



THE WILD SORRELS

HARVESTING MAY/SEPTEMBER 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 SORRELS

There are two distinct types of sorrel, they look different, require different growing conditions and are found in different locations. However, known as cooling plants, they share a sour, lemony flavour and both were once used much as lemons are today.⁽¹⁾

With scores of common names, many reflecting the sour flavour or the animals that favour them for grazing such as cuckoo bread, fox bread, hares meat, birds bread and cheese, sheep sorrel, wood sour, in parts of England it was called Green Sauce after the name of the popular sauce made with it, and in Donegal the Whitsun flower. The latter, relating to the season when you would expect to find the best wild sorrels. You find wild sorrels from spring to autumn. Both like soil that is rich in iron.

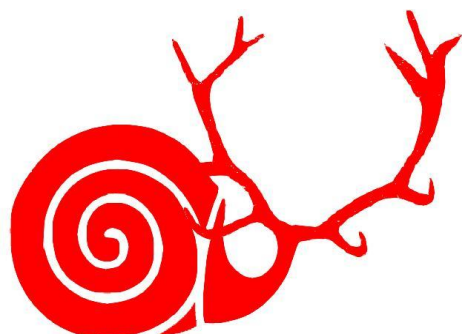
This Template will refer to them as either Wood Sorrel or Sheep's Sorrel.



Where to find Wild Sorrels

Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) flourishes in open woodland and hedge bottoms.

Sheep's Sorrel, (*Rumex acetosa*) grows on grassland and meadows and roadsides, ditches and gardens.



What Wood Sorrel looks like



The Wood Sorrel is low-growing, has multiple three leaves sprigs that open and fold down in response to light and dark and rain. In spring they carry a delicate pinkish-white flower that responds in the same way to light. It flowers from May to August but the leaves can be ready for picking earlier.

What Sheep's Sorrel looks like



The Sheep's Sorrel has soft smooth spinach-like leaves between 7-26 cm long, mid-green in colour, and with a thin, creamy central stalk on each leaf. Its flowers can bolt up to 50-60 cm high. Best leaves will be found at ground level.



How to pick

Pick the outer mature leaves of the Sheep's Sorrel, leaving smaller immature leaves to grow on. As the season progresses you can pick and eat the young flowers.

From wood sorrel pick, one at a time, a small amount of stem carrying the three leaves and flower. Do not strip the plant. Take care not to pull the roots.

How to prepare

Rinse under cold running water, tearing away any blemished leaves as you rinse. For Sheep's Sorrel cut off the stalks and any larger ribs (do this by folding the leaf in two and ripping gently from the end of the stalk; it will naturally break off when the ribs thin out. Shake dry, spread out and allow the moisture to evaporate.

Preserving Wild Sorrel by Pickling

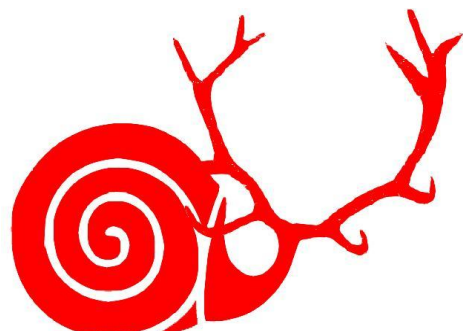
It may be preserved chopped finely and mixed with vinegar and sugar to make a green sauce" similar in looks to mint sauce.

Preserving Wild Sorrel by Drying

Spread out on trays and dry in an ultra slow oven or on a tray in a dry, airy, sunny place indoors. Store in glass jars and use it crumbled as a herb.

Preserving Wild Sorrel in Oil

The fresh leaves may be preserved in oil. Pack them into a wide necked sterilised jar. Cover with oil, pressing down so that you eliminate any air holes and ensure the oil fully covered the leaves. Cover tightly and store in a cool dry place.



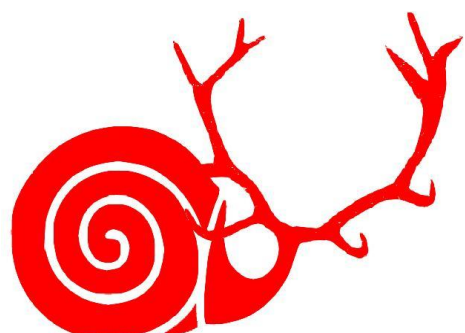


Traditional uses

Sorrel is used as both herb and a wild vegetable. It's native to Ireland and may well have been eaten by hunter-gathers but the first written confirmation is from Spencer who stated it was an (Irish) food in the state papers of 1581(5) It was an important ingredient from the 16th Century, used in a wide variety of dishes. "The juice was used to sour milk and as herbal medicine to lower high temperature, prevent scurvy and dispel kidney stones." (4) However, now the view is that as it contains small amounts of oxalic acid which if consumed in large amounts may actually aid in the production of small "stones". Ray Mears in his book Wild Food states that "sorrel should not be eaten by people with kidney or bladder stones" (5)

The traditional method of reducing the level of acid was blanching first in boiling water and discarding it before cooking in fresh water. As it is, the very big darker leaves have a stronger taste; mid-sized but mature leaves a less strong and sharp taste, while the very young leaves are very mild. If you mix the sizes the flavour will balance out.

Sorrel is available over a long season so it's not surprising that, traditionally, it was used fresh in salads, soups, as a hot vegetable (on its own or mixed with other leaves), to add flavour stews and as a main ingredient in a variety of sauces. In Ireland wild salmon and wild Sorrel sauce was a traditional combination. Many traditional European recipes, especially those from France where it is particularly prized, reflect its affinity with eggs: omelettes or poached, or baked eggs; and as a stuffing for fish.





The dried herb was used to flavour stews. Most famously Sorrel was used preserved as a green sauce to serve with fish, or roast or grilled meat, and to flavour stews. Alan Davidson writes in his Oxford Companion to Food of "Green Sauce owing its colour to green leaves, especially Sorrel. Something of the kind may well date back to classical times and was apparent in medieval cookery in various parts of Europe."

In England, Green Sauce made with sorrel alone and this tacklement as well as the boiled sorrel leaves was a popular accompany to goose and pork, in place of applesauce and with fish. Apparently Wood Sorrel (then called wood sour) was actually cultivated from the early 15th Centaury as a kitchen and medicinal herb.⁽³⁾

When cooking sorrel it is important not to use non-stick saucepans as the plant chemicals react with the coating.

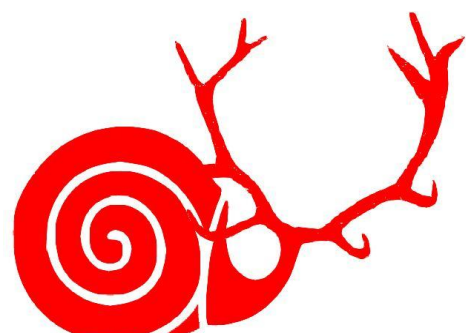
(1) Geoffrey Grigson, *The Englishman's Flora* (Phoenix 1958)

(2) Ray Mears. *Wild Food*. Hodder and Staughton

(3) John Gardner's poem *The Feate of Gardening* (early 15thC)

(4) Mairin Ui Chónchubhair *Aspects of the Flora* (fada on o) of Chorca Dhuibhne

(5) A.T Lucas, *Food Historian Galway University*. Gerwin 1960





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

Sorrel Fritters

This recipe comes from French Vegetarian Cookery by Paola Gavin (Optima 1994).

20 large leaves of oil preserved **Sheep's Sorrel**

1 egg separated

1 tbs olive oil (or rape seed oil)

1 tbs brandy

55mls milk

55mls water

Pinch of salt

Pat dry the Sheep's Sorrel on kitchen paper.

Beat together flour, water, milk, salt and egg yolk until lump-free. Rest for 1 hour. Whisk the egg white until stiff and then fold into batter.

Dip about 4-5 leaves at a time (depending on the size of your pot of oil)

Deep-fry until golden on both sides. Drain on kitchen paper and serve hot.

Sorrel Soup

150g dried **Wood or Sheep's Sorrel** leaves

60g butter

1¼ litres vegetable or chicken stock (or water)

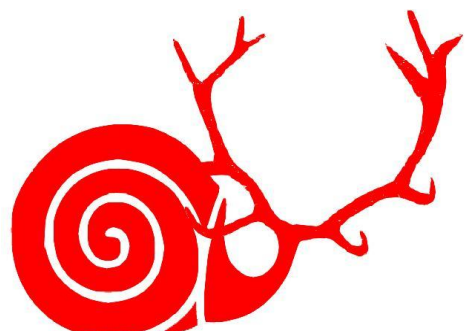
2 egg yolks

45 mls cream

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Garnish: croutons, preferably cooked in bacon fat.

Crumble and reconstitute the dried wild Sorrel for two hours in the stock. Melt the butter, add the stock, bring to the boil and simmer for a few minutes. Beat egg yolks with the cream. Add a little of the soup to a pan and then pour in the yolks and stir over a low, gently heat for a few minutes, top up with remaining soup. Keep soup well below boiling point or the eggs will curdle. Serve at once garnished with croutons.





Simple Sorrel Soup

150g **dried Sorrel leaves**

2 tbs butter

1 small onion, very finely chopped

300g potatoes, peeled and chopped.

1 litre good light chicken stock

Freshly ground pepper and salt, to taste

Garnish: a little cream and a small amount of crumbled dried Sorrel leaves (optional).

It is also good with croutons fried in butter or bacon fat.

Melt the butter and soften the onion. Add the potatoes and stock and simmer until tender. Bring to boiling point and add sorrel leaves for just a few seconds. Blitz the mixture using your favoured method. Season to taste. Stir in the cream and serve.

Sorrel Sauce Irish-Style

Once a traditional country house sauce served with wild salmon or sea trout. But this would be perfect for hot smoked trout or salmon at Wild&Slow.

200ml. double cream.

100g **dried Sorrel leaves.**

2 tbs butter

Seasoning to taste

Reconstitute sorrel leaves for two hours in a small amount of water, then bring to the boil for 1 minute. Drain and chop finely. Melt butter in pan, add sorrel and cook for a few minutes, or until it has reduced to a purée. Meanwhile bring cream to just below boiling point and season with a little salt and freshly ground black pepper. Add cream to sorrel and stir to combine the ingredients. Serve at once while very hot.





Green Sorrel Sauce

This method of preserving sorrel has been used for hundreds of years. Used as a sauce with meat and poultry, particularly fatty meats such as lamb, pork, goose and duck.

250g **Fresh Sorrel leaves.**

Lemon juice or wine vinegar

Sugar

Blanch sorrel in boiling water. Pound to a paste in a mortar and pestle with lemon juice and sugar. If you prefer use a food processor adding juice and sugar with the sorrel, aids the process. You will end up with something resembling preserved mint sauce.

Pack into sterilised glass jars, cover tightly and store in a cool dry place. You need a fair amount of sugar and lemon juice/vinegar in order for this to keep. When you serve it you may like to add a little boiling water to thin the consistency and make the preserve less sour and acid.

Fresh small Hake with Sorrel

4 fresh Hake, boned

4 tbs **Sorrel leaves preserved in oil**, or 3 tbs **dried Sorrel**

a little olive oil

1 small glass of dry white wine

sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

If using dried sorrel, reconstitute in a little wine. Rinse the fish and check for bones.

Place sorrel leaves mixed with the wine and seasoning in the cavity of the fish. Fold over.

Rub skin with olive oil and season. Place on a baking tray and roast at 220°C for 4-8 minutes depending on thickness, or grill (turning once).





Sorrel Eggah

This ultra slow-cooked Middle Eastern egg dish can be eaten hot or cold and served cut into wedges as a main course, or into squares as nibble. Perfect for Wild&Slow.

100g **dried Sorrel**

6 eggs

butter

salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Crumble and reconstitute the sorrel in a small amount of water, then chop. Stew in a little butter. Mix with the eggs and season. Melt a little butter and cook in an oven dish in the oven at 125°C for 30-40 minutes.

Sorrel Tabbouleh

250g fine bulgur wheat

4-5 tbs olive oil or rape seed oil, or to taste

4 scallions, finely chopped

8 tbs **Sorrel preserved in olive** or rapeseed oil, or four dried leaves reconstituted in a small quantity of water

4 tbs parsley, chopped

2 tbs wild mint, chopped

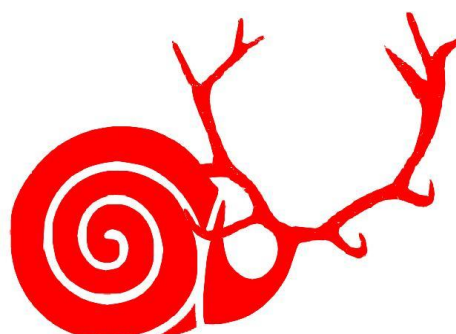
Lemon juice, to taste

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Cherry tomatoes.

Pour enough boiling water over the bulgur wheat to cover plus a little; allow sit until cool. Drain and squeeze out any excess water and mix bulgur wheat with the chopped scallions, sorrel, parsley, mint, oil and season with the salt and pepper. Add lemon juice to taste. Top with tomatoes.

Note: Other ingredients such as sweet peppers and olives may be added as you wish.





Wild&Slow Bread Dip

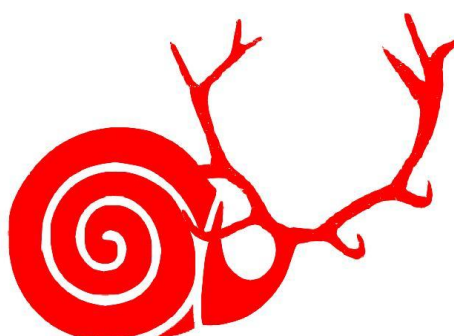
3 cupfuls of Wild autumn mushrooms
100grms **dried Sorrel leaves**
1 teaspoon paprika
3 tablespoon soya sauce
2 tablespoons Tabasco sauce

Fry mushrooms olive oil, add paprika, soy sauce and Tabasco sauce. Blitz. Transfer into a heated serving dish and finish with a couple of twists of black pepper and a small handful of crushed dried Sorrel leaves. Serve over fresh bread or as a dip with thick bread cut into soldiers.

Smoked Irish Cheese and Sorrel Salad

Oak Smoked Irish cheese
1 Cupful of rocket and **sorrel leaves**
Maple syrup for dressing
Rape seed Oil

Slice cheese into six chunky slices. Toss the salad leaves in the Rape Seed Oil. Fry the smoked cheese gently in a little oil. When browned on all sides drizzle with maple syrup and fry for a minute on a low heat. Add salad





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 a disclaimer like this. 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.

