

Edible Weeds – April 2010

Bob Stanley (right), a founding member of the Greely Gardeners Group, and a former long-serving President of GGG spoke to the members about Edible Weeds.

Bob gave a delightful presentation describing a meal created using some of the weeds that we might find in our gardens or in the surrounding countryside.

Plants such as Clover, Dandelion, Milkweed, Chickweed, Lamb's Quarters, Plantain, Purslane, Thistle and Nettle were among the "weeds" used in the recipes (see below for the recipes).



MENU

Starters:

Pacific Oysters in Clover
Farmer's Soup
Chickweed Salad

Entrees:

Scalloped Lamb's Quarters Italian Style
Plantain Casserole
Purslane Chicken Fricassee

served with Baked thistle roots

Dessert:

Nettle Crème Surprise

Dandelion coffee
Dandelion wine (optional)

Starters:

Pacific Oysters in Clover

2 cups clover leaves, washed and chopped
2 tbsp butter
12 fresh Pacific oysters
1 cup dandelion wine (or other white wine)
Salt and pepper

Sauté the clover in butter for 3 to 5 mins (don't overcook).
Add oysters with their liquid, cover and simmer gently until edges of oysters start to curl.
Add wine. Reheat. Add seasonings to taste and serve hot.
Serves four.

Farmer's Soup

2 cups milkweed pods and shoots, washed
1 tbsp butter
1 finely chopped onion
1 cup sliced mushrooms
3 cups beef broth
1 cup cooked beef, cubed

Cover milkweed with lightly salted boiling water. Simmer for 15 mins, then drain. Chop into small pieces and set aside.
Melt butter in soup pot, add onion and mushrooms, sauté 10 mins.
Add broth, milkweed and beef. Season, cover and simmer for 15 mins.
Makes 4 servings. Serve hot with toast.

Chickweed Salad

2 cups young chickweed sprigs, washed.
1 cup baby spinach leaves (or young dandelion leaves).
Roasted, unsalted sunflower seeds.
Salad dressing.

Remove roots from freshly picked chickweed sprigs.
Wash and trim to remove excess stems.
Add spinach (or dandelions) and toss with oil-and-vinegar or blue cheese dressing.
Sprinkle with sunflower seeds and fresh herbs (optional).
Serves four.

Entrees:

Scalloped Lamb's Quarters Italian Style

4 cups fresh lamb's quarters leaves, washed
1/2 cup water
1/4 cup butter
1/4 cup flour
2 cups canned diced tomatoes
Buttered breadcrumbs
Grated Parmesan cheese

Boil lamb's quarters in water for 3 mins. Drain, add half the butter. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Spread in bottom of a greased casserole dish.

Melt remaining butter and stir in flour. Add tomatoes and cook until thickened.

Spread evenly over lamb's quarters, top with breadcrumbs and bake at 375 for 20 mins.

Sprinkle with parmesan to serve.

Plantain Casserole

2 tbsp butter
Medium onion, chopped
2 cups plantain leaves, washed and chopped.
2 cups cooked ham, cubed.
2 hard-boiled eggs, sliced
1 can condensed mushroom soup
1/2 cup breadcrumbs

Melt butter in skillet, add onion and cook until browned.

Add plantain leaves, stir to coat with butter; salt and pepper to taste.

In greased casserole layer half the plantain mixture, then half the ham and eggs. Repeat layers.

Pour mushroom soup over top and sprinkle with breadcrumbs.

Bake at 300 for 1 hour. Serves 4.

Purslane Chicken Fricassee

4 cups fresh purslane leaves, washed.
1/2 cup water.
1 frying chicken cut into serving pieces.
1/4 cup olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced.
Small can tomato sauce.
1/2 dry white wine
1 tbsp lemon juice

Add purslane to boiling water, reduce heat and simmer for 5 mins. Drain, chop and set aside.

Fry chicken pieces in olive oil over low heat for 20 mins.

Add garlic, purslane and tomato sauce. Cover and cook slowly for 45 mins, turning chicken pieces halfway through.

Combine wine and lemon juice. Add to skillet and cook for 2 mins more. Serves 4.

Baked thistle roots

12 large thistle tap roots
2 tbsp melted butter
1/2 tsp salt
3/4 cup beef or chicken broth (or water)
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

Wash and pare thistle roots, then cut each in half lengthwise.

Place in a buttered casserole dish.

Brush with melted butter and sprinkle with salt to taste. Add broth, and bake at 375 for about 45 mins, or until tender.

Serve buttered and sprinkled with parsley.

Dessert:

Nettle Crème Surprise

1 1/2 cups water
1/4 tsp salt
2 cups nettle leaves.
3 tbsps butter.
1 tsp flour.
1/2 cup whipping cream.
1 tbsp sugar.
1/4 tsp nutmeg.
2 tbsp chopped toasted almonds.

Add salt and nettle leaves to boiling water. Boil for 2 to 3 mins. Drain well and chop.

Melt butter in saucepan and add nettle leaves. Cook for 3 mins then stir in flour.

Add cream and cook for 5 mins more, or until thickened.

Add sugar and nutmeg, sprinkle almonds on top, and serve.

Coffee and Wine:

Dandelion coffee

1 lb freshly dug dandelion roots, washed well.
(The best roots are those dug in Spring or Fall.)

Cut roots into 1-inch pieces and spread them on a baking tray.

Roast at 250 for about 2 hours, until they are brown, dry and brittle. Allow to cool. Grind to a powder in a coffee grinder and store in an airtight container.

Make as regular coffee (coffee maker or percolator) using about 1 1/2 tbsp per cup.

Dandelion wine

5 quarts dandelion flowers.
5 quarts boiling water.
3 lbs white sugar.
2 lemons & 2 oranges, sliced.
1 cup raisins.
1 package wine yeast.

Collect flowers (heads only) on a dry day. Place in a crock and pour boiling water over. Cover with a clean cloth and let stand 24 hrs. Strain, add sugar, lemons and oranges. Boil for 10 mins, strain again and let cool.

Add raisins and stir in yeast. Let stand 2 to 3 weeks.

When fermentation has stopped (no bubbles), strain the mixture, bottle and cork. Don't use crown caps or screw tops. Store for six months or more, then enjoy!

The following reference material was provided by Bob at the meeting:

Edible Garden Weeds of Canada by Nancy J. Turner & Adam Szczawinski. Published by the National Museum of Natural Sciences. ISBN 0-660-00026-1

Weed 'em and Reap: A Weed Eater Reader

by Roger Welsch. Published by Falcon Books. ISBN 0-7627-3907-X

Handbook of Edible Weeds

by James A. Duke, Herbal Reference Library. Published by CRC Press. ISBN-10 0849329469