

EARTH SKILLS
EDIBLE PLANT COOKING
MARCH 23, 2013
MENU

Salad Miner's lettuce, watercress, chickweed, dock, wild radish blossoms
Sage-piñon vinaigrette



Breads Piñon muffins
Rose hip fruit spread



Appetizer Wontons with sautéed cleavers and water chestnuts



Main dishes Nettle soup with potatoes
Quiche with wild mustard and radish greens



Side dishes Brown rice with wild currants and corn
Acorn pasta with sautéed mushrooms
Sautéed curly dock greens



Dessert Elderberry pie
Italian style acorn cake with elderberry syrup



EDIBLE PLANT RECIPES

SALAD

Sort, rinse and chop as necessary watercress, miner's lettuce, and chickweed and sprinkle wild radish blossoms on top.

Set out chopped sage leaves, some roasted and chopped pine nuts, and radish blossoms for garnish. Set out sage-piñon vinaigrette.

SAGE-PIÑON VINAIGRETTE

Shell the pine nuts.

½ cup pine nuts
½ cup olive oil
4 tbs chopped sage leaves
4 tbs balsamic vinegar
2 cloves minced garlic

Toast pine nuts (without oil) in a skillet until browned and firm. Chop the fresh sage leaves. In a blender, whirl the nuts, oil, sage, vinegar, and garlic until smooth. Put the dressing into a small serving bowl.

PIÑON MUFFINS

Shell the pine nuts, roast them (without oil) in a skillet until browned and firm, and then grind them in a blender.

2 cups ground pine nuts
1 cup flour
4 tsp baking powder
1 cup milk
6 tbsp honey
1 tsp salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine dry ingredients and then add wet ingredients and mix until just blended. Fill greased muffin cups ½ full and bake 30 minutes.

ROSE HIP FRUIT SPREAD

Clean the rose hips, removing any dried flour parts. Begin to cook the fruits in a little water (so that the hips are covered, but the mixture will not be too thin). After the fruits are soft, put the mixture through a food mill to remove the seeds (and again through a sieve if necessary). Add sugar to taste, and water if necessary, and cook the mixture until it's the right consistency. The spread can be used with muffins.

WON TONS STUFFED WITH CLEAVERS

Freshly picked cleavers (= Galium or bedstraw leaves and stems)
Peanut oil
Garlic, minced
Shallots, minced
Water chestnuts, rinsed, drained, minced
Won ton wrappers
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Wash the cleavers thoroughly and trim any tough stems or roots. Chop fairly finely and set aside.

Place a wok or skillet over medium-high heat. When it begins to smoke, add the peanut oil, then the garlic and onion. (You will need to judge the amount of garlic and onion so that their flavor doesn't overpower the taste of the greens.) Stir-fry 30 seconds. Add the cleavers and cook until they start to get tender (you may have to add a little water to the wok to steam them if the stems are too tough). Then, add the water chestnuts and stir fry another few minutes. Transfer the vegetables to a bowl and season with salt and pepper.

When the filling has cooled slightly, form the won tons. Dip your fingers in warm water and moisten the entire surface of a wrapper. Place a good spoonful of filling in the center of the wrapper and fold it in half. (The resulting wontons should be nicely filled but not so much that the filling would burst out when being cooked or served.) Moisten the edges of the wonton wrappers with water, and press to seal. Set aside the finished won tons.

Close to the serving time, cook the won tons in boiling water until just tender, a few minutes (when they all float to the top of the boiling water they should be done).

CREAM OF NETTLE SOUP WITH POTATOES

2 lb. fresh nettles*
1 lb. russet potatoes, diced*
2 leeks, white part only
6 ½ tsp butter
3 ½ cups water
2/3 cup cream

** proportions approximate*

In a small pan, add the butter and sweat the leeks until soft. Add potato and water, and cook until soft (falling apart). Blend the potato / leek mixture. Return to pan. Add cream. Blanch raw nettle leaves until tender. Add nettles to the potato mixture and season to taste with salt and pepper. Reheat and thin with water or cream if necessary.

QUICHE WITH WILD MUSTARD AND RADISH GREENS

2 onions
8 to 12 cups mustard and radish leaves
2 cups grated sharp cheddar
2 cups grated mozzarella
4 eggs
nutmeg, salt, pepper, and Worcestershire sauce

Rinse the mustard and radish leaves and chop coarsely, removing tough stems and leaf veins if necessary. Chop onion and sauté it in a little oil until tender. Add the leaves to the onion and stir them over low to medium heat until leaves are wilted. Whisk the eggs until lightly beaten.

Then, in a 9 inch pie pan [this recipe makes two pies], combine the onion-green mixture with some of the grated cheeses. Pour the beaten eggs into the pan. Add nutmeg, salt, pepper and Worcestershire sauce, all to taste. Then, top the pie with a thin layer of grated cheddar. Bake the pie at 375 degrees for about 30 minutes or until the top begins to brown.

BROWN RICE WITH WILD CURRANTS AND FRESH CORN

vegetable oil
¾ large red onion, finely chopped
2 cups brown rice
4 cups vegetable stock
kernels from 4 ears of corn
1 ¾ to 2 cups fresh red currants
salt to taste

Proportions above are somewhat variable; corn and currants should be about equal volume. Heat oil in a pan. Add the onion and sauté, stirring often, until onion is softened. When onion is soft, add the brown rice to the pan and toss it in the oil to coat. Add the stock and bring the mixture up to a simmer. Cover, reduce heat and simmer until the rice is almost done, about 50 minutes (or what rice package recommends).

Clean the currants, removing any dried flower parts or leaves from the batch. (Small flower parts still attached to each currant may remain because their removal is difficult without crushing the fragile berry.) When the rice is almost done, add corn and steam another 5 minutes. Then, add the currants, heat for a minute or two, add salt to taste and serve.

ACORN PASTA WITH SAUTEED MUSHROOMS

¾ cup wheat flour
¾ cup semolina flour
½ cup acorn flour, leached
1 ½ cups cool water (may not need all of this)
Pinch of salt
Mushrooms (may be a combination of white mushrooms, shiitakes and any other quick cooking mushrooms)

Mix the flours and salt and place in a large bowl. Make a well in the center of the mixture, and begin adding water, mixing the flour until it forms dough. Turn out onto a floured surface and knead for 10 minutes. Make a ball of the dough, cover with a little olive oil, cover with plastic wrap and let stand for an hour.

Then, cut the dough into sections and roll each section between the hands to form a rope about the diameter of your largest finger. Cut the rope into small discs the size of a fingernail. Put your finger in the center of each one and roll toward you, creating a little dumpling with a depression in the middle. These should be formed not long before they will be cooked; that is they should not sit and dry out. Put the pasta into boiling water for a few minutes until done (when they float to the top they are done or almost done; you can taste to make sure).

Meanwhile, slice the mushrooms and cook them in olive oil. The volume of mushrooms should be equal to that of the cooked pasta. At the last minute, add the cooked pasta to the cooking mushrooms, stir to heat and mix, then serve.

SAUTEED CURLY DOCK LEAVES

Trim leaves, removing large stems and veins. Chop coarsely. Steam until tender, season as necessary and serve.

ELDERBERRY PIE (2 pies)

2 recipes pastry for a 9 inch double crust pie
8 cups elderberries
2 cups white sugar
6 tablespoons or more of cornstarch
2 tablespoons lemon juice

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). Roll out the pastry dough and line the bottom of the 9 inch pie pan. (Reserve dough for the top.)

Mix some of the cornstarch in a little bit of water and add to berries and sugar in a saucepan. Cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture thickens; you may need to add more cornstarch depending on how much liquid is in the berries. Add lemon juice.

Pour the mixture into the pie pan. Dot with butter. Put on top crust or make a lattice. Bake at 375 degrees F until browned and the berries are bubbling through holes in the crust, approximately 40 minutes.

Note: It is a good idea to put a pan or foil under the pie as it bakes since it might bubble over.

ITALIAN ACORN CAKE

This recipe is adapted from an Italian chestnut cake recipe but has whipped egg yolks and whites to make it lighter.

¾ cup olive oil
¾ cup acorn flour leached
¾ cup all-purpose flour
¾ tsp baking powder
¾ tsp baking soda
3/8 tsp salt
5 eggs, separated

¾ cup honey
3/8 cup sugar
Oil for greasing pan

Grease the pan. Mix acorn flour, wheat flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt in a bowl. In another bowl, beat the egg yolks, oil, honey and 3 tbsp sugar until it looks like caramel. Mix in the dry ingredients. In another bowl, add the egg whites and a pinch of salt and beat into soft peaks. Add the remaining sugar and beat so whites reach the firm peak stage.

Fold the beaten egg whites into the other mixture, place in a baking pan and bake for 30 minutes. Check after 20 minutes to make sure it's not burning. When done, let cool.

ELDERBERRY SYRUP

1 cup of fresh (or ½ cup dried) elderberries.
1 cinnamon stick
5 whole cloves
1 tablespoon of julienned ginger
2 cups of water
1 cup of honey

Place the berries in a saucepan and cover them with the 2 cups of water and everything else except honey (which comes later). Then, bring it to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer covered but not tightly for about 20 minutes which will reduce the liquid by about half. Simmer longer for thicker syrup.

Pour the mixture through a mesh strainer, or through muslin cloth or use both with the muslin draped over the strainer which then allows you to hand squeeze the remaining juice from the berries. Add the honey while still warm. Ratio is equal juice to honey.

Wait for the liquid to cool and then serve. (You can also store the syrup in the fridge, where it will last about 3 months. This syrup is also medicinal, used as a cold and flu remedy that stimulates the immune system and inhibits viral growth.)