

## *Spring Wild Edibles/Seasonal Pacific Northwest Eating*

### **WE ARE WHAT WE EAT**

Homegrown, organic food cannot be beat. The vibrancy and life force of freshly harvested fruits and vegetable brought to the table are tangible. As in lip-smacking delicious! If you are unable to produce your own food, buying from local organic farmers is the next best bet. Food grown nearby will likely have been picked at peak ripeness and be full of nutrients and flavor.

Eating from within our own bioregion assures the good habit of eating with the seasons. Don't overlook wild foods and more bitter tastes. Befriending our sour side of life bestows character. Spring greens of dandelion, chickweed, and baby dock are chock full of tonic power. Bitters stimulate digestion by encouraging the liver to produce bile. Be sure that you are drinking plenty of water, breathing fresh air, getting enough sleep, and eating a healthy diet.

### ***Greet spring with a seasonal menu***

Eating locally means eating seasonally. This seasonal spring class will help you get started using all the great local and regional products you find at farmers markets, farm stands, and co-ops. Greens have been a traditional part of the spring diet in most cultures. They are plentiful at this time of the year and their use has always been associated with freshening, cleansing, and building the body. The active part of all these plants, giving them their green color, is chlorophyll, which may be one of the strongest, true healing agents known to man. Chlorophyll closely resembles hematin, the substance that when combined with protein forms hemoglobin, the large molecule that carries oxygen in our blood. Whereas hemoglobin has an iron molecule at its center, chlorophyll has magnesium. Green plants or chlorophyll absorb energy from the sun and water from the earth and make sugar, starch and protein. Greens have a moderate amount of protein and many contain calcium, phosphorus plus the B vitamins, and vitamins, C, E, and A. Later in the season there is no doubt that great emphasis should be put on asparagus, fresh peas and the first berries. These should be simply prepared since their freshness speaks its own language.

### **Renewal and Raw Food**

Food preparation becomes simpler in the spring. Raw and sprouted foods can be emphasized. According to Ayurvedic thought, these foods encourage quickness, rapid movement, and outward activity. They are also cleansing and cooling. Spring, the first season of the year, represents youth. Raw foods are thought to bring about renewal by reminding the body of the earlier, more youthful stages of human development. Most people do well taking at least a little raw food daily. Although, we live in a more temperate climate, we need to cook the majority of our food to maintain climatic and digestive balance. In the spring, food is best cooked for a shorter time but at higher temperatures; this way the food is not as thoroughly cooked, especially in inner part. Light steaming is ideal.

## ***What's In Season in Spring?***

First things first: You have to know what's in season to cook seasonally. See what's considered "spring produce" and what's in season in your neck of the woods so you know what to expect at the market.

### **In the Garden or farm stand**

**Kale** – strengthens stomach

**Chard** – benefits blood and clears heat

**Bok Choy**-good for constipation, indigestion, diabetes, and food retention

**Leeks**- good for sinus infection, common cold, respiratory infection, difficulty urinating, intestinal worms, certain types of boils and lesions

**Beets**- nourishes blood, tones the heart, calms the spirit, liver and gall-bladder cleanser

**Spring Salad Greens** – removes stagnation

**Spinach** – strengthens all organs, quenches thirst

**Parsley** – promotes digestion, removes stagnate food

**Broccoli** – clears heat, brightens eyes, clears heat problems if eaten slightly steamed.

**Cilantro** – strengthens digestion and benefits the common cold, indigestion, and lack of appetite

**Asparagus**- Detoxifies, promotes blood circulation, clears lungs, and constipation

**Peas** – relieves vomiting & belching, aids lactation, quenches thirst and relieves diarrhea

**Chives**- tones kidneys and sexual functions, removes dampness, warms up coldness

**Green Garlic & Garlic scapes**- immune booster, anti-viral, anti-fungal

**Green onion**- tones kidneys, removes dampness, good for common cold

**Mustard Greens** – relieves common cold, dissolves mucus, strengthens and lubricates intestines.

**Eggs**

**Rhubarb**

### **Some local greens around my neck of the woods are:**

**Chickweed** – should be eaten in moderation because of its high nitrate content, a major laxative

**Cleavers** – used for gastric, mouth or skin ulcers; good to treat urinary stones and urinary infections and relieves swollen lymph glands thus used as a blood cleanser. Tea is good for breaking up accumulation of sediment in the gall-bladder. Useful in treating eczema, psoriasis and arthritis

**Blackberry shoots & leaves** – astringent, sweet & sour

**Burdock Roots, leaves & leaf stalks** –*Artium minus*

Burdock roots are boiled down and used for whooping cough, arthritis. Blood purifier and supposedly helps long term indigestion. The young leaves and shoots can be cooked as greens or eaten raw but they are not very palatable.

Is common in moist exposed areas. The leaves are large and bristly and purplish. The root can also be roasted and ground as a coffee substitute.

**Clover leaves & blossoms** – good for respiratory, coughs and bronchitis, and skin disorders such as eczema

**Wood Sorrel leaves & blossoms** - great sweet/sour flavor, contains vitamin C and is a nutritious cleansing herb in spring, also good for parasite elimination

**Nettles** – *Urtica dioica* -kidney tonic, good to thicken hair and enrich blood, improve vitality

**Salmonberry leaves and flowers** *Rubus spectabilis*

have a delicate floral flavor especially if just the petals are eaten. Sprinkle them into a salad for a visual feast – great early spring treat, also tones the uterine and pelvic muscles

**Sweet Cicely** – good in salads and butters also sweetens sour fruits

**Coltsfoot** – *Petasites palmatus*- stem and flower good for coughs and colds

**Dandelion flower** is edible raw, steamed or stir-fried

**Dandelion leaves/greens** – *Taraxacum officinale*- detoxifies, benefits liver function

**Dandelion roots** – brew into a nutty full bodied tea. Excellent laxative and helps support liver eliminate toxins.

**Plantain** – Plantain major and *Pantago lanceolate*

**French Sour Sorrel**- Leaves; the best sorrel, pretty and easily grown; sour flavor

**Chickweed** – *Stellaria media* and *Cerastium*

It flowers in early Spring in small white leafy clusters. The stem of many species is weak, reclining and tufted with hairs. Chickweed can be eaten raw or cooked. It is rich in iron, especially the upper leaf portion. The young tips can be cooked like spinach.

**Cleavers** – *Galium aparine*

Can be dried to make a delicious tea

**Bigleaf Maple** Flowers – *Acer macrophyllum*

are delicately flavored but are sometimes difficult to reach.

**Oregon Grape Root** bright yellow flowers – *Mahonia nervosa*

Are one of my favorites, these flowers taste tangy.

**Elder flowers** – *Sambucus racemose*

Flowers are covered with a soft yellow pollen and are delicious raw or cooked up as fritters. Elderflower Sparkling Drink.

**Violets** (*Viola* spp.) have edible flowers and each variety tastes different. On the island, you are likely to see yellow stream violets or blue violets.

**Siberian Miners Lettuce** flowers – *Montia sibirica*

Are small and somewhat tasteless but make a beautiful addition to a wild greens salad.

## **TENDER YOUNG LEAVES**

**Young Thimbleberry** – *Rubus parviflorus*

Leaves have a delightfully soft rose flavor

**Young Big Leaf Maple** leaves are also wonderful to taste.

**Sweet Cicely** - *Osmorhiza chilensis*

Is in the wild carrot family and tastes just like carrot greens: they are by far one of the sweetest, most well received wild edibles. Care must be taken for positive identification since the young Sweet Ciceley resembles Herb Robert – *Gereanium robertianum* (which has a bit of a geranium smell to it).

**Siberian Miners Lettuce, Cleavers and Violet leaves** are also available to add to your salad.

**Dandelion leaves** – *Taraxacum officinale*

**Wild Cress or Shotweed** – Tips of the stems and flowers; pepper flavored

**Wood Fern** fiddleheads –

Remove brown fuzz and fry in olive oil until crispy

**Low Oregon Grape**- Flowers and tender young leaves; sour.

## ***Spring Recipes***

### ***Fresh Spring Salads***

The fresh, tender produce of spring practically turns itself into salads. “Wild salads contain all the vitamins, minerals, enzymes, trace nutrients and “stimulating bitters” that the body needs. Another attribute is delightful sequence of differently flavored bites. The rich mixture of leaf colors, sizes and textures is reflected in the flavors. The goal is to use as many fresh ingredients as possible, with minimal dressing. Fresh means picked the day the salad will be eaten, or as soon as possible beforehand.

Try not to only eat the obvious, familiar crops, but also culinary herbs, wild plants and some fresh tree leaves. Remember what can be repulsive by itself can be acceptable in a mixed salad-bitter dandelion, acrid dame’s violet and rough comfrey name a few. Many ingredients are used only in minute amounts. To make a palatable salad, select according to the available plants and the mixture of flavors and textures.

After eating a salad of dozens of strikingly different fresh plants for the first time, people often report new digestive sensations. The herbs are frequently tonic, stimulating and mildly active medicinally.

Don't eat plants if you are not sure of their identity and edibility.

Salads can be ruined by too much dressing; some salads require no dressing at all to be delicious

## **Angeled Eggs with Oregon Grape Root Flowers**

A classic—everybody loves these little devils (angels)

### ***Fresh Chickweed Salad***

2 lbs young chickweed leaves

2 t honey

4 t sunflower seed butter or tahini

2 t olive oil

½ cup cider vinegar

Place the washed chickweed in a medium saucepan and cover with boiling water. Simmer, covered for 3 minutes. Remove from heat and pour off the water. (Feed the dogs or plants with it.) Pour cold water over the greens to set the color and stop the cooking process. Drain at once in a colander.

Combine the remaining ingredients to in a large salad bowl. Blend to make a smooth dressing. Add the greens. Toss to coat thoroughly, and then chill for 1 hour to set the flavor before serving.

From *Seasonal Kitchen* recipe by Perla Meyers

## **A tender salad is the essence of spring**

### ***Miso-Tahini Dressing***

1 T light miso

3 T toasted sesame tahini

1 T rice vinegar

¼ t honey

3 T water

Blend all ingredients well. For a thinner consistency, add more water.

From *A Cookbook for All Seasons* recipe by Eleonora

### ***Avocado Dressing***

2 medium avocados

1 lemon, juiced

1 t salt

½ cup water

Pinch cayenne pepper

1 clove garlic

Blend all ingredients well and toss with salad

From *A Cookbook for All Seasons* recipe by Eleonora

### ***Outrageous Dressing***

3 Tbs. tahini or peanut butter (or combination of the two)

2 Tbs. soy sauce

4 Tbs. hot red pepper oil

1 tsp. cayenne pepper

1 tsp. sugar

1 Tbs. toasted sesame oil

2 Tbs. vegetable oil

1 Tbs. ginger, minced

1 Tbs. garlic, minced

1 Tbs. scallions, minced

1 Tbs. white wine

1 tsp. hot mustard (optional)

½ tsp. salt

1 ½ cups broth (vegetable or miso)

Bean thread or rice noodles optional

Poach Mung Beans for ½ - 2 minutes by putting them in rapidly boiling water, remove to strainer and cool with cold water. Drain well

Mix all vegetables and sprouts in a bowl.

Mix all dressing ingredients together and pour over sprouts and vegetable mix.

Serve: Chill and garnish with minced scallion and toasted sesame oil. Serve over bean thread rice noodles if you like.

### ***Gorgeous Grain Pilaf***

1 cup dry quinoa or millet  
3 cups water  
¼ cup currants (add iron), or other dry fruit  
3 scallions, chopped  
1 cup cooked and drained garbanzo beans  
¼ cup toasted nuts, coarsely chopped

#### **DRESSING**

2-3 cloves garlic. Minced	1 T tamari
¼ cup lemon juice	1 T maple syrup
2 T olive oil	1 t ground rosemary

- Rinse the grain: using a fine-mesh strainer, run water through the grain until the water coming off looks clean (quinoa is covered with a *natural* insecticide that tastes bitter if not rinsed).
- *Optional Step:* In a heavy skillet, dry roast the grain over medium low heat until the grain begins to change color and gives off a nutty aroma. This adds a nutty flavor to the salad.
- Bring a pot of water to boil
- Add the rinsed (and toasted if desired) quinoa or millet. Allow it to boil with the cover off (as you would pasta) for about 10 minutes. Taste a grain, it should be al dente.
- While the grain is cooking, put the dressing together, and taste. Adjust flavors as necessary.
- When the grain is done cooking, drain it, and put it in a salad bowl. Add dried fruit, scallions, and the greens, and any optional ingredients.
- Pour the dressing on the grain while it is still warm.
- Eat warm, at room temperature, or cold from the refrigerator.

NOTE: The flavors in this dressing can easily be changed and with a bit of creativity! Instead of lemon juice, use some nicely flavored vinegars, or use freshly squeezed orange or grapefruit. Instead of rosemary, choose basil, oregano, dry or wet mustard, cumin, or any other herb or spice that you like. Try fresh hers when your garden herbs are ready. Put the dressing over a green salad, cooked beans, or marinate tofu in it before you bake it. Recipe by Jennifer Enich

### **Simple Spinach Salad**

4 cups washed fresh spinach  
1 ½ cups rinsed and sliced strawberries  
2/3 cup feta style goat cheese  
4 T olive oil  
1 T balsamic vinegar  
Salt and pepper to taste

## **Strawberry-Avocado Salsa**

Serves 4

Strawberries are a top antioxidant pick with a burst of vitamin C, potassium, fiber, and folate, all in a low-calorie bite. Buy organic whenever possible to avoid pesticide residues. The redder, the better; they don't ripen after picking. Refrigerate in a single layer. Wash just before using.

1 cup roughly chopped strawberries  
¼ cup chopped red onion  
½ small jalapeno pepper, minced  
2 T chopped fresh cilantro  
¼ cup fresh lime juice  
1 medium avocado, roughly chopped  
Salt and pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients in a medium bowl. Gently toss until well mixed. Adjust seasoning to taste with salt and pepper. Serve with grilled halibut or on a bed of greens.

*Recipe by James Rouse, ND, and Debra Rouse, ND*

## **Sprouts, Brown Rice and Avocado YUM**

Sprouts are highly nutritional and good protein foods, many being complete proteins. As most sprouts grow, their protein content increases; when they become green, chlorophyll and many vitamins are added and the protein ratio decreases.

Put a handful of beans in a large glass jar and cover with about three times as much water. Use a cloth or piece of screen for the top for draining. Soak overnight or up to 24 hours, then drain and rinse them, and place the jar out of the sunlight on its side for two or three days, **rinsing, draining, and shaking the sprouts gently twice daily**. They like to stay moist, but not wet or too dry. Finally leave them in a spot where there is a mixture of indirect and direct sunlight for a day or two keeping them moist while they grow green with chlorophyll. Refrigerate in a covered container and use to top brown rice or in salads, soups or sandwiches.

2 cups brown rice cooked  
1 avocado sliced

Drizzle with a little olive oil, lemon juice, nutritional yeast, pinch of salt and other seasonings. With a taste of honey added to the dressing, the children will love it too!

# Butterhead Lettuce with Spring Radishes and Peas with White Balsamic Dressing

From: [The Sustainable Kitchen](#) , by [Stu Stein](#)

This is a “knife and fork” salad with a “creamy”-style dressing. Think of it as a flavorful, more sophisticated spring version of the truck stop favorite iceberg lettuce salad with ranch dressing. The white balsamic dressing is a staple at the restaurant. Since the recipe makes more dressing than you need, consider sharing some with friends or use it as dip for raw vegetables.

**What to buy:** White balsamic vinegar is processed differently than regular balsamic vinegar, where the vinegar “must” is caramelized during processing, thus producing a rich, golden color. White balsamic is used for aesthetic reasons, so as not to color sauces and dressings. White wine vinegar or champagne vinegar can be substituted.

## INGREDIENTS

### For the white balsamic dressing:

- 3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 3/4 cup vegetable oil
- 2 egg yolks
- 1 [shallot](#), minced
- 1 teaspoon kosher [salt](#)
- 1/4 teaspoon white [pepper](#)
- 1/2 cup white balsamic vinegar

### For the salad:

- 1/4 pound snow or snap [peas](#), cleaned
- 1/4 pound English peas, removed from pod
- 6 [radishes](#), thinly sliced
- Kosher salt and cracked black pepper, to taste
- 4 ounces white balsamic dressing
- 2 heads butterhead or other head [lettuce](#) such as Bibb or Boston
- 1/4 cup sliced [almonds](#), toasted

## INSTRUCTIONS

### For the white balsamic dressing:

1. Mix together the olive oil and vegetable oil. In the bowl of an electric mixer with a whip attachment, combine the egg yolks, shallot, salt, and pepper. On the medium speed whip the egg mixture and then slowly add half the oil mixture, a little at a time. When the mixture begins to resemble a thick mayonnaise add a

little vinegar. Continue slowly adding oil and then vinegar until all the liquids have been fully incorporated. Taste and adjust seasoning. (Makes approximately 2 cups.)

**For the salad:**

1. Fill a large stainless steel pot 3/4 full with salted water and bring to boil. Add the snow peas and cook until tender. Plunge the peas into an ice-water bath. When cold, drain and pat dry. Repeat the process with the English peas and reserve.
2. In a large bowl, combine both peas and radishes. Season with salt and pepper. Drizzle two tablespoons of dressing over and toss until well combined and the vegetables are evenly covered.

**To serve:**

1. In the center of each plate, place half a head of butterhead lettuce. Drizzle remaining vinaigrette over lettuce. Place peas and radishes over lettuce and sprinkle almonds on top and around. Serve with additional dressing and additional fresh cracked black pepper.

*Spring produce is so tender, most of it needs but the briefest of cooking time. And that's a good thing as the days grow longer and warmer and pull us outside and away from the kitchen.*

**Grilled Asparagus**

- 1/4 cup olive oil
  - 1/8 cup lemon juice
  - 2 T tamari
  - 12 fresh asparagus spears
  - 1/8 cup Nutritional Yeast
  - 6 cups fresh washed spinach
  - Pepper to taste
1. Preheat a grill for low heat. Combine the lemon juice, tamari, nutritional yeast, black pepper and olive oil on a shallow baking pan. Place asparagus on the pan, and roll around to coat.

2. Grill asparagus for about 5 minutes, turning at least once, remove and roll around again in the olive oil mixture. Remove from the grill, and place back onto the plate with the oil.
3. In a large bowl, combine the spinach, and asparagus cut into bite size pieces, and add to a salad of fresh spring greens along with the lemon juice and oil from the marinade. Toss to blend, then serve.

## **Marinated Beets, Garlic, Walnuts and Goat Cheese Salad Recipe**

Fresh Spring Greens

4-6 Beets

Crumbled Goat Cheese

3 cloves Garlic

½ cup olive oil

¼ cup balsamic vinegar

2 T lemon juice

salt and pepper to taste

1 cup chopped fresh herbs (like parsley)

2 cups Walnuts

-Chop or tear apart your spring greens – a nice mix tends to be better for this salad.

-Chop the individual beets as you desire and steam them for about 4- 6 minutes.

Marinate the beets with chopped raw garlic, olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper, and any fresh herb you desire (I like parsley).

-Spread the goat cheese over the salad. Cover with a bit more dressing and add chopped walnuts. YUM

## **Elderflower Sparkling Drink**

6 Elderflower heads  
3 C sugar  
3 lemons  
2 T lemon juice  
8 pints of water

Dissolve sugar in a little boiling water. Thinly pare lemons and add peel to the sugar. Wash flowers well to remove insects and place in bowl. Add sugar and peel mixture, the lemon juice and the remaining water. Stir well, cover (not airtight) and leave four days in a cool place. Ready to drink on day 5, but it gets better with age, stored airtight in the refrigerator.

## **Summary**

The spring season means keeping in the best shape with new attention to your nutrition, exercise, self-awareness and self-expression. Spring is the season of beginning, creation. Physical activity will help clear and open the body and mind. Developing a regular exercise program is important now.

Making contact with your creative self is vital to spring harmony. As you can see, a lot is going on in the springtime of life. It is important to clear out the past to create spaces for the future to come into being *now*. If there is no room for it, the new energy will get all clogged up in the system. When spring arrives, remember, “elimination equals illumination.”

## **Favorite Resources Used:**

*Staying Healthy with The Seasons* by Elson Haas  
*Healing with Whole Foods* by Paul Pitchford  
*The TAO of Nutrition* by Maoshing Ni, and Cathy McNease  
*The New Age Herbalist* by Richard Mabey  
*Native Harvests* by E. Barrie Kavasch  
*Seasonal Kitchen* by Perla Meyers  
*Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast* by Pojar & Mackinnon  
*Medicinal Plants of the Pacific Northwest* by Michael Moore  
*A Cookbook for All Seasons* by Elson Haas & Eleonora Manzolini

**“Using recipes as inspiration instead of rigid structures will allow your creativity to express itself and make cooking and eating more joyful experiences.” Eleonora Manzolini**