

# ***Chopping Club, March 2020***

## ***Nettles and Wild Garlic***



Nettles are best picked in early spring though you can eat them at other times of the year too. Look for young plants rather than old tough ones, but don't eat them when they're flowering. Just pick the tops of the nettles – first 4-6 leaves, making sure you protect yourself from stings (wearing washing up gloves works well). Keep the gloves on until you have washed and picked the nettles. Once they've been cooked or simply blanched in boiling water they won't sting you any more! If you can't find nettles, spinach is a good substitute.

Wild garlic is another delicious free spring green, which usually appears in late February. A good way of identifying it is that when crushed between your fingers it will smell very strongly of garlic. But always be very sure you know what you're picking before tasting as it does have non-edible look-a-likes.

### ***Sort of Swedish style Nettle Soup (Nasselsoppa)***

Serves 4

250 g nettles – probably about half a carrier bag. Washed thoroughly

4 shallots or 1 onion, peeled and sliced

500ml vegetable stock,

300ml cream

1 tbsp fennel seeds, toasted and crushed or left whole

salt

100g stale bread

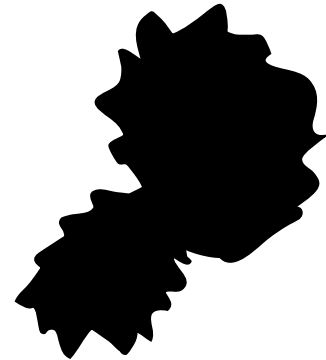
plenty of pepper

100g butter

4 tbsp olive oil

handful mixed herbs, picked and chopped = eg. tarragon, parsley, chives and/or handful wild garlic, washed and chopped

Hardboiled eggs (optional)



-Blanche nettles in boiling salted water for around 1 minute, and drain

-In a large pot fry onions on a low heat with the fennel seeds in half the butter until onions are very soft

-Add the nettles, stock and cream and bring to boil, then simmer for 5 mins

-Blend until smooth

-Season well with salt and pepper. You could also add freshly grated nutmeg

-Make croutons from bread fried in butter until crispy

-Serve soup with croutons, drizzle of oil and herbs and/or wild garlic scattered on top. Traditionally served with hardboiled eggs.

### ***Irish Nettle soup***

Serves 4

Half a carrier bag of stinging nettle tops, or fresh-looking larger leaves

50g butter

1 large onion peeled and finely chopped

1 litre vegetable or chicken stock  
1 large potato, peeled and cut into cubes  
Salt and black pepper  
Nutmeg (optional)  
2 tbsp cream  
Garnishes -eg. herbs, wild garlic, tabasco, olive oil



-Wearing gloves, pick over the nettles and wash them well. Discard the tougher stalks. Melt the butter in a large pan and sweat the onion, ( you could add celery, leek, celeriac, garlic here too) until soft but not brown - about 10 to 15 minutes.  
-Now add the stock and potato. Put gloves back on and pile in the nettles, pushing them down to submerge. Bring to the boil and simmer, partially covered, for five to 10 minutes until the nettles are tender and the potato is soft. -Season with salt and pepper, and with nutmeg, if you'd like.  
-Purée the soup in a blender- the quantity is such that you will probably have to do this in two batches.  
-Return the puréed soup to a clean pan, stir in any herbs or wild garlic leaves and reheat, but do not let it boil. Check the seasoning, then serve, garnishing each bowl with a swirl of cream.

## ***Iranian Mazandarani style Nettle soup*** (adapted from <http://www.cafeleilee.com/2016/03/mazandarani-style-nettle-soup.html>)

### Ingredients

1 cup vegetable oil, divided  
1 large garlic bulb, finely chopped  
1 teaspoon turmeric  
1 large onion, thinly sliced  
1 can chickpeas  
1 can other beans of your choice – kidney, pinto or cannellini  
1 cup short grain rice  
1 cup red lentils  
1 bunch coriander, finely chopped  
1 bunch chives, finely chopped  
1 large bunch nettles, cleaned and chopped (you can substitute with spinach if you can't find nettles)\*  
1 cup pomegranate molassas

\* Make sure you use gloves when working with nettles to avoid the sting

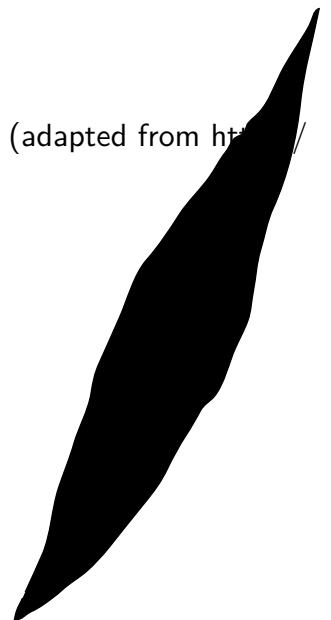
In a small shallow pot heat 3/4 cup of vegetable oil over medium heat. Fry the minced garlic until golden and crispy. Set aside.

In a medium pan, heat the remaining oil over medium heat and brown the sliced onions. Add turmeric, sauté for one more minute and set aside.

In a large pot bring 2 litres of water to the boil and add rice. Cook rice for around 10 minutes, then add the lentils and cook for around 20 minutes more, and then add the chickpeas and the beans.

Add chopped chives and coriander and let the soup simmer for 10 minutes uncovered. Cover the pot and let the soup simmer for 10 more minutes. Add fried onions and 1 tablespoon of fried garlic and pomegranate paste. Stir the soup and simmer over low heat until the ingredients come together. If the soup is too thick add some water.

Add the chopped nettles 10 minutes prior to serving. Garnish with fried garlic and enjoy



# *Wild garlic and mushroom dumplings*

Makes 14

14 Dumpling wrappers

50 g chopped chestnut or shitake mushrooms, fried for a few minutes in sesame oil

70 g chopped water chestnuts

150 g chopped wild garlic

3 tablespoons soy sauce

½ tablespoon sesame oil

1 pinch sugar

½ tablespoon corn starch

For the dipping sauce:

pinch chilli flakes

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 teaspoon rice vinegar

sesame oil

pinch sugar (optional)

Mix the chopped mushrooms, wild garlic and water chestnuts with the soy sauce, corn starch sugar and oil.

Mix dipping sauce ingredients to taste

Add one teaspoon of the filling to the middle of each dumpling wrapper and fold over.

Seal the edges of the dumpling, pinching them with your fingers

Boil or fry dumplings as preferred

Serve with dipping sauce

