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WILD CUISINE: *ANCIENT FOOD, ANCIENT WISDOM*
WAPF - WISE TRADITIONS CONFERENCE 20008

WHY TO LOVE AND EAT WILD PLANT FOODS

- Connecting with our wild plant heritage
- Original food ~ genetically intact germ plasma
- Beneficial *"nutra-ceuticals" ~"Let your food be your medicine."*
  ~Nutrient dense ~Health-promoting phyto-chemicals
  ~their vital energies supports our own vitality
- *Wild* and diverse flavors
- Sustainable & Local ~ *"0 carbon foot print"*
- Financially rewarding ~ *free food!*
- Wild-crafting connects us to the rhythms of the earth and seasonal eating
- Changes our relationship to the landscape ~ connecting to the web of life

COMMON WILD PLANT FOODS
(loosely arranged by harvest time)

It is critically important to correctly identify plants before harvesting. Pictures and descriptions are not a substitute for a knowledgeable person showing you how to identify the plants growing in their natural habitat.

The plants listed here are often common and abundant, but 'ETHICAL WILD-CRAFTING' practices include leaving unharvested a number of plants in an area and spreading seeds when able.

Do not harvest plants from land exposed to pesticides and other pollutants.

A 'POTHERB' is simply any wild plant, foraged or cultivated, that is put into a pot for cooking.

Wild nuts, grains, starches, mushrooms and seaweeds are other deeply nourishing and delicious foods available for the foraging. Hopefully this introduction will 'wet your taste' for more wild foods!

CHICKWEED *Stellaria media* CARYOPYLLACEAE [Annual, low growing - common in fields/lawns; shade to part shade, grows in the cooler weather of spring and fall]
HARVEST aerial parts
EAT as salad, potherb, pesto, vinegar, tea, juiced
Very high in iron, manganese & zinc; cooling, soothing (topically as poultice for inflamed skin)

NETTLES: *Urtica dioica,* URTICACEAE [Perennial, 4' tall, prefers sun & fertile soil]
HARVEST young leaves in spring or second growth later in season
EAT as pesto, soups, sauté, casseroles, vinegar, tea
Very nutritious, high in vitamins, minerals and protein, builds blood, adrenal & kidney tonic, allergy tonic, diuretic, warms, mildly drying. *"When in doubt use nettles!"*

VIOLET: *Viola papilionacea,* VIOLACEAE [Perennial, low growing; shade to part shade]
HARVEST flowers early spring and leaves throughout growing season
EAT as salads (mild flavored green), potherb, soup (thickener), sauté, pesto, vinegar, teas
High in Vit. C, beta-carotene, cooling, demulcent (soothing to digestion and as poultice)

DANDELION: *Taraxacum officinale,* ASTERACEAE [Perennial, low growing, sun to part shade]

HARVEST LEAVES all summer (though the tender young spring leaves are less bitter); ROOTS in early spring or fall (though summer harvested roots have more bitter compounds)

EAT ***LEAVES*** as salad, potherb soups, sauté, stews, vinegar, tea; ***FLOWERS*** as fritter, wine, cordial; ***ROOTS*** vinegar, decoction (roast roots for a coffee-like decoction)

Nutrient rich (very high in beta-carotenes calcium & potassium), digestive bitter, *LEAVES* are an effective potassium-rich diuretic (best as a tea for diuretic properties); *ROOTS* are inulin-rich and liver-tonic.

SHEEP SORREL: *Rumex acetosella,* POLYGONACEAE **WOOD SORREL:** *Oxalis stricta & corniculata,* OXALIDACEAE [Perennial - Low growing – up to 1 ½ " tall - shade to part sun]

HARVEST aerial parts throughout the growing season

EAT as salad, soup, pesto, sauté, vinegar, drinks. (Adds a lemon flavor to dishes; best raw or very lightly cooked at low heat as the leaves dissolve quickly and brown with heat) Sorrel pairs well with egg and fish dishes.

Cooling, high in Vit. C. Sheep sorrel is an ingredient in *Essiac* cancer remedy. High in oxalic acid.

POKE: *Phytolacca americana,* PHYTOLACCACEAE [Perennial, 4'-10' grows in disturbed ground, sun to part shade]

HARVEST **only** early spring shoots up to 3" tall or leaves from plants up to knee height. (Mature leaves & berries have potent emetic properties and are NOT a food!)

EAT as potherb (cooked –not raw – traditionally in one or two changes of water): soups, sauté, stews substitute in recipes that call for asparagus as the shoots and leaves have an asparagus –like flavor.

Cooling, high in iron, beta carotene vit C, a traditional spring tonic food

WILD LETTUCE: *Lactuca spp.* ASTERACEAE [Biennial, 3'- 6' tall, part shade to sun]

HARVEST leaves all summer (some species & tender young spring leaves are less bitter)

EAT as salad, potherb, sauté, vinegar – *ancient lettuce!*

Very nutritious, bitter digestive, laxative, sap is sedative

AMARANTH, *'CALLALOU'*: *Amaranthus spp.,* AMARANTHACEAE [Annual, 1' – 6', sun]

HARVEST early plant tops, leaves in summer & immature seed heads as vegetable & mature for grain

EAT LEAVES as potherb soups, sauté, stews; *SEEDS* as grain *~Ancient food!*

Very nutritious, high in vitamins and minerals and protein

LAMBS QUARTERS: *Chenopodium album* CHENOPODIACEAE [Annual, 1'-4', sun]

HARVEST whole plant in early summer and leaves throughout growing season

EAT as salads, soups, sauté, stews, *'wild spinach'*

Deeply nutritious, rich in calcium, iron, beta carotene

PURSLANE: *Portulaca oleraceae,* PORTULACAEA [Perennial, prostrate, sun]

HARVEST leaves and stems all summer

EAT as salad, soup, sauté, stew, pickle (freezes well for winter meals)

Cooling, high in Omega 3's *"the esoteric cachet of watermelon radishes and purslane"* –NYT food magazine, 10.12.08

MALLOW: *Malva neglecta & moschata,* MALVACEAE [Annual & Perennial; low growing; sun to part shade]

HARVEST flowers, leaves & seeds all summer

EAT as potherb, salad, pickle seeds

Cooling, soothing, mucilaginous, high in calcium

MONARDA *Monarda fistulosa, didyma, spp.* LAMIACEAE [Perennial, 2-3' tall sun]

HARVEST leaves in spring & summer and flowers in bloom

EAT as salads, pestos, butter & highly aromatic & pungent flavoring (M. *didyma* less pungent); has a flavor similar to oregano and can be used as a substitute in many recipes

Cooling, balances heat in the body (M. *fistulosa* is used for yeast overgrowth, cleanser for lungs)

~MORE WILD GREENS: *ASIATIC DAYFLOWER, FIDDLEHEAD (ostrich fern), CHICORY (wild endive), MUSTARDS, RAMPS (wild leeks), PINEAPPLE WEED (wild chamomile), ONION & GARLIC GRASS (wild chives), WATERCRESS, WHITE PINE, SASSAFRAS, BLADDER CAMPION, JAPANESE KNOTWEED, YELLOW DOCK (young leaves)*

HARVEST (generally) leaves & flowers during the growing season. Young leaves /plants are generally more tender and less bitter than mature leaves.

EAT (in general depending on plant) as salad, soup, pesto, sauté, drinks, use aromatic and pungent greens as dish flavorings

All wild greens are very nutrient–dense foods!

ROSE: *Rosa rugosa, & spp* ROSACEAE [Perennial, bush or vine, sun]

HARVEST flowers when blooming and rose hips in the fall (*Rosa rugosa* has large rosehips)

EAT as salads, desserts, teas, cordials, syrups, jams, powders

Cooling, astringent, mildly drying, very high in Vit, C

CORN & OPIUM POPPY *Papaver Rhoeas & Somniferum* PAPAVERACEAE [Annual, 2-3' tall, sun]

HARVEST leaves spring and summer and summer flowers and seeds when they form

EAT as salads, butter, seeds in sauces and baked goods

Cooling, nervine

***MORE* EDIBLE FLOWERS:** *MILKWEED BUDS, PANSIES, CRABAPPLE, CALENDULA, HOLLYHOCK, OX-EYE DAISY, BLACK LOCUST, HAWTHORNE, BORAGE, DAY LILY, NASTURTIUM, ST. JOHN'S WORT, WILD CHIVES, LAVENDER, MINT FAMILY & CULINARY HERB FLOWERS*

HARVEST while in flower

EAT as salads, deserts, butter. fritters, sauté (day lilies & milkweed buds),

High bioflavonoid content, various therapeutic qualities

ELDER: *Sambucus Canadensis* CAPRIFOLIACEAE [Perennial shrub; @ 8'; sun to part shade; prefers moist soil]

HARVEST flowers in the spring, ripe berries in fall

EAT as Drinks, Wine /Cordial, Fritters (flowers), Dessert, Jam

Cooling, immune support, berries high in iron & bioflavanoids

~MORE WILD BERRIES: *SERVICE (JUNE) BERRY, BLUEBERRY, RASPBERRY, BLACKBERRY, CRANBERRY, STRAWBERRY, GOOSEBERRY, ELDERBERRY, CURRANT, STAGHORN SUMAC BERRIES, JUNIPER BERRIES*

~MORE WILD FRUITS: *BEACH PLUM, WILD APPLE, WILD GRAPES, CRABAPPLE, ROWAN, ROSEHIPS, HAWTHORN, PERSIMMON, PAWPAW, PRICKLY PEAR*

HARVEST when in fruit

EAT raw and as desserts, drinks, porridge, syrups, vinegars. Use juniper berries, sumac berries also as aromatic flavoring for meat and savory dishes. *DRY* extra for winter

Bioflavonoid-rich, cooling (Juniper berries balance dampness & mucus and offer immune support)

BURDOCK *Articum Lappa & Minus* ASTERACEA [Biennial; large low growing leaves, 3'-9'; sun to part shade]

HARVEST roots fall after 1st year or early spring of 2nd year; leaf stalk in spring (small leaves cut off)

Tonic (liver), alterative, mineral & inulin rich

EAT as vinegar, soup, stew, sauté, tea (decoction) pickle (Burdock makes a great pickle & is well known in Japanese cuisine as 'GOBO') cook leaf stalks as fritters (Italian tradition)

~MORE WILD ROOTS: *SUN CHOKES (JERUSALEM ARTICHOKES), DANDELION, CHICORY, SASSAFRAS, YELLOW DOCK, WILD CARROT, CATTAIL, KUDZU, COW PARNSIP*

HARVEST roots in fall after growing season or early spring before growing season

EAT as vinegar, soup, stew, sauté, pickle, tea (decoction). Roasted *DANDELION* & *CHICORY* make a tasty coffee substitute. *KUDZU* thickens sauces and is a base for Kantens, a soothing gelatin-like dessert.

~General Recipes~

A few ways to incorporate wild plants into your meals

Drying Plants

- Hang tied bunches of ***Leaves & Stemmed Flowers*** upside down until dry. (Ideally in a dark, dry, well ventilated area like many attics)
- *Roots* (cut into small pieces)**,** *Flower-heads, Seeds & Berries* are dried on screens
- Plants can also be dried in brown paper bags (small amounts), or in a dehydrator.
- *Store* bone-dry (!) plant material as whole as possible (i.e. not cut up) in glass jars, in a cool, dark place (such as cupboards)

Wild Plant Teas & Drinks *healing, nutritious & tasty drinks, hot or cold*

- *Leaves & Flowers* are *INFUSED* with just boiled water, off heat, for @30 minutes to 4 hours, covered
- *Roots & Seeds* are *DECOCTED* (simmered at low boil) for @30 minutes, lightly covered, or steeped for 8 hrs covered
- *Wild fruit syrup* (such as elderberry) added to a tasty herb blend (such as anise hyssop & lemon balm) makes a delicious herb punch. Teas also can serve as a base for fermented drinks

Mineral-rich *Wild* Vinegars *with wild greens, berries or roots*

- *Chop* wild greens or roots into small pieces (berries can remain whole)
- *Fill* glass jar with either greens, berries or roots – ¾ full (or less if a milder vinegar is desired)
- *Cover* plants with vinegar
- *Top* with glass or plastic cover (no metal! vinegar corrodes metal)
- *Strain* through cheesecloth after 6 weeks, pressing the plant material dry as much as possible.
- *Store* in glass jar with glass, cork or plastic top

Note: Inulin rich roots such as dandelion and burdock will have a whitish deposit settling in bottom, which is the inulin. Simply shake vinegar before use.

Pesto / Sauce Base

Toss pesto with grain or pasta, spread on breads or add to salad dressings, mayonnaise and other sauces. Pestos are most commonly made with olive oil, but melted butter or ghee can be used if the 'pesto' will be used for a sauce base. This method of making pesto allows for less oil to be used. If freezing, omit cheese.

INGREDIENTS: • 9 cups wild greens • 4 cloves garlic • 1½ cups 'crispy' nuts or seeds • 5 ounces (1½ cups grated) hard cheese such as Romano • olive oil (or melted butter). *(Can change amounts to preference)*

Note: Raw nettles make a wonderful pesto! Blending neutralizes the sting and the raw form preserves the 'sting's' allergy-balancing and nervine properties.

- In processor, *blend* chunks of cheese, add garlic, continue on to nuts & then add greens until well blended.
- *Add* oil or butter to desired consistency.
- *Store* in refrigerator for 1-2 weeks; *Freeze* for later use. (Freeze in ice-cube trays for small additions to recipes)

Potherbs: Soup – Stew – Quiche – Vegetable dishes

- *Wild 'potherb' greens make excellent substitutions for most leafy green added to soups and stews.*
- *Egg dishes: quiches, frittatas, omelets and scrambled eggs, are wonderful ways to include wild greens into meals. Nourishing Traditions by Sally Fallon has a wonderful quiche recipe – just substitute wild greens for the vegetable. (A nice mix is dandelion greens, bacon and goat chevre, but the possibilities are endless!)*
- *Adding a Béchamel 'white' sauce (also in Nourishing Traditions), or similar sauce of choice, to cooked greens 'softens' the strong flavor of many wild vegetables. The healthy fats in the sauce aid in assimilating all the nourishment in the greens.*
- *While the bitter taste of some wild greens, like dandelion, is beneficial and stimulates digestion, it may be too strong for some palates. The bitterness can be lessened by cooking them in 2 changes of water or harvesting the very young spring leaves.*
- *Adding vinegar or lemon juice to cooked greens or soups brightens the flavor and helps to make the minerals more bio-available. (The acid, along with the cooking, breaks down the cell walls where the minerals are largely present) Ume Plum vinegar is a particularly wonderful with wild greens*
- *Experiment substituting or partially substituting wild greens with your favorite recipes!*

Nettle *(or other wild green)* Soup

Ingredients: • @1 lb nettle leaves • 1-2 onions, chopped & sautéed • @ 2½ lbs of a mix of potatoes, parsnip & celeriac • 2 quarts chicken stock • bouquet garni (optional) • Ume Plum vinegar, nutmeg, raw salt and pepper to taste • 1 cup crème fraiche, or cream

- *Simmer* nettles, onions, root vegetables, stock and bouquet garni until the vegetables are soft
- Remove the bouquet garni. *Blend* soup, off heat, with an immersion blender (or in a blender)
- *Season* to taste with fresh nutmeg, raw salt, pepper and ume plum vinegar.
- *Serve* with a good size dollop of crème fraiche, or cream.

Spanakopita/ Casserole

Ingredients: • 1-2 lbs wild greens • 1-2 onions, chopped • 2 large garlic cloves, minced • ¼ cup chopped fresh herbs, preferably a mix of dill and parsley, or 1 tsp. each dried thyme & oregano

FOR SPANIKOPITA: • 4-5 ounces raw feta, crumbled (goat chevre or cottage cheese are possible substitutes) • 3 large eggs, beaten • juice of one lemon • 12 sheets phyllo pastry (organic, whole grain is available in many natural groceries) • ¼ cup olive oil or melted butter or mix, for brushing

FOR CASSEROLE: • Béchamel sauce with raw cheese melted in • soaked & cooked grain • cooked sausage, (*optional)*

- *Blanch* wild greens (tough ribs removed) in a pot of salted boiling water for a minute. Transfer greens to a bowl of cold water to cool, then drain and press out excess water. Chop coarsely.
- *Sauté* onions and garlic with butter or olive oil until softened, stir in greens, herbs, ½ tsp. raw salt
- *FOR SPANAKOPITA* toss greens with lemon juice, then mixture of beaten eggs & feta; taste for seasoning with salt & pepper
- *FOR SPANAKOPITA*: Line the pie dish with 7 pieces of phyllo, lightly brushing each piece with butter or oil. Fill with the greens mixture, then layer the remaining 5 pieces on top, brushing each piece with butter or olive oil. Brush the top with the butter or oil, and make a few slashes for steam to escape as the pie bakes
- *FOR CASSEROLE*: Toss greens mix with a tbsp. of lemon juice or Ume Plum vinegar ***Fold in*** the béchamel cheese sauce, sausage and cooked grain. *Fill* a casserole dish & ***Top*** with grated cheese.
- *Bake* at 350º for @ 40 minutes (Till top is golden brown on both.)

Flower or Herb Butter

This is a wonderful butter to fill in ramekins and serve with a special meal. The lemon flavor of sorrel mixed with butter adds local lemon flavor to fish for Northerners who usually need to import lemons.

Ingredients: edible wild flower petals or finely chopped *tender* wild greens, raw butter

- Gently *fold* flower petals or finely copped greens into softened butter

Fruit Coulis

Dillute as a beverage; Use as a topping for desserts, and as sweet sauce base for meat, vegetable & more desserts…

Ingredients: • 2 cups wild berries or fruits • @¼ cup raw honey (adjust honey according to fruit and taste)

- If desired or called for by the fruit *simmer* fruit in a small amount of water to cover for @ 10 minutes
- *Blend* wild berries or pitted fruit with raw honey in a jar or bowl
- *Strain* the mixture, pressing it through with spatula
- *Store* in refrigerator for 2 weeks or freeze for later use

Herbal Truffles

Ingredients: 'crispy' nuts; dried fruit (apricots & dates -also figs & raisins); shredded coconut; herbal powders (rosehips, elderberries, nettles, burdock, dandelion rt & other herb powders) *(Adjust amounts to taste & consistency)*

- *Process* nuts first & add dried fruit to form a paste (roughly 1:1, equal parts, but adjust according to pastiness)
- *Mix in* herbal powders (Use small amounts of bitter herbs) •*Roll* into balls and coat with coconut or cocoa

Wild Berry or Flower Cordials

Ingredients: wild berries or aromatic flowers (such as elderberries or roses), Brandy

- *Fill* a glass jar ¾ of the way full with berries or flowers
- *Fill* jar to top with brandy making sure to cover the berries/flowers)
- *Cover* and let sit for 6 weeks (away for direct sunlight); *Shake* occasionally
- *Strain* through cheesecloth (pressing berries/flowers dry as much as possible) •*Store* in a glass bottle

"The Urban Homestead: ...Home growing is a first step, but backyard livestock is the real aim: bees, quail, chickens, duck and rabbits. **Foraging** *[for food]* **is the next frontier**"
~New York Times Magazine, the Food Issue, October 12, 2008

Comparison of Nutrients in cultivated & wild plant foods

Based on USDA research Composition of Foods, Mark Pederson Nutritional Herbology # indicate milligrams per 100 grams 0 moisture basis
Numbers with 'fresh' by it are based 100 grams fresh plant (Bede's wild plant cookbook & Mother Earth News #60 1979)

PLANT	RDA	SPINACH	KALE	NETTLES	DANDELION ROOT	DANDELION LEAVES	BURDOCK ROOT	CHICK-WEED
CALCIUM	800	102	206	2900	614	252-4223	733	1210
MAGNESIUM	300	96.8	37.4	860	157	+	537	529
IRON	18	2.96	1.8	41.8	96	3.1 (fresh)	147	253
POTASSIUM	1875-5225	518	244	1750	1200	397-2757	1680	1840
VIT A (carotenes)	4,000IU	8,920IU	9,130IU	15,700IU	14,000IU	21,060-58335IU	7,500IU	7,229-32,500IU
VIT. C	60	56	102	83	38	33-652	+	375
THIAMINE	1	0.116	0.11	0.54		.23-1.7	1.1	.21
RIBOFLAVIN	1.2	0.22	0.2	0.43	0.21	.29-1.8	.34	.14
NIACIN	13	0.6	1.8	5.2	3.3	.08	1.3	4.7
CHROMIUM	.05-.20			3.9	0.9	?	2	?
MANGANESE	2.5-5.0	96.8?	37.4?	7.8	6.8	?	6	15.3
PHOSPHORUS	800			447	362	59-526	437	448
ZINC	15	0.618	0.78	4.7	1.3	?	2.2	5.2
SELENIUM	.05-.20			2.2	.86	?	1.4	.43
COBALT				13.2	8	?	12	12.1
SODIUM	1100-3300	98	47	4.9	113	79	127-152	147
PROTEIN %		5%	10%	12-16.5%	16.5%	10.6-12%	10.6%	21.7%

Putting it together - Traditional Food Menus with Wild Plant foods

~ A Cape Cod Autumn Wedding Feast ~

All the dairy is raw from pastured cows, nearly all of the food is local & organic and a great deal is wild-gathered.
[Note: wild plant foods were in all the dishes marked with as *]

Appetizers

Proseco sparkling wine, sparkling mineral waters
raw Wellfleet Clams & Oysters, Clams Casino
*organic Chicken Liver Pâté **
Taramasalata – Greek Fish Roe Dip
Raw Sour Cream and Onion Dip
local home-smoked Blue Fish Pâté
rice crackers, Norwegian rye crackers & sourdough bread

Dinner

Pinot Noir, Pinot Grigio, mineral waters
*herb & elderberry punch **
*Sourdough bread & raw wildflower butter **
*Mesclun Salad with wild greens and flowers **
*Buttermilk, Sourcream Herb dressing **
*Lime Vinaigrette dressing **
*Green Beans with shallots & herbs **
Potatoes au Gratin
Wild Rice Pilaf, soaked in yogurt
*Roasted Beets, Carrots & Parsnips **
Striped Sea Bass with wild sauce of
*Nettles, lamb's quarters, lemongrass, citrus & ginger **
*slow cooked Lamb Stew **

Deserts

*Octagon Wedding Cake with wildflowers **
Greek Cheesecake
*with Wild Beach Plum, Rosehip & Elderberry Sauce **
*herb teas & Organic coffee, tea with raw milk & cream **