

Nettle Soup (Serves 6)

Ingredients

- ½ carrier bag full of nettles, tops or young leaves
- 50g butter
- 1 large or 2 medium onions, finely sliced
- 1 large carrot, chopped (optional)
- 2 celery sticks, chopped (optional)
- 1 large garlic clove, crushed (optional)
- 1 litre good chicken, fish or vegetable stock
- a pinch of freshly grated nutmeg (optional)
- 3 tbsp cooked rice or 3 rice cakes
- 2 tbsp thick cream or crème fraîche
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

To garnish

- a little extra cream or crème fraîche
- a small bunch of chives, chopped
- a few sprigs of wild chervil or parsley, chopped

Method:

1. Pick over the nettles and wash them thoroughly. Discard only the tougher stalks, as the soup will be liquidised. Melt the butter in a large pan and sweat the onion, plus the carrot, celery and garlic if using, until soft but not brown.



2. Add the stock and pile in the nettles. Bring to the boil and simmer for 5-10 minutes, until the nettles are tender. Season with salt and pepper, and with nutmeg if you wish.

3. Purée the soup in a liquidiser with the cooked rice or rice cakes (you will probably have to do this in 2 batches). Return to a clean pan, stir in the cream and reheat but do not let it boil. Check the seasoning, then garnish with a swirl of cream and chopped herbs to serve.

From: River Cottage

Alan's Special Wild Garlic (Ramson) Pesto

This pesto has a multitude of uses: try it on any pasta; on top of soup; grilled fish or even sprinkled on top of an omelette. It is also a great marinade for chicken.



Ingredients

- 1 large bunch of fresh Wild Garlic (March - April), leaves only, washed and hand dried with towel.
- 2 medium cloves of garlic
- one small handful of raw pine nuts
- roughly ¾ cup Parmesan, loosely packed and FRESHLY GRATED
- A few tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil

Optional: Fresh crushed chili to taste (no powder). Pinch of sea salt however you will probably find that the Parmesan give you all the saltiness you require.

Special equipment if possible:

large mezzaluna for chopping (large flat chopping knife if not).

Method:

1. Start chopping the garlic with about 1/3 of the wild garlic leaves. Once this is loosely chopped add more leaves, chop some more, add the rest of the leaves, chop some more. Scrape and chop, gather and chop. At this point the leaves and garlic should be a very fine mince.

2. Add about half the pine nuts, chop. Add the rest of the pine nuts, chop.

3. Add half of the Parmesan, chop. Add the rest of the Parmesan, and chop.

4. In the end you want a chop so fine that you can press all the ingredients into a ball or "cake" - should take no more than 7 minutes.

5. Transfer the wild garlic pesto "cake" to a small bowl and cover with olive oil, it doesn't take much, just 4-5 tablespoons.

Note: This is for immediate usage or place in a small jar for storage in the fridge for up to a week (remove from fridge an hour or so before using to let it get to room temperature and shake well before using).

More ideas for wild garlic.....

Wild garlic infused olive oil

Finely chop a large handful of fresh, washed and dried ramsons leaves. Stir into 750 ml extra virgin olive oil. Leave to infuse overnight. Strain the oil through muslin or a clean pillowcase to remove the leaves. Pour into a clean 750 ml bottle. Take about six washed and dried ramsons leaves and carefully push them into the bottle, stalk end first. After a few hours they will absorb oil and turn dark green. Looks and tastes great and is particularly good for making salad dressings.

Wild garlic and nettle soup

Put about one pint of water and one pint of milk into a saucepan, bring to a simmer and stir in two vegetable stock cubes or some stock powder. Add one large peeled and finely sliced potato, two crushed garlic cloves, a chopped leek, a small sliced onion, 150g spring nettles, 150g ramsons leaves, some salt and pepper. Cover with a lid and simmer for 20 minutes. Liquidise, reheat and serve. Simple, nutritious and delicious.

Pickled wild garlic bulbs

Dig down about 10 inches into the soil where wild garlic grows to extract the bulbs. This is done when no leaf is present above ground (late July - December). You will need about 50 - 100 bulbs for a jam jar's worth of pickled bulbs (can be gathered in about 15 minutes). Remove the roots from each bulb and wash under cold running water. Sterilise a jar and lid by immersing and boiling in water for five minutes. In the meantime, stir two dessertspoons of light brown sugar into a small pan of pickling vinegar. Bring to the boil. Place the cleaned bulbs in the (hot) jar with a teaspoon of pickling spice, then pour in the vinegar right to the top and screw the lid on. Once cooled, refrigerate. Keeps about 10 months. Good to eat after two weeks in salads and with cold meats.

White Soda Bread (makes 1 medium loaf)

Ingredients

- 450g (1lb) white flour, preferably unbleached
- 1 level teaspoon salt
- 1 level teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- 350-400ml (12-14 fl oz) buttermilk, depending on the consistency

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 230°C/450°F/gas mark 8
2. Sieve the dry ingredients into a large wide bowl. Make a well in the centre and pour most of the buttermilk in at once.
3. Grip the bowl with one hand and use the other to mix the flour in from the sides of the bowl, adding more milk if necessary. The dough should be softish and not too wet and sticky.
4. When it all comes together, turn out onto a well-floured work surface. Wash and dry your hands so that the dough is easier to handle.
5. Tidy up the dough and flip it over gently. Then pat it into a round, about 2.5cm (1 inch) deep and cut a deep cross in it, which is done according to Irish folklore in order to let the fairies out!

6. Bake for 15 minutes, then turn down the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas mark 6 for 30 minutes or until it is cooked. If in doubt tap the bottom of the bread - if it is cooked it will sound hollow. Leave to cool on a rack.

From: Forgotten Skills of Cooking - Darina Allen

Cheesy, Oaty Soda Bread



Ingredients

- 275g/10oz plain flour
- 250g/9ozs stoneground wholemeal flour
- 25g Flahavans Porridge oats
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 rounded teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- 125g/4 ½ ozs hard farmhouse cheese e.g. Carrigaline, coarsely grated
- 500ml (16 fl oz/1 pint) buttermilk

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 230°C/450°F/gas mark 8.
2. Sieve the flour, salt and soda into a large mixing bowl and stir in the wholemeal flour, oats, and 75g of the grated cheese.
3. Make a well in the centre, add 450ml of the buttermilk and mix together to make a soft but not too sticky dough. Add a little more buttermilk if the mixture seems too dry.
4. Turn out the mixture onto a lightly floured surface and knead very lightly and briefly into a round.
5. Flip over the dough and gently flatten out into a disc about 4cm thick.
6. Lightly dust a baking tray and place the dough on it and sprinkle with the remaining cheese and a few more oats. Then using a sharp knife, cut a large cross into the top of the loaf, almost half way through the dough.
7. Bake the loaf on the middle shelf of the oven for 15mins. Then lower the temperature to 200°C/400°F/Gas mark 6 and bake for a further 20-25 mins, until it sounds hollow when you tap the base. Leave to cool on a cooling rack before serving.

From: www.goodtoknow.co.uk/recipes

Eileen's Brown Bread Loaf

Ingredients

- 175g/6ozs coarse wholemeal flour
- 50g/2ozs plain flour
- 50g/2ozs bran
- 25g/1oz pin head oats
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 level teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- 1 dessert spoon oil
- 1 egg - beaten
- 250ml (8 fl oz/ ½ pint) buttermilk

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas mark 6.
2. Sieve the plain flour, salt and soda into a large mixing bowl and stir in the wholemeal flour and pinhead oats.
3. Make a well in the centre, add 225ml of the buttermilk, oil and beaten egg and mix together to make a wet and sticky dough. Add a little more buttermilk if the mixture seems too dry.
3. Spoon the mixture into a grease/lined loaf tin and sprinkle some more pin head oats on the top.
4. Bake for 45-55 mins until brown and base sounds hollow when tapped. Remove from the oven and leave to cool for a few minutes. Turn out the loaf from the tin and leave to fully cool on a wire rack.
5. If you like the crust to be soft rather than crunchy, place a clean damp cloth across the top of the loaf while cooling.

From: Eileen Cullen (Ruth's mum)

Tiffen (Chocolate broken biscuit cake)

Ingredients

- 225g/8ozs digestive biscuits
- 100g/4ozs butter
- 50g/2ozs caster sugar
- 2 tablespoons drink chocolate
- 1 egg
- 150g/5ozs digestive biscuits
- 225g/8ozs chocolate (for top)

Method:

1. Grease a Swiss roll tin measuring 27cmx17cm (10.5inchx7inch)
2. Crush the digestive biscuits. The easiest way is to put them in a plastic bag and batter them with a rolling pin.
3. Put the crushed biscuits into a bowl.
4. Put the sugar, butter and drinking chocolate into a saucepan and gently melt. Add the beaten egg and stir the mixture until it thickens.
5. Remove from the heat, add the raisens and stir.
6. Press the mixture into the tin - use a potato masher to smooth out
7. Melt the chocolate in a bowl over a saucepan of water. Spread across the top of the mixture in the tin.
8. Leave to chill and set in the fridge. When cold, cut with a sharp knife into fingers or squares.

From: Operation Oven fundraising Publication

Flapjacks



Ingredients

- 125g/4.5ozs butter
- 25g/1oz golden syrup
- 50g/2ozs soft brown sugar
- 225g/8ozs rolled oats
- 50g/2oz raisins or dried fruit cut into small pieces (optional)

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas mark 4.
2. Melt the butter in a saucepan, then add the syrup and sugar. When bubbling stir in the oats.
3. Remove from the heat and add the raisins/dried fruit. Mix together thoroughly and place in a greased and lined

18cm/7inch square tin. Press the mixture firmly down with a big spoon.

4. Bake for 20-25 mins or until the mixture is golden brown. Remove from the oven and mark into the number of pieces you want to cut it into. Leave to cool and then cut.

From: www.goodtoknow.co.uk/recipes