

Eat the Weeds



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PLEASE READ: *The information handout has not been approved by the FDA and does not in any way intend to diagnose or prescribe. Always consult with your health practitioner before taking any remedy. **Above this, I also recommend that you...***

1. *Research an herb in at least three good sources before ingesting it,*
2. *Take proper steps to ensure that any wildcrafted material is indeed the plant you think it is,*
3. *Check with your pharmacist for herb-drug interactions if you take prescriptions, AND*
4. *Listen to your body and/or intuition if an herb does not resonate with you or you experience side effects.*

Discover a culinary bounty of plants that are nutritious and beyond “easy to grow”: they’re weeds! I’m not saying you can’t weed your yard, but you can save a few of these delicious plants from the compost pile and add them to your dinner instead.

Get Foraging

There is only one rule to wild foods: Be 100% sure the plant is what you think it is and in the form it should be eaten. This takes time to learn, but it quickly turns into an enjoyable hobby.

Seek out wild food classes in your area. This will introduce you to a few foods and give you a taste of foraging and plant identification. Search around local nature centers and old ways organizations. Also check out wildfoodplants.com/Resources to find educators near you.

Get to know one plant. When you forage on your own, focus on one plant at a time, and learn it intimately. People will overwhelm themselves trying to learn all possible edible plants. “You don’t need to be familiar with so many different plants, just the one you’re eating,” says forager & author Sam Thayer. You may want to observe the plant for a year. Many are best identified when they are in flower, but this is rarely the ideal time to harvest them. Refer to books and view photos via plants.usda.gov.

Build Your Library. Unfortunately, no one book will give you all the information you need to correctly identify and prepare all wild foods. Some books may have conflicting information, so it’s helpful to have a variety of books to cross-reference. Try to find at least two or three good plant identification books for your area. “Newcomb’s Wildflower Guide” will cover most flowering plants across the United States. Peterson’s Field Guide “Edible Wild Plants” covers most of the United States, including poisonous look-alikes. Ask your local Audubon, nature center, or foraging experts what others they recommend. Then look for books that specifically discuss the edibles. Consider “Stalking the Wild Asparagus” by Euell Gibbons, “The Forager’s Harvest,” by Samuel Thayer, and “Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants in Wild (and Not-So-Wild) Places” by Steve Brill (excerpts and photos on www.wildmanstevebrill.com). Visit www.wildfoodadventures.com/bookstorereviews.html for more book recommendations.

Harvest Kindly & Carefully. Plants can contain pollutants if harvested from an unclean source. Avoid plants along busy roadsides, railroad tracks, and downstream from agricultural business, chemical plants, and waste facilities. Always ask permission before wildcrafting on private property. And, avoid over-harvesting plants, particularly delicate species. These tend to be native, perennial, and root-based wild foods. For example, while wild leeks are delicious and incredibly abundant in some areas, they are surprisingly slow-growing.

Find Your Tribe. Connect with other wild foodies in your community and across the globe. Consider joining the Yahoo group Forage Ahead. Members share wild food advice, location leads, preparation techniques, recipes and more. You'll also connect with others by taking classes and attending a plant rendezvous or festival. Visit wildfoodplants.com/Resources for a listing of these events.

Beginner Wild Foods

Leafy Greens

Nettles (stinging) young leaves
 Amaranth tender leaves
 Lamb's Quarters young greens
 Sheep Sorrel
 Wood Sorrel
 Purslane
 Chicory young leaves
 Garlic Mustard
 Dandelion spring greens
 Watercress (clean water)

Tea Weeds

Heal All
 Pineapple weed
 Raspberry, Blackberry,
 Dewberry leaves
 Strawberry leaves
 Blueberry leaves
 Rosehips
 Wintergreen leaves
 Wild & Water Mints
 Chicory root (roasted)
 Sassafras leaves/roots
 Birch bark
 Pine, Spruce, Hemlock (tree)
 Nettles (dried, NOT fresh)

Not Just Pretty Flowers

Violets
 Bee balm/Monarda
 Day Lilies (pref. cooked)
 Clovers
 B. elder flowers (dry or fried)
 Nasturtium
 Rose petals (some are better)

Edible Roots

Burdock
 Dandelion
 Queen Ann's Lace
 Chicory

Wild Berries

Elderberries (black, not red)
 Cherries
 Serviceberries
 Wintergreen Berries
 Autumn Olive
 Raspberries, Blackberries &
 Dewberries
 Concord Grapes
 Blueberries
 Mulberry
 Rosehips
 Sumac (red) for "lemonade"

Other Culinary Treats

Fiddleheads (cooked)
 (Not all ferns are fiddleheads!)
 Japanese knotweed "rhubarb"
 Cattails

Medicinal Weeds

Red Clover
 Ground Ivy
 Jewelweed
 Plantain
 Yellow Dock
 Violets
 Partridgeberry
 Plantain
 Mullein
 Yarrow

Poisonous

Poke Weed
 Foxglove
 Poison Hemlock
 Water Hemlock
 Poison Ivy, Oak & Sumac
 False Hellebore/Veratrum
 Aconite/Monkshood
 Bryony
 & others

Recipes

Sweet & Sour Spring Salad

This was a treat during the early wild strawberry season. Wild strawberries are TINY but absolutely delicious. If you have young-uns who can do the picking for you, recruit them! Sheep sorrel grows abundantly in our unsprayed, acidic lawn. It has a tangy sour taste and arrow-shaped leaves. If you don't have any of that, chances are you have clover-like wood sorrel, which can be used just the same. Some mild garden lettuce and peppery arugula round out the flavors.

Salad:

- 2 handfuls of sheep sorrel or wood sorrel
- 2 handfuls of garden lettuce
- 2 handfuls of arugula
- 1 cup or more of wild strawberries or sliced cultivated strawberries

Dressing:

- 1 tablespoon licorice-mint/anise-hyssop-infused honey
- 1 tablespoon chive blossom vinegar
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- Or any fruity vinaigrette

Wild Mint Cocoa

This has become a favorite of ours for camping trips. Wild mint (or is it water mint that's wild?) tends to grow along the shores of fresh water. We harvest small amounts as we paddle or when we're setting up camp. Some wild mint tastes better than others, but the ones I use are delicious! It's reminiscent of peppermint but milder and fresher in flavor.

- 2-4 sprigs of wild mint
- 1 package of cocoa mix

- 8-12 oz of water

Bring water to a boil, pour over mint in your mug. Cover and let sit for 15 minutes. Then add cocoa mix & enjoy!

Wild Green Smoothie

Yes, you can puree whole greens in the blender, and it tastes better than you'd think! Feel free to experiment with a combination of wild and cultivated greens, fruit, and juice. Here's a blend that I like:

- 1 handful of mild greens like kale, nettles, lamb's quarters...
- 1 handful of stronger flavored wild greens like watercress, purlane, sorrel...
- 1/2 – 1 banana
- 1/2 – 1 cup orange juice

Nutri-Tea

This pleasant-tasting tea provides a nice "fuzz" of minerals and some vitamins to give your body a boost. Minerals are hard to extract in tea form, but what does come out is then easily absorbed by the body.

- 2 parts nettle leaf
- 1 part alfalfa leaf
- 1 part red clover flower
- 1 part horsetail
- 1 part spearmint leaf
- 1 part peppermint leaf
- 1/2 part calendula flowers

Use 1 tablespoon per cup of hot water. Let steep, covered, for 5-15 minutes. Sweeten if desired.

Rosemary Gladstar's Nettle Spanakopita

This recipe can be found in Rosemary Gladstar's Family Herbal (Storey Books, 2001). I HIGHLY recommend this book if you are looking to really integrate herbs into your life. She has several wonderful and diverse recipes in the book that go beyond teas, tinctures, and capsules. For example Zoom Balls for energy, 7-Herb Long Life Soup, Seaweed Salad, and Fire Cider Zest. I've had the joy of eating Nettle Spanakopita made by Nancy Phillips (one of my teachers and Rosemary's students)—it's delicious!

Buy ready-made phyllo dough in the frozen section of most grocery stores—it is even available in

natural food stores. It must be completely defrosted and at room temperature.

- 2 cups water
 - 1 cup brown rice
 - 3 quarts fresh nettle tops
 - Extra-virgin olive oil
 - 3 large onions, chopped
 - 1 full head of garlic, chopped
 - Basil, marjoram, oregano, and thyme
 - 1 cup ricotta cheese
 - 1/2 cup grated provolone or cheddar cheese
 - 2 eggs
 - 1/2 cup butter
 - 1 package phyllo dough at room temperature
 - 1/2 pound feta cheese, crumbled
1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Bring the water to a boil, add the rice, cover, and simmer on low for 45 minutes or until done. When the rice is cooking, steam the nettle tops for about 20 minutes or until completely steamed through.
 2. In a skillet, heat just a few drops of olive oil. Sauté the onions and garlic until translucent. Add basil, marjoram, oregano, and thyme to taste.
 3. For the filling, combine the rice, nettles, and onions and garlic in a large bowl. Add the cheeses and eggs, stir well.
 4. Melt the butter in a small saucepan. Place the phyllo under a damp towel to prevent it from drying out, and work quickly. If exposed to the air too long, the phyllo will become dry, brittle, and unworkable.
 5. Butter the bottom and sides of a 9x13 inch baking dish. Lace a layer of phyllo on the bottom of the dish and brush lightly with the butter, using a pastry brush. Add another layer of phyllo and butter lightly. Repeat this process until you have used half the package of phyllo.
 6. Pour the filling over the phyllo and sprinkle the feta on top. Place a layer of phyllo over the filling and butter lightly. Repeat until you have used all the phyllo or until you get tired of layering and buttering. Cut into diamond-shaped pieces before baking.
 7. Bake for about 1 hour, or until lightly browned. Serve with fresh wild herb salad or Greek nettle marinade, French bread, and hearty red wine.

Tips

Use these tender greens in salad:

- Sheep sorrel (sour)
- Wood sorrel (sour)
- Lamb's quarters/goosefoot (green)
- Amaranth (green)
- Purslane (succulent, unique)
- Watercress (peppery)
- Dandelion leaves (bitter)
- Chicory (bitter, an uncultivated endive)

Use these tender greens cooked like spinach

- Stinging nettle (use gloves when handling fresh, but once cooked it's tastier than spinach!)
- Any of the "salad greens" above
- Garlic mustard (garlic-y)
- Purslane (succulent, unique)

Toss any of the edible flowers into salad EXCEPT

- Use day lilies cooked, like in a stir fry (large quantities & raw can upset the stomach)
- Use elder flowers cooked (often fried in tempura) or dried (to make tea or elder water)

Use these berries as you would cultivated berries – fresh, frozen, dehydrated, cooked as pie, jam....

- Blueberries
- Strawberries
- Raspberries, Blackberries, Dewberries
- Serviceberries (aka Juneberries) (Note: some taste better than others)

Use these berries cooked or dry preferably (fresh may be mildly toxic), for as pie, fruit leather, jam...

- Black elderberries (note: red elderberries are toxic)
- Wild cherries (Note: some taste better than others)

Sources & Resources

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- Sams, Tina. (2006). Wild Foods For Every Table.
- Thayer, Samuel. (2006) The Forager's Harvest

Websites

- www.swsbm.com TONS of photos, old herbal texts, Michael Moore's books, and more, available for anyone to read/see, download, etc.
- www.foraging.com Links galore to Foraging sites.
- www.wildmanstevebrill.com Great site to get started. Much of his books are available here to read for free. Recipes, identification basics, etc.
- www.wildfoodplants.com Sunny Savage archives info and has videos as well. Not particularly informative, but a nice introduction.
- Definitely check out <http://wildfoodplants.com/Resources> for upcoming foraging events & links to many foraging websites.

Visit the Links page of www.WintergreenBotanicals.com for Local & Online sources for seedlings, seeds, *herb supplies, herbs...* as well as links to *informative herbal websites*.
