

SOME SEASONAL RECIPES

See Fruit Routes Blog for more seasonal recipes

NETTLE SOUP (Spring)

My favourite wild food! You will find lots of nettles on the campus particularly along the campus boundaries and edges. Use young nettles or nettle tops. You are likely to find these earlier in the year in March-June but you will also find re-grown nettles later in the year. Take gloves and scissors or grasp and pluck the nettle top quickly (this usually works but I still get the occasional sting!) Improve gloves out of two carrier bags. Can replace spinach in most recipes, loses its sting once it's been plunged in boiling water.

Ingredients: 55g butter • 1 large or 2 medium onions, finely sliced • 60g nettles, tops or young leaves • 2 celery sticks, chopped (optional) • 1 garlic clove (optional) • 200g potatoes • 1 litre vegetable stock • Salt and freshly ground black pepper. To Garnish: A little extra cream or crème fraiche

Method: 1. Pick over and wash the nettles (using gloves). Discard the tougher stalks, as any stems that feel stringy will be hard to break down. 2. Melt the butter in a large pan and sweat the onion, plus the potatoes, celery and garlic if using, until soft but not brown. 3. Add the stock and pile in the nettles. Bring to the boil and simmer for 5-10 minutes, until the nettles are tender and potato is cooked. Season with salt and pepper, and with nutmeg if you wish. 4. Puree the soup in a liquidizer. Serve, options swirl of cream and sprinkling of chopped herbs. You can use a clove of garlic if you like but I don't think it needs it. Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 3 garlic cloves
- 2 tablespoons of toasted pine nuts or hazelnuts, walnuts or almonds
- 2 tablespoons of grated cheese (any hard cheese will do - parmesan is good if you can get it)
- 6-8 tablespoons of blanching, chopped nettles
- Salt, pepper and lemon juice to taste
- 4 or more tablespoons olive oil (good quality)

NETTLE PESTO (Spring)

Method: 1. Add the nettles directly from their bag into a large pot of salted, simmering water and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes. 2. Drain in a colander. 3. When the nettles are cool enough to handle, wrap them in a clean tea towel and wring out or squeeze repeatedly with back of spoon to remove as much moisture as possible. 4. In the bowl of a food processor, whirl the garlic, pine nuts, salt, and pepper until finely chopped. 5. Add the nettles, breaking them up as you drop them in, and the lemon juice. 6. Add the olive oil slowly, and process until smooth. You can decide how smooth or textured you want it. 7. Add the cheese, pulse briefly, and season to taste with additional salt, pepper, or lemon juice. It will taste even better if you make this by hand in a pestle and mortar! Store any unused pesto in a jar in a fridge, topped with some olive oil to keep the air out. Use within three weeks.



GINGKO LEAF TEA (Autumn)

The **Gingko Biloba** is nicknamed the 'memory tree' - no wonder it's found growing right outside the Pilkington Library! The best time to harvest is late summer/autumn when naturally drying and yellowing.

You can use other foraged foods in teas, dried in a similar way. For example nettles, blackberry leaf, raspberry leaf, mulberry leaf and lime flowers. Young leaves or flowers on new growth are generally the best.

Ask your doctor before using ginkgo or other wild teas if you currently take any non-prescription or prescription medicines or are pregnant or nursing.

Method: Use fresh or dry by laying them out flat in a warm place/near boiler (away from sunlight). Then store in an airtight container in a cool place. Use 5 fresh leaves or 1 teaspoon of crushed dried leaves. Pour boiling water over the leaves and leave to steep for 10 minutes. Drink (perhaps with a little honey)



You will find many different hedgerow berries on campus, particularly rowan, rosehips and hawthorn berries and some sloes (and there will be more coming as we've planted some!) You will also find crab apples. Make sure that you have correctly identified the berries before using them.

Ingredients:

- Around 1kg rowan berries or sloes, rosehips, or haw berries or a mix.
- Around 1kg crab apples
- At least 1.5kg granulated sugar
- A jelly bag or a clean cotton or muslin cloth and a big sieve.

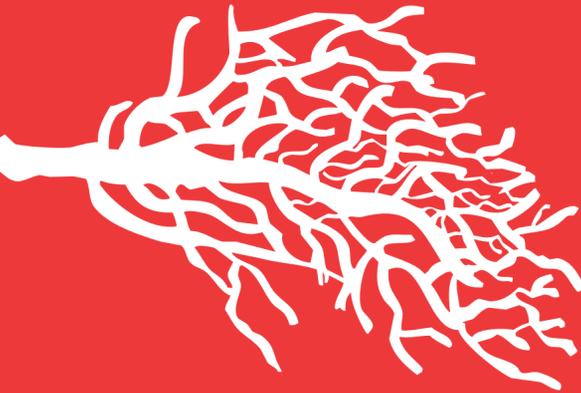
HEDGEROW JELLY (Autumn)

Method: 1. Remove the berries from the stalks and wash them well. Peel and roughly chop the crab apples leaving in the apple cores. Put all the fruit into a large, heavy pan, along with enough water (at least 500ml) to come about halfway up the fruit. Bring to the boil and simmer, stirring occasionally and crushing the fruit against the side of the pan, until pulpy.

2. Tip the mixture into a jelly bag (or a large sieve lined with a cotton cloth) suspended over a bowl, and leave to drain. If you want a clear jelly, just let the liquid drip through, but if you don't mind cloudy jelly and want to maximize your yield squeeze the pulp through.

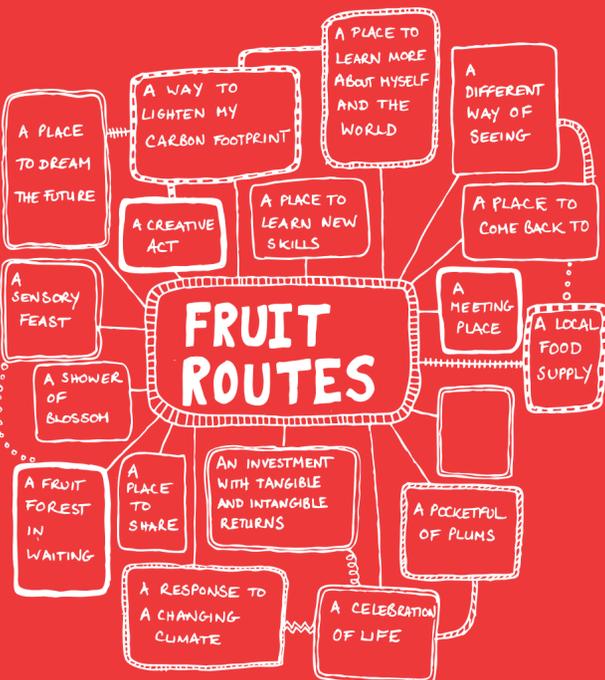
3. Measure the juice and transfer it to a clean pan adding 750g sugar for every litre of juice. Stir on a low heat until the sugar has dissolved, then boil rapidly, removing any scum off the surface, until you reach setting point (106 degrees C). You can measure this with a sugar thermometer or after about 10 minutes of boiling, take the pan off the heat and drop a teaspoon of the jelly onto a cold saucer then put this in the fridge for a minute or so. Then push your finger through the jelly. If the surface wrinkles, your jelly is ready. If not, boil for five minutes longer and repeat the test.

4. When setting point is reached, remove the pan from the heat and pour into warm, clean, sterilised jars. Sterilise your jars either in a dishwasher or in an oven 140C/gas mark 1 for minimum 20 minutes. Cover with a disc of waxed paper, then a lid. Leave for a few weeks to mature before eating. The jelly should keep for up to a year.



FRUIT ROUTES

MAP + GUIDE TO FRUIT AND FORAGING ON CAMPUS



Use Elderflower heads when they are in full bloom and not droopy. They should have a strong fragrance. Scissors are useful for cutting the stems. Try to use as soon as you can but you can store in the fridge for a day or two.

Ingredients: 25 elderflower heads (more if you like it stronger) • Finely grated zest of 3 unwaxed lemons and 1 orange, plus their juice (about 150ml in total) • 1kg sugar • 1 heaped teaspoon of citric acid (optional) to help preserve - buy from a chemist or homebrew shop.

ELDERFLOWER CORDIAL (Summer)

Method: 1. Remove any insects from the elderflowers. Place the flower heads in a large bowl together with the orange and lemon zest. 2. Bring 1.5 litres water to the boil and pour over the elderflowers and citrus zest. Cover and leave overnight to infuse. Try leaving a bit longer or adding more elderflower heads for stronger flavour. 3. Strain the liquid through a scalded jelly bag or piece of muslin and pour into a saucepan. Add the sugar, the lemon and orange juice and the citric acid (if using). 4. Heat gently to dissolve the sugar, then bring to a simmer and cook for a couple of minutes. 5. Use a funnel to pour the hot syrup into sterilised bottles. Seal the bottles with swing-top lids, sterilised screw tops or corks. Keeps well in the fridge or you can freeze it. Once open try and use as soon as you can. You may want to add more sugar to the mix if you prefer your cordials sweeter.

DANDELION (All year) AND ELDERFLOWER FRITTERS (Summer)

Dandelions flower throughout most of the year. Use flower heads that are fresh looking and not too raggedy. Use Elderflower heads when they are in full bloom.

Ingredients: • 110g plain white flour • 1 egg • 235ml or half a pint of milk • A pinch of baking powder • ½ teaspoon of vanilla essence (optional)



Dandelions: Take one of the flowers and hold it by the greens at the base of the flower petals. Dip the petals into the batter and twirl until the flower is covered. Drop it into the frying pan flower side down. Make sure it is covered in oil. Continue dipping and dropping flowers, checking the first ones every once in a while to see if they are brown. When they've lightly browned, flip them over and brown them on the other side. Then remove and drain the excess oil on a paper towel.

Elderflowers: Dip the flower heads in the batter and twirl the stalk between the fingers to remove any excess batter. Remove when brown and drain as above. Serve with honey or sprinkled with sugar or ice cream.

For savoury fritters try dipping in mustard or adding some savoury herbs to the batter and leave out the vanilla essence.

This recipe is great because it saves the effort of checking the boiling pot every few minutes and saves on gas or electricity.

Ingredients:

- 450g cooking apples (or any tart apple)
- 450g dates (without stones)
- 450g onions
- 450g soft brown sugar
- 570ml malt vinegar (or you can use your own cider vinegar)

NO-COOK APPLE, DATE AND ONION CHUTNEY (Autumn)

Method: 1. Wash, peel and core the apples and skin the onions. Finely chop the apples, dates and onions. 2. Put the finely chopped fruit and onions in a large glass or china bowl. Add the sugar and vinegar. Stir very well and stir once a day for three days, keeping it covered with a clean tea towel. 3. On the fourth day bottle the chutney in sterilised jars with plastic lined screw top lids.

Made by our very own Jo Shields - Sustainability Manager. This disappeared so quickly at last year's harvest feast that I didn't get to taste any but was reliably informed that it was delicious!

Ingredients:

- 450g cooking apples
- 100g blackberries
- Couple of handfuls of elderberries
- Juice of half a lemon
- 225g softened butter
- 280g golden caster sugar
- 4 eggs
- 2tsp of almond extract
- 350g self-raising flour
- 2 teaspoons of baking powder
- Sugar to sprinkle

JO'S CAMPUS CAKE (Autumn)

Method: 1. Heat oven to 180C/fan oven 160C/gas mark 4. Butter and line a rectangular cake tin (approx. 27cm x 20cm) with parchment paper. 2. Peel, core and slice apples and squeeze the lemon juice over. Set to one side. 3. Place butter, caster sugar, eggs, almond extract, flour and baking powder in a large bowl and mix well until smooth. Spread half the mixture into the prepared tin. 4. Arrange half the apples over the top of the mixture and sprinkle half the blackberries and elderberries, repeat the layers ending with the fruit. 5. Sprinkle with sugar and bake for 45-50 minutes until golden and springy. Leave to cool for 10 minutes and then turn out and tin and remove paper. Cut into bars or squares.

ROASTED CHESTNUTS (Winter)

Method: 1. Heat the oven to 200C/gas mark 6. 2. Using a small, sharp knife cut a cross into the skin of each nut. 3. Put in a roasting tin and bake until the skins open and the insides are tender - usually about 30 minutes. 4. Peel away the tough outer skin and the pithy white inner skin to get to the sweet kernel. **OR** 1. roast them over the fire on a grill or in a chestnut roaster (pan with holes) or an old tin can pricked with holes and the lid still on. 2. Slit the chestnuts as above and then place in or on the fire (not in the very hot part). Jiggle them around until they are blackening on the outside. It should take about 10 minutes but try them before and see if they are soft and warm inside.



WHAT IS FRUIT ROUTES?

Fruit Routes combines foraging, the arts, biodiversity and community. Staff, students and the local community are welcome to all events. These include: harvesting trips; seasonal foraging walks; cooking with foraged food; eating and feasting together; brewing and juicing on campus; and events led by artists and ecologists at different times of day. We work with the Student and Staff Landscaping and Gardening Society; The School of the Arts and Transition Loughborough as part of a wider project called Eat Your Campus. The trees planted in 2014 were funded by The Big Tree Plant.

As the fruit trees grow there will be more and more fruit to eat, cook, share and celebrate. You are invited to enjoy the route in all seasons, get involved in the project and make use of the fruit. Come and join in! Fruit Routes is devised by artist Anne-Marie Culhane and supported by Loughborough University's Sustainability and Grounds Team.

WHY DO WE DO IT?

- To share and enhance the biodiversity on campus
- To connect staff, students and local people in a creative and educational way
- To get in touch with the campus as a living and learning landscape
- To support a local food culture
- To reduce our ecological footprint.

"With every apple you bite into you can make a landscape, you can sustain a culture." Common Ground, Producing the Goods

"We still (sometimes) remember that we cannot be free if our minds and voices are controlled by someone else. But we have neglected to understand that we cannot be free if our food and its sources are controlled by someone else. The condition of the passive consumer of food is not a democratic condition. One reason to eat responsibly is to live free." Wendell Berry, farmer/writer

"The most political act we do on a daily basis is to eat." Dr Jules Pretty, Professor of Environment and Society, Essex University



Some highlights elsewhere on campus:

- **Apple trees close to the West Gate outside Stewart Miller Building** (small but good for snacking, juicing and cider).
- **Crab apples all across campus** (good for jams, jellies and juicing).
- **Walnut tree between Edward Herbert Building and Print department** (fruiting some years).
- **Sweet Chestnut tree at Harry French Court.**
- **Mulberry Tree at The Holt** (eat in June fresh from the tree).
- **Pear Tree outside Cogz Bike Shop, Telford Way** (you will need a long stick to get these pears! They will ripen off the tree and are good for cooking or juicing).
- **Apple Trees next to 11 Holywell Drive** (you will need a long stick!)
- **Cherries across campus particularly around Pilkington Library.** (Some wild cherries are sweet, some are sour. Pick in July.)

Safe and Responsible Wild Harvesting

Do not taste a plant unless you are 100% sure it is edible or someone who you are confident has knowledge about wild food and plants has shown you. If you do use the internet for information, cross-reference a few websites, as there are some cases of misleading information and mis-identification. Start with plants that are easy to identify and learn a few at a time. Leaves, stems, flowers, seeds, location, time of year and smell will help you correctly identify things. Make sure you are eating the correct part of the plant, for example, some plants have poisonous leaves but you can eat the fruit. Only try a small taste first. Don't eat a large quantity until you really know the plant and your individual reaction to it. See what it feels like in your mouth before swallowing it. Learn to identify each plant at different times of year to understand the lifecycle of the plant you want to forage. Make sure you know when the fruit is ready to eat. Many fruits are only really good for eating when they are fully ripe.

If you have a medical condition, are taking medication or are pregnant or breast feeding seek professional medical advice before consuming any edible wild plants.

The University does not spray its pathways, it only uses chemicals on sports pitches and does not allow dogs on campus. Outside the University, spraying may occur along paths and you will usually be able to tell through withering and yellow/browning of the plants. Avoid harvesting along busy roads due to potential contamination and if you are concerned about soiling from animals then harvest plants that are above animal height. Plants grown around ponds and streams can be contaminated through the water source so seek specialist advice before you gather from these areas.

If you are allergic to nuts you will also be allergic to wild nuts like hazel nuts. If you are intolerant to any other type of food be very sensible about what you try.

Foraging and Wild Harvesting is an opportunity to share in nature's abundance so leave some for other creatures!

Good References
Wild Food by Roger Phillips and *Food for Free* by Richard Mabey are key foraging books. Also recommended is *Edible Wild Plants and Herbs* by Pamela Michael. For more on community fruit harvesting see the *Abundance Handbook* (free download)
<http://growsheffield.com/abundance>

