

March '11 Portland's Magazine of Food + Drink

Barrel aging gives spirits a lift
Sancerres of spring · Charms of NW 21st
Seven great beers you've overlooked

M I X

INTO THE WILD

Bitters and tonics
plucked from
the desert / p20

High-concept
cuisine with
native flavor / p26

A get-started
guide to
foraging / p35



FIELD GUIDE TO FORAGING

Admit it. You want to be a forager, too. Well, join the club, because who wouldn't want to go for a nature walk and load up a basketful of tasty, free food? Chanterelles, morels, fiddleheads — all for the price of a leisurely walk in the woods. Sounds pretty sweet, right?

Before you head out, though, you need to do a little research. Otherwise your foraging foray could lead to some rather unpleasant, or even dire, results. There are lots of toxic look-alikes in the world, and they're not only limited to mushrooms and the Olsen twins. Luckily Oregon is as rich in foraging resources as it is in wild edibles. There are classes, workshops, treks and clubs to join, plus dozens of great books and websites to help you dig even deeper.

To get you started, we put together this mini field guide — some food for thought. So, take a read before you take a hike. There's a lot of food out there waiting to be found. — DANIELLE CENTONI

Book tells you what to do with what you picked

Ask any forager why they scour the wilderness for food and the answer will invariably have something to do with the pleasure of communing with nature, living off the land and satisfying that innate hunter-gatherer impulse modern life has yet to bludgeon out of us. But some foragers have managed to parlay that passion into a full-fledged business, finding a healthy market for their wild ingredients among chefs hungry to harness the taste of something untamed.

Connie Green was one of the first people to turn foraging into a top-shelf culinary business in this country. For three decades the Napa Valley resident has been supplying acclaimed chefs like Thomas Keller with wild foods through her business Wine Forest Wild Mushrooms. After so many years of living around and working with culinary greats, not to mention cooking with what she finds, Green has amassed encyclopedic knowledge

of how best to prepare some of the most sought-after wild ingredients, from sea beans to dandelion greens. Recently she partnered with chef Sarah Scott to come up with recipes that put her knowledge to delicious use in their book, "The Wild Table" (Viking Studio, October 2010, \$40, 368 pages). Unlike field guides, which focus mainly on identification, Green and Scott's book focuses on what to do with the ingredients once you get them home.

"It's a hybrid between a cookbook and a true reference book for some of these wild ingredients," says Green.

"It has practical instructions for things as basic as cleaning the things you find, from washing mushrooms to cleaning the fur off fiddleheads. This is what people are ignorant about. It keeps people from using them because they don't know what to do."

Even chefs, she says, struggle with how to handle wild ingredients. "A lot of chefs don't understand the flavors of some of these things. And after selling mushrooms for over 30 years, I still go to restaurants and bite into a mushroom dish and get grit in my teeth."

So, along with recipes for things like Elderflower Panna Cotta, there are tips such as: "You can make a lobster mushroom eject its spores by placing it upside down in the sun." Every wild ingredient gets paired with pointers on cleaning and prep, ideal cooking methods, storage and how to select. And most of the ingredients are found all over the country. "Even in New Jersey or the suburbs of Los Angeles you'll find some of these things," says Green.

Though it's hard for her to pick just one favorite ingredient, morels definitely top the list. "I like finding

them, I like cooking them, I like eating them, I love stuffing them," she says. "The recipes in the book for stuffed morels — we could have had 30 of them. I have a party every year when chefs come. They're required to bring one stuffing, and we just stuff and eat and drink the entire day. It's an incredible scam on my part — they do all the cooking!"

Here in Portland, we can purchase many of the wild edibles featured in the book at farmers markets and even supermarkets. Still, if you want to find them yourself, Green has a few words of advice: Join a mushroom society, learn from experienced foragers, get a guidebook for wild food as well as one for wild mushrooms, and go out in the morning.

"I think it's wisest to do anything when the fewest people are out, and some things are just dramatically better harvested in the morning. Besides, you may want to eat it that night. And this gives you a chance to go out and have a lovely adventure first."

Get Connie Green and Sarah Scott's recipe for a spring fry-up →

PHOTOGRAPH BY SARA REMINGTON



SHAFER FINE ART
GALLERY



THE ART OF
CHRISTOPHER M.

308 SW First Avenue
Portland, Oregon
877-844-3447

www.ShafferFineArt.com

Date Night
by Candlelight
at the
Grape Vine

ITALIAN, GREEK AND
AMERICAN CUISINE

GRAPE VINE

FAMILY DINING & LOUNGE

503-597-0300

11525 SW Barnes Rd.
Near Cedar Hills Blvd & Hwy 26



FORAGING FIELD GUIDE / CONT.

Fritto Misto of Fiddleheads, Ramps and Asparagus With Meyer Lemon Aioli

MAKES 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

Almost any vegetable can be substituted in this recipe. Cut them into sizes that will allow them to fry at the same rate.

Meyer Lemon Aioli:

- 1 large or 2 small garlic cloves
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 large egg
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Finely grated zest of 1 Meyer lemon
- 2 tablespoons fresh Meyer lemon juice

Fritto Misto:

- 4 quarts peanut or vegetable oil
- 3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 cup cake flour
- 1 large egg
- 2 cups buttermilk
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1½ to 2 pounds mixed fiddleheads, ramps (or green onions) and asparagus, cleaned and patted dry

To make the aioli: Place the garlic and salt in the bowl of a food processor. Process until garlic is finely minced and beginning to liquefy. Add the whole egg and egg yolk. Process for 30 seconds. With the machine running, slowly begin to drizzle in the oil. As the mixture thickens, the oil can be added a little more quickly. Add the lemon zest and lemon juice and process briefly to mix in. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed. If the aioli seems too stiff, add water in ½ teaspoon increments to thin it.

To make the fritto misto:

Place the oil in a 6- to 8-quart pot and heat it to 375 degrees.

Sift together the all-purpose and cake flours and place them in a

wide bowl or on a platter. Whisk together the egg, buttermilk, salt and pepper in a large bowl.

While the oil is heating, prepare the vegetables, making sure that they are dry before coating. To avoid gluey fingers, use one hand for wet dipping and the other for dry. Working with a few pieces of the vegetables at a time, dip them into the buttermilk mixture, coating them well. Lift them out, letting the excess buttermilk drip off, then drop them into the flour mixture, working quickly to coat them evenly with flour. Shake off any excess flour and lay the vegetables in a single layer on a large parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Continue until all the vegetables are coated (you can do this up to 25 minutes ahead).

When the oil is hot, carefully add the vegetables to the pot but do not overcrowd. Fry until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Give the vegetables a stir as they fry, turning any that are browning unevenly. Using a slotted spoon or flat strainer, remove the vegetables and place on a paper towel-lined baking sheet. Sprinkle with salt. Hold in a warm place while frying the rest of the vegetables. Be sure to bring the oil back up to temperature before adding the next batch. Serve warm with the aioli.

— From *"The Wild Table"*
by Connie Green and Sarah Scott

PHOTOGRAPH BY
SARA REMINGTON



ON-LINE EXTRA: Hungry for more? Get a recipe for Stir-fried Dandelion Greens With Duck Fat and Garlic at MIXPDX.COM

What's in season now:

We're surrounded by moist, shady forests — prime real estate for much of the wild edibles that emerge each spring. Here's a taste of what you can find growing around here this time of year:

1 DOUG FIR TIPS: The bright, light-green new growth on the tips of conifer branches is tender and fragrant. Use it to infuse spirits, simple syrup or cream, or grind and blend with salt.

2 MORELS: These meaty mushrooms thrive in chaos, growing best in forests where the ground has been disturbed — think fires, selective logging and campsites. Don't eat raw.

3 FIDDLEHEADS: The tightly furled new growth of wild ferns have an asparagus-like flavor and texture. They grow best in shady, moist areas.



4 DANDELIONS: No introduction needed, just a word of caution: Unless you like extremely bitter greens, pick the leaves before the flowers form.

5 NETTLES: The leaves have notoriously painful stinging needles that are neutralized by cooking or drying. They're very nutritious with a rich, full flavor. Look for them growing in moist areas.

6 ELDERFLOWERS: The blue elderberry tree sends out plumes of sweet-smelling flowers from spring into early summer. Just harvest the petals — shake the branch over a paper bag to collect them — then use to infuse cream, syrups and spirits with their floral, honeyed sweetness. The pollinated calyxes that stay behind will grow into delicious cassis-like berries you can harvest in fall.



On the web:

JOIN THE CLUB
Oregon Mycological Society
(wildmushrooms.org)

FIND A CLASS
Wild Food Adventures
(wildfoodadventures.com)

Trackers Northwest
(trackersnw.com)

GET AN APP
Download "Foraging for Edible and Medicinal Wild Plants" — the new interactive app from "Wildman" Steve Brill due out this month
(wildmanstevebrill.com)



Before you hit the trail, hit the books:

KITSCHY BUT GOOD: "All That the Rain Promises and More," by David Arora (Ten Speed Press, \$17.99)

THE TOME: "Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants," by Steve Brill with Evelyn Dean (Harper Paperbacks, \$21.99)

FOR LOCALS: "Edible Wild Plants: Wild Foods From Dirt to Plate," by John Kallas, Ph.D. (Gibbs Smith, \$24.99)

THE CLASSIC: "Stalking the Wild Asparagus," by Euell Gibbons (Hood, Alan C. & Co., \$17.50)

PRETTY PICTURES: "Nature's Garden," by Samuel Thayer (Forager's Harvest Press, \$24.95)

FOR THE COOK: "The Wild Table," by Connie Green and Sarah Scott (Viking Studio, \$40)