BFA cum laude from Temple University and an MFA from UC San Diego, and has received

multiple academic awards. ã ã Bird was an assistant professor at the School of the Art Institute of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1986-2002. ã ã Bird is active advising masters' and doctoral candidates, giving lectures, conducting goddess rituals, and writing for numerous publications. Visit Stephanie's webpage atã ã <http://www.stephanierosebird.com/>. ã ã Website:ã ã <http://www.stephanierosebird.com/> Blog:ã ã <http://stephanierosebirdstudio.blogspot.com/>ã ã Facebook:ã ã <https://www.facebook.com/stephanierosebirdauthor>. ã ã ã ã >

Chapter 1 Fixin' to Work Roots Hoodoo began in folks' sheds, basements, and kitchens. It seems as though once it spread into the hands of merchants, the demise of this folkcraft began. The renewed interest of late in Hoodoo, rootwork, and conjuring affords a wonderful opportunity to start fresh from scratch. If you want to be a hoodoo, who else can you depend on to procure the proper ingredients, and blend them at the right time and in the right way to produce the desired results? Time and Space Time is one of the main elements needed for rootwork. Luckily, you don't have to run out and buy it. You do, however, need to have some set aside. I can't sugarcoat this for you. Just like a good soup stock, tasty stew, or homemade pie, your herbal brews and fragrant oils will take time and skill to fix them up just right. On average you will need to invest at least an hour for the preparation of your handmade treatment. While recipes that require infusions or distillation will take longer, some treatments are instant. If you crave convenience, the latter are the recipes for you. One of the main reasons the making of Hoodoo products was relinquished to others was the rise of companies interested in marketing to African Americans. This group of companies, salesmen, and merchants saw an opportunity to profit from the folk beliefs and the lack of time folks faced for mixing their own products. Now, instead of quality products, we are sold inferior blends that often are little more than sweetly scented, colored waters and synthetic oils-a pale memory of the depth and texture the old hoodoos who were well versed in herbalism invested in their roots. The real deal is, if you want your rootwork to take, you need to be absolutely certain that the roots, berries, beans, and herbs are authentic and that the harvest was correctly timed astrologically according to the effects desired. Many of us are unaccustomed to spending hours in the kitchen, and even less time in the garden or woods. However, if you want to be a good hoodoo, let me help you become reacquainted with the lost art of patience in pursuit of quality. Start slow; take your time, gradually build up your expertise, taste, and skill, and before you know it you'll have all the herbs and equipment needed to formulate a unique repertoire of recipes for your loved ones and yourself. Clean, organized space is also essential. Having a work space (such as a level table or

countertop) clear of clutter for your cookery is very important. Clean space will save you the agony of messy accidents or contaminating your brew after all of the love and care you've put into making it.

Equipment and Tools In this book I have tried to give ample options in the recipes with consideration for various budgets, time constraints, and geographic locations. This is designed to ease your passage into the art of rootworking as gently and painlessly as possible. Before fixin' to work up a mojo, sachet, wash, or anointing oil, however, you need certain equipment to get started.

Apron A plastic "splash-proof" apron sold by soap suppliers and chemical shops is highly recommended for protection against the caustic sodium hydroxide used during cold-processed soapmaking. Also consider putting on old clothes to use as smocks or work clothes.

Blender A blender is used for thorough mixing and liquefying.

Bottles and Jars Bottles and jars are very important pieces of equipment. I like using recycled bottles as much as possible for shampoo and conditioners. Mouthwash, liquid dish detergent, shampoo, and conditioner bottles, as well as lotion, yogurt, and baby food containers are all useful. Glass storage jars are used mainly for oil infusions and tinctures. Tinted glass ones with spring or cork tops work well. At times you will want to make special blends as gifts or for stores. There are plenty of specialty container suppliers who carry powder dispensers, spritzers, cologne bottles, flip-top body-wash bottles, and decorative jars with screw tops for this purpose. It's nice now and again to use these decorative containers for yourself -especially the powder dispensers, since powders are essential to hoodoos. Pretty perfume bottles used for storing personal scents also add a nice touch. They can be bought new or at antique shops. There is more information in appendix B about commercial bottle suppliers. Remember, when using recycled materials, it is very important to sterilize them first by boiling plastic containers and cleaning glass bottles with very hot, soapy water. Rinse and allow to dry before beginning. They can also be sterilized in a dishwasher if you have one.

Cauldron A cauldron doesn't have to be fancy or bought from a specialty shop; a plain, castiron Dutch oven will do. However, if you want to brew your roots in a proper cauldron, there are plenty of suppliers who carry them.

Charcoal Blocks Buy charcoal blocks in quantity, as they are the most efficient way of burning loose herbal incense. Avoid those that contain saltpeter; it is toxic when burned. (Traditionally, saltpeter was an ingredient used by hoodoos. Sadly, the type sold today is sodium nitrate, a highly combustible substance that is also harmful to the skin, eyes, and lungs.) Pure bamboo charcoals from Japan are available and make a more wholesome alternative.

Chiminea A chiminea is a portable, miniature fireplace that is generally kept on the patio. This is great for burning incense and for fire rituals if you don't have a fireplace.

Coffee Grinder A coffee grinder is a convenient way to grind tough spices and roots compared to its ancestor, the mortar and pestle, which requires hand grinding and lots of elbow

grease. Watch out though; really tough spices and roots need to be ground by hand or they'll break your coffee grinder. Trust me, I've been through quite a few.

Double Boiler A double boiler is an indirect way of heating that prevents waxy mixtures, like ointments and candle wax, from cooking too quickly. A double boiler can be improvised by floating a stainless-steel bowl in water in a pot that is slightly larger than the bowl.

Droppers Droppers are essential for dispensing droplets of essential oils, fragrance oils, body fluids, or other precious liquids that you don't want to waste. Throughout this book I ask that you drop in essential oils, as this is the approach used by good perfumers. It helps ensure that the oils don't clump up; instead, they disperse evenly. See appendix B for suppliers.

Drying Rack A drying rack is where fresh herbs are hung by their stems to dry. Also, it's an attractive way to display and store dried herbs indefinitely.

Food Processor Even a mini food processor without all the fancy attachments will do to blend and liquefy ingredients for personal-care recipes.

Freestanding Mixer A freestanding mixer is convenient, but not essential. It is used for whisking and thoroughly blending ingredients while saving your energy.

Funnel Set Funnels are used to prevent spills and ease the transfer of liquids, oils, and powders from the bowl or pan to a small-necked bottle (referred to here as bottling).

Grater A Teflon or stainless-steel grater is recommended because it lasts longer and resists sticking and rusting. It is mainly used for shredding beeswax and refining roots.

Kettle A kettle is used to boil water for infusing herbs.

Measuring Cups Measuring cups are used to measure both dry ingredients and liquids. Pyrex, tempered glass, and stainless steel work best. Glass and stainless steel are easy to clean completely to prevent cross-contamination of ingredients.

Measuring Spoons Measuring spoons made of stainless steel with clearly marked measurements etched into the surface are preferred.

Mixing Bowls Glass, ceramic, or stainless-steel mixing bowls are recommended because they will not become stained from colorants, nor will they harbor bits of leftover ingredients once cleaned properly. Cleanliness is very important because dirty bowls or other equipment will introduce bacteria to your recipes, lessening their longevity and efficacy.

Mortar and Pestle Recommended for tough spices and roots. See "Coffee Grinder" section above.

Pans Stainless-steel pans with heavy bottoms work best because they distribute heat evenly and resist burning and overheating. Most importantly, stainless steel stays inert, which prevents contamination and depletion. Contamination and depletion are likely to occur while using cast iron, aluminum, or copper. Make sure you have tight-fitting lids handy as well. They help retain the medicinal qualities of the volatile oils, otherwise these precious substances evaporate.

Stirring Spoon Stainless-steel stirring spoons are preferred.

Stirring Wand A stirring wand, usually made of nonreactive glass or ceramic, is used similarly to a cocktail stirrer to blend perfumes while discouraging cross-contamination.

Storage

Bins Storage bins are used to hold dried herbs. Dark glass containers with spring tops or stainless steel is ideal. Keeping light away from the herbs helps them retain their medicinal qualities longer. Some folk store them in brown paper bags, particularly when they are being dried. This works well only if you don't have moths or other pests that might try to eat the herbs.

Stove or Hotplate A stove or hotplate is used for heating, drying, and simmering brews.

Straining Devices A straining device can be cheesecloth (muslin) stretched over a preserve or other wide-necked jar and secured with a rubber band or twine. I prefer to use a stainless- steel sieve.

Sun Tea Jars Glass or plastic sun tea jars are used to brew herbs in sun- or moonlight.

Thermometers Candy thermometers will work, but a meat probe is my first choice because it will not break as easily. Thermometers are essential when making soap, and are useful for checking temperatures during the creation of creams, salves, and healing balms.

Twine Twine is good for tying herbs together at the stems before hanging them to dry, and for fixing muslin to a jar for straining. Hemp (marijuana) string is an excellent alternative for its strength and durability.

Whisk A stainless-steel whisk is preferred.

Gathering and Drying Herbs

Suggestions to Urban Dwellers For folk living in cities, apartments, or other tight spaces where land comes at a premium price, the primary source for gathering herbs will be specialty catalogs, health-food stores, and the Internet. Even within this commercial arena, the way you go about gathering is critical, and the relationships you develop can be meaningful, educational, and fun. Things to look for are as follows: Are the herbs ethically harvested? Be careful about barks and roots. Some, like Little John, are overharvested and face extinction. Are the herbs organically grown? This is the safest method for personal-care products and consumables. Are the herbs fresh and within their expiration date? They should have a bright color, strong scent, and no mold or mildew. Are the prices fair, without excessive markups? Do some research and compare prices. Are the herbs usually in stock, available without delays? Is the source convenient and practical for you? Is a knowledgeable person available to answer your questions? Start out with a local shop, if possible. Then, as you become comfortable with creating your own brews, you can branch out into wholesale. Buying herbs in bulk saves big bucks! Other options include visiting your local farmer's market, or driving outside the city to support roadside farm stands. If you so choose, you can also grow your favorite herbs in pots on the windowsill, terrace, or even inside using grow lights.

Suggestions to Suburban and Rural Dwellers If you are fortunate enough to have enough space to grow your own herbs, fruits, and vegetables, the following suggestions are for you. Please remember, when gathering Mother Nature's gifts, approach the plants with respect and thank them for sharing their healing energy with you.

Harvesting Leaves Look for leaves of a consistent green color without brown or yellow spots. Harvest midmorning after the dew has evaporated. Gather

leaves before the plant begins to flower. For plants that have long growing seasons, such as basil or oregano, pinch back the tops to prevent flowering. (Flowering takes energy away from the main body of the plant.) Keep herbs separated by type, and tie the stems loosely together in a bundle with twine or hemp string. Until you are very familiar with all of the herbs, it is best to label the bundles and date them as well. Hang them up to dry immediately after harvesting to prevent mildew or deterioration. Hang the herb bundles stem up in an area with good circulation away from direct sunlight. The ideal temperature for the first twenty-four hours is ninety degrees, followed by seventy-five to eighty degrees the rest of the time. Most herbal bundles will dry between two to three weeks. Petals and leaves should feel light, crisp, and paperlike. If there are small buds or tiny leaves that may fall off during the drying time, create a roomy muslin bag to encase flowers and leaves and tie it loosely with twine or hemp string at the stems. This is particularly important with seed-dropping plants, such as fennel or sunflowers. When herbs are completely dry, store the whole leaf and stem away from direct sunlight in dark glass or stainless-steel airtight containers.

Harvesting Flowers-Flowers are extremely delicate. Select healthy flowers in the early afternoon during dry weather conditions. Take extra care not to bruise the petals, refrain from touching them, cut from the stem, and allow the flowers to drop into a basket. Dry smaller, more delicate flowers, such as lavender and chamomile, whole. You can hang them upside down tied with twine over a muslin cloth or large bowl or wrapped loosely with muslin to retain dried buds. Use fresh flowers in the home whenever possible. You may also freeze them in an ice cube tray filled with spring water.

Harvesting Seeds-Collect seeds on a warm, dry day. Seeds need to dry in a warm, airy environment. Make provisions to catch the quickly drying seeds by placing a bowl or box

underneath the hanging plants. **Harvesting Bark-**Bark peels easiest on damp days. Choose a young tree or bush and, if possible, one that has already been pruned, cut, or taken down naturally by wind or stormy conditions to prevent damage or even death to the plant. Stripping too much bark from a tree will kill it. A thoughtful approach to Mother Nature's gifts is essential. Bark may harbor insects or moss, so wash it first and allow it to dry flat on waxed paper in a location that is well ventilated and away from direct sunlight. **Harvesting Roots-**Roots are ready for collecting after the autumn harvest. Dig up roots after their plant has begun to wither and die. Extract the whole root while trying not to bruise it. Like bark, roots need to be cleaned before they are

This is an excellent source for those both new and experience in the art of Hoodoo. The text flows well. There are practical solutions for everyday Hoodoo using common objects, as well as sources in the Appendix for further supplies and info.

Love this book-informative and educational

Very good book. Practical and easy to understand. The author has excellent knowledge.

Thankful for the insight this book has given me!

Very informative and culturally educational; including basic spiritual beliefs and practices for the spiritual beginner of folk magick.

Let me start off by saying that the reason I liked this book is because Bird does what a lot of authors refused to do, which was raised the bar. Most writers about Hoodoo had nothing to do with the African American community. They simply copied down formulas and recipes mostly based upon fiction and said it was Hoodoo. Most authors like Robert Pelton had no understanding of the culture that produced the tradition and as she stated, as result, these authors make the ridiculous claim that the tradition came from Europe. So, I like this book first and foremost because she tries to set the record straight but tying it back to its African roots. She has researched the subject in order to get enough understanding to make practical use of various myths that existed apparently in her household. What she has done, which a lot of people don't seem to understand is explain and define her own personal hoodoo. Oh yeah, by the way, hoodoo in African American speech is used to define a system, tradition and even one's personal spiritual practice. This is why the term is used as a noun, pronoun and adjective. So, to say that this is not hoodoo I think is incorrect, it is Bird's Hoodoo, which is what the book should have been called. Bird's Hoodoo, makes use of multicultural references and can be applied in various ways such as for weddings, blessings, funerals, etc. Now, what I didn't like about this book is that in its attempts to appeal to a broader reading public (typical of Llewellyn fluffy magickal books-can't you hear them singing Kumbaya). This book fails to define African American spirituality and religious thinking. The reason is because once this is defined, there are certain things that have to be excused because it would not be appealing to the multicultural audience. Simply put there are some things that African Americans will not agree with or accept no matter what the public's opinion is and Bird understands this. So as a substitute, this is why in my opinion the book lacks traditional hoodoo substance and is peppered with astrology and influences from other religion. For instance, the old practitioners that I have met in Detroit, Chicago and Northwest Florida (some of which were from Detroit) only looked to the sky to see when the

moon was waxing or waning. They never dealt with astrology because the tradition as I heard someone explain it to me is a poor man practice. Astrology was considered a form of "high magick" mainly because only those that had money could buy the resources to use it. Another example is that hoodoo practitioners of old, never really used parchment paper, because it was too expensive, so they used brown paper bag, which resembled parchment paper (there's another reason for using this as well). Make sense? So, I give Bird credit for trying and would still recommend this book for those interested in more than just spellbooks, because it at least gives one something to think about. If you are looking for a book on real hoodoo that lists all of the details and all that. It hasn't been written and most likely never will because you can't properly explain an intuitive practice. That's like trying to explain how to get the Holy Ghost...yeah, WHAT? So, understand, those pages exist deep within the spirit, the akahsa memories or whatever you want to call it. Books are supposed to be guides but eventually one has to put the book down and learn from within. Hope this helps.

I loved this book its a beginners book on Hoodoo. I especially loved the part on Hoodoo child, it offered wonderful rituals for the pregnant woman while I am an advanced Hoodoo root worker, this book is a wonderful book to pass on to my 3 daughters. being a life long root worker and one who is a current student of Cat Yronwode. I found this book to be a wonderful addition to the Hoodoo experience. some people have complained the book was fluff, quite frankly if they read the book without prejudice they would certainly find things that work. now there are books with more in depth information like Robert Laremy and Cathrine Yronwode for the more advanced root worker. and 5000 spells by Judika Illes the mother of all spell books. to try to dismiss Stephanie book as fluff indicates prejudice by those who seek instant magic. if they knew anything about "real" magic its a tool to enhance and make the living experience that much more richer. this type of magic by Stephanie invite the reader to tap into their inner Hoodoo spirit and to enjoy the experience of intimate Hoodoo working. I know my daughter will enjoy this book as much as I have, it will surly spark their curiosity and creativity on a long held cultural tradition of Hoodoo practiced by our ancient ancestors and their descendants today. this book invites you to tap into latent cultural traditions.

Excellent read.

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