

THE WILD GARLIC

HARVESTING MARCH/APRIL/MAY FOR
NOVEMBER AND WILD&SLOW



THE JUST-ABOUT COMPLETE, BEGINNERS GUIDE ON
WHERE TO FIND IT, WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE,
HOW TO PICK IT, HOW TO PREPARE IT,
AND HOW TO PRESERVE IT UNTIL NOVEMBER WITH
SUGGESTED RECIPES FOR ANY STALLHOLDER WISHING
TO PARTAKE IN WILD&SLOW



THE WILD GARLIC

There are a number of different types of Wild Garlic growing in Ireland but Wild Garlic Ramsoms are the most widespread and most frequently mentioned in traditional food culture.

“Creamh is identified as one of three species of Wild Garlic native to Ireland and mentioned amongst edible herbs used as a condiment or relish for food in the Life of St Kevin and the Brehon Laws” ⁽¹⁾
Both the leaves and flowers have a robust garlic flavour.



Where to find wild garlic

It's a common plant all over the island and it thrives in mixed woodlands and other damp, shady places like country lanes and near streams. In the right place it will be widespread and easy to spot.



What it looks like



Growing from a surprisingly small translucent bulb, broad, pointed, bright green leaves push up through the soil to gradually form a multi-leaved bunch and are followed by a single flower stalk bearing several small white blossoms. Most years the harvest begins in mid-March and continues until mid-April. This period may vary according to local conditions or a spring that arrives early or late. Usually you can harvest over a month.

Some people prefer the young milder leaves; others wait until the plant flowers, and the flavour is stronger, and gather leaves and flowers at the same time.

The flower of the Wild Garlic is highly identifiable and for the first time forager this is when this wild food should be harvested. Prior to this, it might be mistaken for the leaves of the Wild Lily of the Valley, and other wild plants. Some of these are, of course not pleasant to eat or indeed poisonous.

A good means of positively identifying Wild Garlic is grinding the leaves between one's fingers, which produces a pungent garlic-like smell. The leaves of Lily of the Valley come from a single purple stem, while the Wild Garlic leaves have individual green-coloured stems.



How to pick

Do not dig up the bulbs and never strip a plant of all its leaves or remove all the flowers or plants in a small area.

Pick mid-sized to larger leaves and flower heads that have blossomed. Baskets are ideal for gathering (particularly for the flowers) but if you plan to preserve the leaves choose roomy plastic bags. Pack loosely and do not press down or you may bruise the tender leaves and flowers.

How to prepare

Shake flower to remove insects and then wash flowers and leaves in cold water and spread out on a clean cloth; pat with a cloth or kitchen paper to remove moisture.

Traditional uses

In early Celtic times annual garlic feasts had to be provided by the lower orders to their clan chiefs and chiefs to their kings.

Garlic was widely used as an herb with fish and to flavour soups, stews, potato dishes and in salads. In rural areas, particularly in northern counties, the traditional uses continue. Wild Garlic was also used as a medicine particularly for coughs and chest complaints "Keogh gives this prescription: Take a handful of it and boil in 2 quarts of spring water until half the water is consumed; strain and add a quart of honey to make a syrup. A spoonful will infallibly cure any cough, asthma or shortness of breath".⁽²⁾

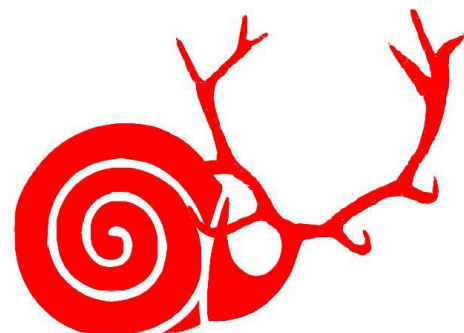
Garlic bread is no newcomer to Irish food culture. "Ancient law tracts defining the amount of relish that should accompany each loaf of bread state there should be four stalks of garlic to each cake (of bread) or honey, bacon with an inch of fat, salted venison or pork or fish or curds."⁽³⁾

By the 12thC there are references to flavouring butter with garlic.⁽⁴⁾

(1) and (4) A. T. Lucas : Gwerin, Volume 3, No 2, 1960

(2) Patrick Logan : Irish Country Cures. Appletree Press, 1981

(3) Brid Mahon: Land of Milk and Honey. Mercier Press, 1998



Preserving Wild Garlic

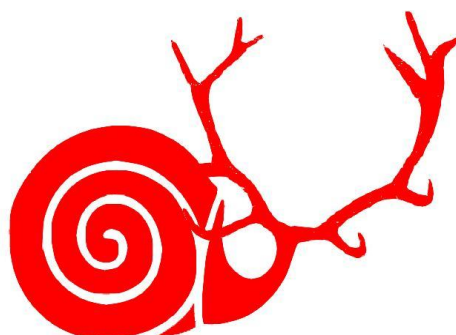
Garlic leaves and flowers may be preserved in honey as suggested in the tradition above. They may be preserved in oil, (and used in oil based sauces such as wild garlic pesto); they may also be used in pickles and chutneys and vinegars. Alternatively the leaves and flowers may be dried and when required rehydrated and used in a variety of ways in the same way as when fresh.

Preserving Wild Garlic by Drying

Leaves and flowers dry best when air can circulate freely. So, following the methods of preparation, spread out well on flat baskets or wire mesh in a dry shady place. Every few days stir them around. They can also be oven dried. Set the oven to the lowest heat possibly 70C (leaving the oven door open as necessary). They are sufficiently dry when the leaves are brittle. Remove excess stems and store in cardboard boxes, paper-lined airtight tins, or jars. Store in a dry, cool, dark place. As a rough guide, dried flowers and leaves weigh one eighth of the fresh leaves.

Preserving Wild Garlic in Oil

Without a doubt, Wild Garlic lends itself best to preservation in oil. Olive Oil is of course the traditional oil of use, however we now have some wonderful Organic and conventional Rapeseed Oils being produced in Ireland by our Artisan producers. These Irish Rapeseed Oils are subtle enough to preserve Wild Garlic without distracting from its flavour or freshness. Fresh Wild Greens, indeed any greens needing to be preserved in oil should be done so in a glass lidded and sealed Kilner style jar to prevent the reaction that tin lidded jam-style jars seem to induce. Whilst keeping 'full' leaves in oil is visually attractive, it does use a lot of oil. So it is recommended to 'blitz' the leaves and place in an oven heated and sterilised Kilner, then cover with the oil and seal, for future use. Spoonfuls can then be used for any recipe desired. This method should also be used for Wild Garlic pesto.



Possible recipes that might be suitable for a stallholder at Wild&Slow

Wild Garlic Champ

120g 'oil preserved' wild garlic /15g dried wild garlic, or to taste.

1kg floury potatoes

250mls whole milk, warmed

Butter to taste

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Warm the milk and if using dried wild garlic leaves crumble them into small pieces and place in the milk to re-hydrate.

Steam the potatoes (preferably in their skins) until tender. Dry for a few minutes using an absorbent cloth, then peel. While still hot put the potatoes through a potato ricer or mouli, or mash thoroughly, adding a big knob of butter (to taste). Add the wild garlic and milk mixture, season to taste and mix lightly. You may add more milk if the mixture seems too dry but on no account should it become too moist. To serve, reheat until piping hot.

Potato cakes/potato cake wraps, using wild garlic champ

The texture varies and is achieved by adding more or less flour. Commercial potato cakes use a lot of flour and are thin, making them easy to handle and ensuring a longer shelf life. More potato makes them moist and tender to the tooth and they are usually made thicker. Thickness varies from ½ cm to 1 cm.

Potato wraps are best made with the high flour, thinner version.

1 quantity of **wild garlic** champ

60-175g plain white flour

Mix the ingredients together adding a little extra milk to make a dough (soft for potato cakes and fairly firm for potato wraps). Sprinkle flour on a work surface and roll out to your chosen thickness and cut into whatever size and shape you desire. Bake on an ungreased flat griddle or a heavy-based pan until lightly brown on both sides. Serve hot or reheat by frying over a gentle heat in a little butter or bacon fat, or spread with a little butter and grill until hot through.



Wild garlic, onion and potato soup

350g floury potatoes, peeled and diced

150g onions, peeled and chopped

160g **'oil preserved' wild garlic**, or 20g **dried wild garlic**, or to taste

1.25 litres chicken or vegetable stock

30g butter

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Optional garnish: Croutons spread with a little wild garlic pesto, or wild garlic flowers, or finely chopped wild garlic leaves

Heat the butter in a pot and sweat the onions until soft. Add and potatoes and stock and bring to the boil; then simmer for 10-15 minutes or until potatoes. Add chopped or crumbled garlic leaves and simmer for 1 minute. Purée briefly, in a food mill or processor or blender. Season to taste. Serve hot with or without the optional garnish.

Garlic flower fritters

250ml milk, or milk and water mixed

110g plain white flour

Pinch of salt

1 egg

Dried wild garlic flowers.

When using dried flowers re-hydrate in the milk. Lift each flower and allow excess milk to drain off then dry flower on kitchen paper. Whisk the milk, flour and egg together until you have a smooth batter and allow to stand for 30 minutes. Dip each flower into the batter and deep-fry at 220°C until golden brown all over. Drain on kitchen paper and serve hot as a garnish.



Wild Garlic Pesto

50g 'oil preserved' wild garlic
25g cashew or pine or hazel or chestnuts
200ml olive oil or rapeseed oil
40g grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
Season to taste.

Blitz the nuts and half the oil in a food processor and add in the grated cheese. Add the wild garlic and blitz with the remaining oil to the right consistency. Season.

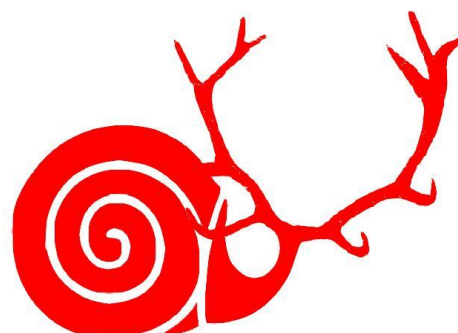
Pour into a sterilised jar and keep in the fridge.

Venison & Wild Garlic Patties

1kg Minced Pork Shoulder
500g Minced Pork Belly
500g Minced Venison Shoulder
1 tbsp **dried wild garlic**
2 tbsp 'oil preserved' wild garlic
40g Fine Sea Salt
10g Coarse Ground Black Pepper
Splash of chilled water

Place Pork and Venison shoulder into food mixer with a dough hook attachment. Mix for 1 minute at the slowest speed setting and stop, add in the salt. Mix for another 1 minute and then add in the garlic, pepper and mix again for 1 minute. Add in the belly, and use splashes of water 1 tsp at a time. Mix for a further 2 mins

At this point the mixture should have a matt appearance, and "stipple" like a ceiling. Using an ice cream scoop as a measure, form balls. Form into patties, by rolling between the palms of your hands, and squash flat onto griddle or pan. Cook on a high heat for 4-6 mins each side depending on thickness.



Roast Butternut Squash, Feta and Wild Garlic Quiche

Short crust Pastry,

Makes enough to fill 6 individual flan rings.

200g white flour

100g butter

Pinch of salt

Water to bind

Filling:

250g butternut squash, peeled and cut into chunks

100g onions cut into wedges

175g feta

50g **dried wild garlic**

4 eggs and 5 egg yolks, mixed together

700ml cream

Roll out the pastry and use to line the loose-bottomed flan tins, then bake blind.

Place the butternut squash and onion in a roasting tray, mix with some olive oil and bake in a preheated oven 180'c for 25-30 minutes.

Whisk the eggs and egg yolks with the cream and some salt and pepper. Place the roasted butternut squash, onion; crumbled feta and wild garlic in the pastry shell, then pour the egg mixture over them. Bake at 170'c for about 30 mins, until set and lightly coloured.

Wild garlic butter

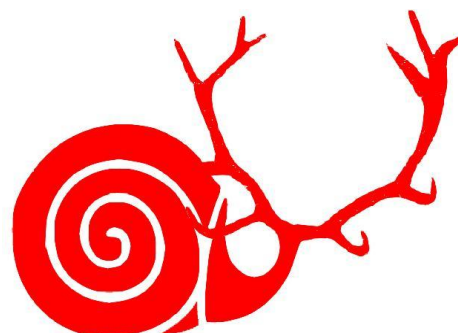
100g salted organic butter

2 tbsp '**oil preserved**' **wild garlic**

A squeeze of fresh lemon juice and a little grated rind

Cream the butter; add in the wild garlic and then the lemon juice. Roll into a roll and wrap with greaseproof paper. Keep in the fridge to harden.

This can be served with grilled meat or fish or it can be used to make garlic bread.



Wild Garlic Chicken Prosciutto Croquettes

Béchamel Sauce

90g butter
90g plain Flour
125ml homemade chicken stock
1 fresh bay leaf
135ml milk
60ml cream

Filling:

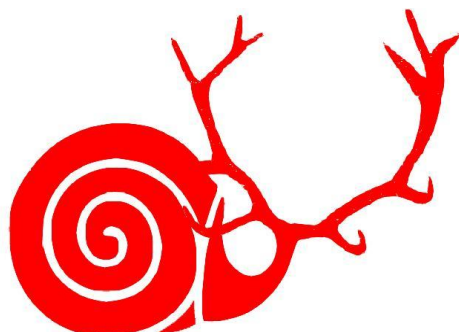
Olive oil
½ a leek, white part only finely chopped
6 slices Prosciutto finely chopped
½ Celery stalk very finely chopped
200g minced chicken
10 tsp '**oil preserved**' wild garlic
50g seasoned dry fine breadcrumbs
55g ground almonds
Seasoned plain flour for coating
2 eggs, lightly beaten

To make the béchamel sauce, melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat, then add the flour and stir for 5 mins, or until the mixture is dry and a little crumbly. Remove from heat and gradually whisk in stock, add bay leaf, gradually whisk in about half the milk, then return to the heat and whisk in rest of the milk, then cream. Cook, stirring for 8-10mins or until the mixture is thick and smooth and starts to pull away from the side of the pan. Remove from pan and set aside.

To make the filling:

Heat oil in a frying pan, add the leek, Prosciutto, celery and cook for 5mins, or until softened and lightly golden. Add chicken, fry until chicken changes colour and is cooked through. Add in wild garlic pesto. Transfer mixture to bowl. Add the sauce to the chicken and mix. Season to taste refrigerate for about 3hours until completely cold.

Divide the filling into 24 portions and roll in the small croquette shapes. Combine the breadcrumbs and ground almonds in a small bowl. Lightly coat the croquettes in the flour dip them in the beaten egg, then, coat them in the breadcrumbs mixture. Deep-fry the croquettes until lightly golden.



Wild garlic and Goats Cheese Scones

225g plain flour
2 tsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
15g castor sugar
35g butter
30g goats cheese
50ml '**oil preserved**' wild garlic
100ml milk

Combine flour, baking powder, salt and castor sugar in a bowl, and then rub in the butter with your fingertips until mixture looks like breadcrumbs.

Mix in the goat's cheese and the wild garlic pesto.

Add the milk slowly until you have firm dough.

Turn out onto a floured work top, pat the dough into a circle about 1 ½ cm thick and cut out the scones.

Put onto a non-stick baking sheet and brush the tops with a little milk.

Bake for 12-15 mins, at 180C.

Wild Garlic Tortilla

1 kg floury potatoes
1 onion, finely diced
2 tbsp '**oil preserved**' wild garlic
2 tbsp **dried wild garlic**
3 eggs lightly beaten
Sea salt and pepper
Olive oil.

Cut the potatoes into paper-thin slices, and then cook in a frying pan, with onions slowly. When potatoes are soft but still have a bite. Increase the heat and add the wild garlic and eggs over the potatoes and mix through with a wooden spoon for 1 min until it begins to thicken.

Allow a skin to form on the bottom, reduce heat to a low flame and wet the edges over with a spatula to form nice round curves, when the edges begin to form cook for 2 mins.

Take a large plate and place over the top of the pan and flip the tortilla onto the plate, return the tortilla to the pan uncooked side down, increase the heat to medium and finish cooking.



The Nitty-Gritty

Okay...so here's the nitty-gritty, but don't let it put you off! All twelve or so of these 'Wild Food Templates' for gathering and harvesting Wild Foods have been chosen because they are highly identifiable. It is always desirable for the first time forager to go out with someone who has experience.

However, as always, it is up to you to discern what to pick, how to harvest it and preserve it in a manner that would be in keeping with and fit for our ancestors.

Remember, if in doubt.... don't!

Disclaimer

For countless generations our forefathers/mothers gathered Wild Foods and it seems they did so pretty well...after all we're all still here! However modern protocol demands that we produce this disclaimer. So here we go.

The above plant images, although helpful, are not for identifying purposes. It is important to use a good guide, unless you are familiar with these plants. This post is only an introduction to the plants mentioned therein, and should not be relied upon in isolation. Foraging guides of repute should always be used, and one should always err on the conservative side, remembering, that it is important to read any guide together with any caution notes, and ultimately responsibility for your safety and those that you give, serve or sell these foods to, lies with you.

All information contained including various recipes are purely for illustrative and informative purposes only and ultimately it is the user that determines as to how the above mentioned Wild Food, might be used.

