



Nettle Cravings

For some reason, I awakened today with a fierce craving for fresh, healthy greens.

Cherie Langlois

Wednesday, March 3, 2010

Photo by Cherie Langlois For some reason, I awakened today with a fierce craving for fresh, healthy greens.

Our diet of late has been somewhat lackluster in the green vegetable department, in part because we've been too busy to hit the supermarket, but also due to our efforts to adopt a more locavore grow-it-yourself or shop-the-farmer's-market seasonal diet.

Unfortunately, at present our farmer's markets are still closed, and here on the farm we only have two pathetic-looking kale plants that survived winter in our garden. (However, the weeds are doing just fine!)

Cold frames and a cute greenhouse for year-round greens growing are on THE LIST, but that doesn't feed my current craving.

Thank goodness for our stinging nettle patch.

I noticed in February that the nettles, which pop up around our goat and sheep's climbing rocks every year, had already started to appear, and so this morning I grabbed scissors and filled a bag with young shoots and leaves—careful not to touch them, of course.

For lunch, I heated a few tablespoons of olive oil and sautéed two teaspoons of minced garlic, then added a colander half full of rinsed stinging nettle shoots.

After sautéing the greens for about five minutes (cooking kills the sting), I added a beaten mixture of two eggs, one slice Provolone cheese (torn to pieces), salt/pepper and snipped chives from my garden for good measure. Then I scrambled everything together until the eggs were thoroughly cooked (I added another tablespoon of oil to keep them from sticking), and enjoyed it with mint jelly-topped toast. It not only satisfied my fresh greens craving, but tasted fabulous!

Once upon a time, I despised nettles. A tall perennial fond of moist, disturbed ground, it ran rampant at the wildlife park I once worked at and often gave me stinging slaps as I tromped around the vast free-roaming area inhabited by moose, bison and other animals.

Then, after discovering our own patch, I did some research and learned nettles are a rich source of vitamins A and C. The Native Americans dined on these nutritious plants and used the tough fiber to fashion nets and snares.

You can also use nettles to make a healthy spring tonic tea, sauté them with fresh herbs in olive oil as a vegetable side dish, or cook up a creamy nettle soup similar to leek soup.

Caution: Always positively identify wild foods before partaking (consult a good edible plant book). Also, if you store your nettle harvest in the fridge, label it so someone doesn't get a painful surprise if they reach in the bag!

Bon appétit!

~ Cherie

« More Country Discovery »