

IF YOU CAN'T BEAT IT, EAT IT!

COOKING WITH GARLIC MUSTARD AND JAPANESE KNOTWEED

GARLIC MUSTARD

The youngest plants have a mild mustard flavor with hints of garlic and are great when used raw. As they plant gets older, it will develop a stronger, more bitter flavor. The round leaves are the least bitter. BE SURE to pull up the entire plant. The roots will keep it fresh until you're ready to use it. Discard the unused parts in the trash – do not plant or compost it or you will soon have far more of it than you want, and it'll be crowding out everything else in your garden and yard.

Garlic Mustard Pesto (Version 1)

1 cup garlic mustard
½ cup basil
3 cloves garlic
2 oz. toasted pinenuts
4 oz. olive oil
juice of 1 lemon

In food processor combine all ingredients except olive oil. Puree and add olive oil with processor running. Toss cooked raviolis with pesto.

Garlic Mustard Pesto (Version 2)

3 cloves garlic, peeled
¼ cup garlic mustard taproots
1 cup parsley
1 ¾ cup garlic mustard leaves
¾ cup basil
1 ½ cups olives, pitted
3 cups pine nuts and/or walnuts
1 ½ cups olive oil
1 cup miso

Combine the garlic and garlic mustard roots and chop in a food processor. Add the parsley, garlic mustard leaves, and basil. Chop. Add nuts and chop coarsely. Add the olive oil and miso and run the processor to make a coarse paste. Makes 4 cups. (See the next recipe for another approach to pesto.)

Garlic Mustard and Spinach Raviolis with Garlic Mustard Pesto

Raviolis:

4 shallots / 1 clove garlic
2 cups spinach
2 cups garlic mustard
4 oz. ricotta cheese
2 oz. Parmesan cheese
2 oz. chopped sundried tomatoes
6 sheets fresh pasta

Saute shallots and garlic in 2 Tbl butter until tender. Add spinach and garlic mustard greens & wilt. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from pan and cool slightly. Squeeze excess liquid from green and chop. Combine all ingredients and season to taste. Cut pasta sheets to desired size. Egg-wash pasta and fill with garlic mustard and spinach mixture. Add to boiling water and cook until they float. Drain and toss gently with garlic mustard pesto (see recipes above)

Time required: 1 hr. Serves 10.

Garlic Mustard Mexicali Cornbread

2 cups cornmeal
2/3 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
2 teaspoons baking powder
2 teaspoons salt

2 cups buttermilk
1/2 cup chopped garlic mustard leaves
1/2 cup blanched corn and peppers, or frozen Mexican vegetables
Butter for pan

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Preheat oven to 450. Mix dry ingredients. Add buttermilk, eggs, garlic mustard leaves and vegetables. Bake in buttered bread pan 20-30 minutes until bread springs back.

Time required: 30 minutes. Serves 8.

Garlic Mustard Scallion Cakes

2 eggs
1 bunch scallions, chopped
1 pkg flour tortilla
1 cup garlic mustard, chopped
2 tsp sesame oil
oil for frying

Mix scallions and garlic mustard. Beat together eggs and sesame oil. Brush on side of a tortilla with egg mixture. Sprinkle on scallion/garlic mustard mixture. Brush egg mix on another tortilla, then put on top of 1st tortilla with egg side down (repeat until all tortillas are used). Cover with plate and weigh down with cans to seal tortilla (about 15 minutes). (Separate cakes with wax paper.)

Heat oil in heavy pan. Brown cakes on both sides (~2 minutes total). Drain on paper towel. Cut into wedges and serve.

Tossed Salad with Garlic Mustard

There are infinite ways to use garlic mustard in salads. This will get your imagination going.

4-6 leaves ruby red leaf lettuce
4-6 leaves romaine lettuce
1-2 handfuls tender garlic mustard leaves
French sorrel and bronze fennel, one leaf each
1/3 cup mandarin orange slices, drained
1 slice of smoked salmon
1/8 cup sunflower seeds
croutons

Wash and crisp all the leaves and tear the lettuce leaves into a salad bowl. Cut the garlic mustard leaves, the French sorrel, and the fennel into narrow strips and add to the salad. Cut the oranges and the smoked salmon into thin strips and place in the salad. Sprinkle on sunflower seeds and fresh, herbed croutons. Dress lightly with Italian dressing. Serve immediately.

Garlic Mustard Bulgur

1 c. bulger
pinch salt
one or two handfuls, fresh, tender garlic mustard leaves
1 TB butter
Cayenne pepper
Soy sauce

Put two cups of water ,a pinch of salt and one cup bulgur into a saucepan. Cover the container, bring contents to a boil and cook slowly for about 15 minutes. Place bulgur into a serving dish, cut the garlic mustard leaves in thin strips onto the steaming bulgur. The mustard will wilt. Add the butter, cayenne pepper and soy sauce to taste and serve immediately. (It can be chilled and served cold as well.)

JAPANESE KNOTWEED

Be very careful what to do with the knotweed trimmings; trim it on site when you pick it, as you don't want to be dropping any knotweed cuttings. It's a voracious weed that will sprout from cuttings. Don't even think about composting it.

Knotweed Soup

The tangy flavor of Japanese knotweed mellowed out by vegetable broth and tofu-cream cheese.

4 cups vegetable broth

3-1/2 cups young Japanese knotweed shoots or rhubarb, sliced

1 cup tofu-cream cheese

1. Simmer the knotweed in the broth 5 minutes or until tender.

2. Stir in the tofu-cream cheese and serve.

Serves 6. Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Baked Knotweed

6 cups Japanese knotweed shoots, peeled if larger than 8 inches long

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon tamari soy sauce

2 teaspoons dried rosemary, finely crumbled

2 teaspoons freshly ground dill seeds

2 teaspoons freshly ground yellow mustard seeds (1 teaspoon seeds)

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper (1/2 teaspoon peppercorns)

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Place the Japanese knotweed shoots in a 3-quart oiled casserole dish. Combine the remaining ingredients in a small bowl and stir them into the knotweed shoots. Bake the knotweed, covered, until it is tender, about 30 minutes. Serve hot. Serves 4-6

Steamed Knotweed Sesame

Japanese knotweed, with its soft texture and lemony flavor, is great in vegetable dishes. The seasonings in this steamed side dish bring out its best qualities.

8 cups young Japanese knotweed stalks, peeled if desired

3 tbs. tamari soy sauce

1 tbs. chili paste or 1/4 tsp. cayenne hot pepper, or to taste

6 cloves of garlic, crushed

6 tbs. sesame seeds, toasted

Mix together all ingredients except the sesame seeds. Cook covered, over low heat, in a heavy saucepan, 20 minutes, or until tender. Serve hot sprinkled with the sesame seeds. Serves 6.

Time: 10 + 20 minutes

Japanese Knotweed Crumble

Prepare a knotweed compote (similar to stewed rhubarb) by cutting tender spring knotweed shoots, no longer than about 12"-18" (the thicker, the better; leaves removed) into inch chunks. Steam till soft -- about 10 minutes. Add sweetener to taste -- perhaps 1/4 c. sugar per 2-3 cups of steamed knotweed -- and a squeeze of lemon juice. A drop of red food coloring will give it a very appetizing look.

Mix equal parts flour and oatmeal, say 1/2 c. each, with a bit of cinnamon, some sugar and a dash of salt. Cut in butter, 1/3 stick at minimum and more if you like a richer crumble. Butter a baking dish. Put in the knotweed, cover with crumble mixture and bake in a medium hot oven, 350 degrees, for a half hour or so. As you notice, measurements, times and temperatures are variable. This basic technique is flexible and adaptable – just like knotweed! Have fun, use up our invasives, and get something for nothing.

Apple and Knotweed Pie

Japanese knotweed's sour flavor complements all sweet fruits, and it does a great job in this nontraditional apple pie, with an unusual herb-flavored crust, and a filling sweetened with the herb stevia instead of sugar or honey.

Crust

2 cups buckwheat flour
1/2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. dried spearmint, ground
1 tsp. coriander, ground
1/4 cup almond oil, or as needed
1/2 cup apple juice, or as needed

Filling

2 1/4 cups tart apples, sliced
1 1/4 cup Japanese knotweed shoots, sliced
1/2 cup apple juice
1 tsp. liquid stevia
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. powdered ginger
1/2 tsp. nutmeg, ground
1/4 tsp. cloves, ground
1/2 cup sunflower seeds
1/4 cup each black walnuts and English (commercial) walnuts, or 1 1/2 cup English walnuts
3 tbs. tapioca

Chill all crust ingredients. Mix the flour with the seasonings. Cut in the oil. Mix until you have the consistency of wet sand. Slowly mix in the cold apple juice until you have a dough that's elastic and pliable, but not mushy, and knead. Press this into an oiled 9 inch pie pan. Save the excess dough to use on top of the filling. Mix all filling ingredients

together. Prick holes in the crust with a fork, then fill it with the filling. Place the excess dough on top, lattice style. Bake in a preheated 425°F oven 10 minutes, checking that the crust doesn't burn. Reduce the heat to 350°F, turn the pie pan to distribute the heat more evenly, and bake another 30 minutes, or until the crust is crisp and the filling is bubbly. Makes 1 pie; serves 6.

Knotweed Wine

Four pounds (2 kg) of knotweed stems, leaves cut off and cut into chunks.

Three pounds (1.5kg) sugar

1 tsp yeast nutrient

Juice of one orange

Wine yeast (all purpose will do, but champagne yeast would probably work very well).

Enough water to make up to 1 gallon (4.5l)

Put the knotweed into a straining bag, and put that into a sterilized bucket. Get the water, sugar, orange juice and yeast nutrient to the boil and pour onto the knotweed. Let it stand, covered, till cool, and pitch in the activated yeast. Keep it in the covered bucket for around a week, till the fermentation dies down a little, and decant into a demi-john. Treat as for other wines from this point, but if you manage to retain a vibrant pink colour then don't stabilize when bottling as the sulfite makes the color vanish.

Got more ideas? Let us know by e-mailing rltinfo.com, or posting your recipe to the Facebook page for the Richmond Floodplain Forest Restoration Project.