

Natural Health News

May 2012

EVERGREEN SPA & WELLNESS
ELY, MN

EAT YOUR DANDELIONS

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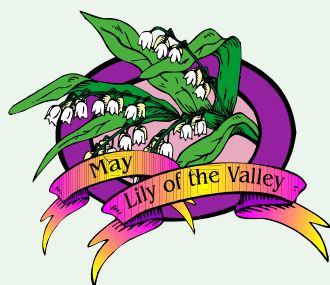
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Many of us view dandelions as a troublesome weed. However, this steadfast and happy plant offers amazing nutrition and medicinal benefits, and can be as tasty as greens can be. Growing up in Europe, I am accustomed to enjoying this nutritious plant, as dandelions are enjoyed and actively cultivated all spring and summer long. Although the plant was brought to the U.S. by ship, on purpose, there seems to be very little understanding and use of this curative wonder and super-food. This plant is useful and edible from everything from root-tip to flower-top. The leaves are one of the most nutrient-dense vegetables on earth. They provide more beta-carotene than any other plant, almost as much vitamin A as cod liver oil, twice the potassium of bananas, and 50% more vitamin C than tomatoes. Dandelion greens help fight cancer; boost immunity; prevent the aging process; build bones, teeth, and blood; and protect against heart disease. Ancient herbalists relied on dandelion greens as a liver tonic to treat liver disease. Modern research has shown that due to their choline content, dandelion greens stimulate production of bile, enabling the liver to do its job more efficiently. They also cleanse the gallbladder. Dandelion greens seem to have a general tonic effect on the body. The parts generally eaten are the leaves and tender stems. The blossoms and roots are also edible. Cultivated dandelions are for sale in markets today and has longer, more tender leaves than the wild variety. Dandelion greens should be gathered just before the plants flower. If you decide to forage for your own wild greens, here are a few precautions: Do not pick wild greens from an area that has been treated with pesticides, and do not collect greens from roadsides, since the soil there is almost certainly contaminated with lead from exhaust fumes (even though lead is no longer permitted in gasoline). Avoid pastures or areas that are popular with dog walkers, as the soil may contain parasites or worms. Most important, be absolutely certain that you identify correct species of plant. As an alternative, many seed companies now sell dandelion seeds and you can grow your own in pots in the backyard or even on your windowsill. To store dandelion greens, encase the greens, unwashed, in moist paper towels and place them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Greens will keep for three days, but try to consume them within one day to ensure optimum nutritional value. To prepare them, remove the roots and separate stems. Trim any tough or thick stems. Swirl the greens in a basin of cool water. Remove the greens from the water and allow the dirt to settle to the bottom. Empty the basin, refill, and repeat until greens are free of grit or dirt. When picking the dandelion flowers for cooking, snip the flowers above the stem to avoid the very bitter milk that's in the stem. The best time to gather dandelions is on a sunny afternoon. This ensures that the flowers will be open and they will be dry and fluffy. Choose the deep yellow flowers and not the small buds which will make your recipe bitter. Avoid the white, fluffy, seed heads altogether. The entire dandelion plants are good for eating and is a valuable, free, food source that can be used in a variety of ways in the kitchen. We live in a time when looking to the past to re-learn lost wisdom has become essential to moving into a sustainable future. If we can change the way we look at a weed and see the possibility of dinner, how many other things can we change?

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DANDELION RECIPES

There is a traditional soup in France, crème de pissenlits, **CREAM OF DANDELION SOUP** which balances the dandelion's spiciness and subtle bitterness with other savory flavors. It is delicious! If using more mature or very bitter tasting greens, blanch them in a pot of boiling salted water, then drain and squeeze out the excess water, chop and set aside. You will need about 6 cups of trimmed and washed greens. Heat 1 tbsp. butter or olive oil in a large pot over medium heat, add greens, 1 carrot (diced), 2 large leeks (white and light green parts only, cleaned and sliced) and cook, stirring often, for 15 minutes. Add 4 cups vegetable stock and simmer for about 15 minutes. Reduce heat to medium and whisk in 2 1/2 cups milk, stirring frequently, until slightly thickened. Puree the mixture in a blender until smooth. Season with salt and pepper and add 1 tbsp. of Dijon mustard (optional). Serve in bowls and garnish with dandelion buds and/or flower petals.

DANDELION FLOWER FRITTERS: In a bowl mix together 1 cup whole wheat flour, 2 tsp. baking powder, and a pinch of salt. In a separate bowl, beat 1 egg, then mix with 1/2 cup milk or water and 2 tbsp. olive oil. Combine with dry mixture. Carefully stir in 1 cup dandelion flowers (cleaned), taking care not to crush them. Lightly spray a griddle or frying pan with vegetable oil. Heat until thoroughly warmed. Pour batter onto griddle by spoonfuls and cook like pancakes. Makes 10 fritters.

DANDELION SALAD: In a medium bowl, toss together 1/2 lb. torn dandelion greens, 1/2 red onion (chopped), and 2 tomatoes (chopped). Season with basil, salt, and pepper and drizzle with olive oil and vinegar (optional). Fresh dandelions are also excellent served with hard-boiled eggs and crumbled bacon with a light vinaigrette.

DANDELION GREENS WITH BEANS: In a large bowl, mix 4 cups torn dandelion leaves, 1 cup steamed green beans, 1 cup cooked white beans, 2 tbsp. minced red onions, 1 tbsp. chopped walnuts, and 1 tbsp. crumbled feta cheese. In a small bowl, whisk together 2 tbsp. olive oil, 1 tbsp. white vinegar, and 1/4 tsp. dry mustard. Pour over the salad and toss well to coat. Serve at room temperature or slightly chilled.

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Sicilian Dandelion Soup

Cook 5 cloves of chopped garlic with a few tablespoons of butter for a few minutes. Meanwhile wash 1/2 a plastic grocery bag full of packed dandelions, chop them and add them to the garlic and sauté for a few minutes until completely wilted. Set aside. In a large pot bring 64 oz. chicken stock to a boil, then turn to simmer. Beat 5 eggs in a bowl and slowly pour the egg mixture in a steady stream while stirring the stock in a steady fashion. Stirring the stock during this process is very important so that the egg cooks the right way. Then add the sautéed dandelion/garlic mixture and 1/2 cup of grated pecorino cheese or parmesan cheese. Add salt and red pepper flakes to taste. Enjoy!

The glory of gardening:
hands in the dirt, head in the sun,
heart with nature. To nurture a
garden is to feed not just the body,
but the soul.
Alfred Austin

