



# Southland Herb Society Spring Festival of herbs

## Foraging Notes by Maggie Elford

### Why forage?

- Being Self-reliant
- Higher nutrient value of food
- Diverse diet
- Connect with nature
- Being thrifty
- It's fun

### Guidelines

- Be able to identify your edible or poisonous plants. "If in doubt leave it out"
- Take only what you need and sustainably harvest.
- The safest place to start is your own backyard.
- When you are foraging in the wild make sure you aren't on private property.
- Avoid roadsides, and areas that may have been recently sprayed.
- Make sure you wash all foraged food well.
- Introduce new foods to your diet gradually and in small amounts.

### Weeds used to be called Food and Medicine

People used to graze on three to five thousand plants.

Now we rely on 150 with only 20 providing 90% of our intake.

American stats show that just FOUR crops account for 2/3 of their calories.

They are soy, corn, wheat and rice.

**So to increase the diversity in your diet forage for a wide variety of plants.**

### Some ideas on how to include foraged foods.

- salads
- soups
- pestos and dips
- sauces for pasta, casseroles
- fritters/patties
- infuses oils and vinegars
- syrups
- drinks
- jams and jellies
- butters
- teas/tisanes
- smoothies

### Some to get started with

- Miners lettuce
- Puha
- Chickweed
- Stinging nettle
- Plantain
- Dandelion
- Onionweed
- Watercress
- Nasturtium
- Flowers - nasturtium, borage, pansy, brassicas, red clover, chives
- Elderflower/berries
- Blackberry
- Horopito
- Chestnuts
- Apples
- Rosehips
- Walnuts
- Pinenuts
- Hawthorn berries

### Yoghurt Dip

2-3 heaped teaspoons of fresh foraged herbs, finely chopped

1 cup thick yoghurt (could be strained through muslin for a short period of time)

1 garlic clove, pounded in a mortar and pestle, or crushed or finely grated

juice of 1-2 lemons

salt and pepper to taste

pinch of turmeric or paprika (optional).

Place all ingredients in a bowl and stir to combine.

### Stuffed Nasturtium Leaves

Nasturtium leaves

Cream cheese

Chop finely red onion, red capsicum, wild walnuts and dried apricots (*optional*)

Mix chopped ingredients with cream cheese and use to stuff the nasturtium leaves and roll up.

### Weed Pakoras (*Courtesy of Johanna Knox*)

1 cup chickpea flour

1 1/2 tsp ground cumin

1/2 tsp baking powder

1 tsp salt

a big pinch of chilli powder

2 cups finely chopped foraged greens, loosely packed down

2 tablespoon grated onion

water to mix

Mix dried ingredients together and add greens, and grated onion. Mix to a batter adding enough water to make the required consistency.

Heat a little oil in a heavy based frying pan over a medium heat. Fry in small spoonfuls of batter, cooking till golden on both sides.

Serve with yoghurt dip.

## **Elderberry cream pots with chocolate truffles** *(A pannacotta type dessert from Find it Eat it by Michael Daly)*

150g elderberries	1/3 cup caster sugar
1 Tbsp powdered gelatine	2 Tbsp cold water
300ml cream	100ml full fat milk
3 Tbsp caster sugar	1 Tbsp vanilla extract
30gm dark chocolate	

### ***Preparing the elderberries***

Wash the elderberries under cold running water while still on the stalks. Gently remove the berries with a fork and place in a thick-bottomed pot. Add the sugar and place over a low heat to allow the berry juice to be drawn out. Simmer for 10mins until the berries become thick. Pass this jam through a fine metal sieve to remove the skins and seeds. Keep the seed and skin mix to one side.

### ***Making the cream pots***

Soak the gelatine in the cold water for about 5 minutes, until the granules soften. Put the cream, milk and caster sugar in a pan and bring to the boil. Whisk in the gelatine and elderberry jam then pass the mixture through a fine sieve. Finally whisk in the vanilla. Cool slightly before pouring into four individual serving dishes. Place in the fridge until set. (Over night.)

### ***Making the truffles***

Finely grate the chocolate into the cold elderberry seed mixture and mix well.

## **Wild Herb Pesto**

Pesto can be made from really anything - chickweed or nettles are good wild green ingredients.

If using nettles blanch them in boiling water for 1-2 minutes first. Bitter greens like dandelion also benefit from pre-boiling to remove some of the bitter juices. Lemon juice helps neutralise some of this.

1 clove of garlic	1/4 to 1/2 tsp salt	2 cups of foraged greens - roughly torn
about 1/4 cup olive oil	1/2 cup nuts, chopped	1/3 cup parmesan cheese or breadcrumbs

Pound the garlic with the salt in a pestle and mortar. Gradually add the greens, continuing to pound. Gradually add the oil and nuts until you have a smooth paste. Stir in the breadcrumbs or cheese.

Alternatively use a blender for all the ingredients except the cheese or breadcrumbs. Stir them in by hand.

## **Elder Flower Cordial**

*I often make 4x this recipe and freeze the excess.*

6-8 elder flowers  
575 mls (1pint) water  
450grams castor sugar  
2teaspoons citric acid or cider vinegar  
Juice and zest of 1 lemon

Bring sugar and water to the boil and stir till sugar is dissolved.  
Put flowers into a bowl and pour sugar solution over them  
Stir in lemon and vinegar  
Cover and leave 24 hours  
Strain and bottle.  
To use, mix with water or

## **Elder flower Champagne**

4 litres water  
2 1/2 cups sugar  
7 fresh elder flowers  
2 lemons chopped  
2 Tablespoons white wine vinegar  
Pour boiling water over sugar and stir to dissolve. Cool.  
Add flowers, lemons and vinegar.  
Leave for 24 hours.  
Strain through muslin, and bottle. Don't overfill the bottle. Leave for 2-3 weeks before drinking. By using plastic bottles it is very easy to tell when it is ready as the bottles get tight.

## **Elderberry Jelly** *(courtesy Lynda Hallinan)*

1 kg elderberries	1 cup water
1 cinnamon stick	6 whole cloves
1 teaspoon vanilla paste	800g jam setting sugar

Use a fork to strip all the ripe berries from the stalks.

Place in a pot with the water and spices and simmer gently for 20-30 minutes, mashing from time to time until the berries are juicy and cooked.

Strain through a sieve, pressing the berries with a spoon to extract as much juice as possible. Discard the seedy pulp and spices.

Bring the elderberry juice to the boil then add jam-setting sugar. Stir until the sugar has dissolved then boil for 5 minutes. Pour into jars and seal.

## Hawthorn Cordial

1 kg fresh Hawthorn berries

Just cover berries in a pot & bring to boil. Simmer till berries break up Strain out liquid (don't press or squeeze, or you will get a cloudy cordial)

This yields about 500mls of liquid

Put back in a pot

Add 1 cup sugar and gently bring to the boil to dissolve completely, bottle and refrigerate.

### Stinging Nettle Soda Bread *(Courtesy of Michael Daly)*

150 g nettles

225 g wholemeal flour

1 tsp baking soda

50g butter, cubed

egg wash

Prepare the nettles by washing and stripping leaves from stems.

Remember to only keep the young tender ones and no flowers.

Drop into boiling water for 2-3 minutes and strain under cold running water. Squeeze out all the moisture (or leave to drain overnight).

Chop as finely as you can and then blitz yoghurt and nettles together.

Pre heat oven to 200°C

Mix together dry ingredients and rub in butter. Add yoghurt mixture and gently fold together to get a soft dough. Turn onto a floured board and roll into a circle about 5cm thick. Cut a cross on top, about 1cm deep. Make egg wash and brush over the top of the dough and then sprinkle with extra wholemeal flour.

Place on a baking sheet on a piece of baking paper and bake on the middle shelf of the oven for 35-40 minutes or until golden brown.

Test by tapping the bottom of the loaf. It should sound hollow. Leave to cool on a rack.

Serve with a nettle or blended butter.

### Herb butters

100g softened butter

1-3 tsp of dried foraged treasures or a handful of fresh leaves chopped finely.

Eg nettles, horopito, dandelion, plantain, chickweed, cleavers.

Cream butter and then blend together your

flavourings and shape.

Store in paper in the fridge till required.

## Resources

A Foragers Treasury (Revised Edition 2021) – Johanna Knox

Find It Eat It – Michael Daly

Field Guide to Edible Plants of New Zealand – Andrew Crowe

<http://foragerstreasury.blogspot.co.nz/>

[juliasedibleweeds.com](http://juliasedibleweeds.com)

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/thiswayup>

herbnews Autumn 2018