

Week of Wild Food - Day Three

Contributed by Becky Lerner
26 May 2009

Seasons: Why nature is not like the grocery store

Breakfast this morning was tea made from pine needles, ground ivy, pineapple weed and wild rose blossoms. Thumbnail: Cleavers are named for their habit of hooking on to anything they touch. When brewed in a tea, they act medicinally as a lymphatic tonic.

I snacked on some purslane leaves I found growing on my street (recommended by a reader named Jim from Washington state), which had a bland but not unpleasant flavor. Lunch was broth made from stinging nettles. For dinner, I boiled a tea made of blackberry buds, pine needles, rose petals, ground ivy and a whole lot of cleavers. I also had more stinging nettles broth and baked burdock roots.

This time, while preparing the burdock, I noticed that the rough outer skin of the burdock root can be peeled away to reveal a cream-colored, tender interior. This made for a much more pleasant texture when cooked. I went looking for mushrooms with my friend Travis, who harvests morels for profit, but we didn't find any. It looks like we were too late in the season for them. They like the cool, moist weather of spring and fall, and lately the weather has been hot and sunny, like summer. This has me realizing that nature is not like the grocery store -- you cannot find whatever you want whenever you want. Fruits and berries are a summer and fall thing, as are nuts. Mushrooms are only in the fall, except for a few that like the springtime too. Greens are really only in the spring and summer. The native people were probably never in the situation I am in right now. They would have stored seeds from the fall and hunted animals for meats, fats, and jerky -- food they would have needed all year long.

I have to go back on what I said about nettles -- I totally got stung a bunch today. I think the trick to handling them without getting hurt is to pinch the upper few inches of the stem (or a leaf) and pull upward to remove it. It seems that a number of folks have noted that nettles sting more often when you brush by them rather than when you deliberately grab them with a firm touch.

Check out a video of me on the local ABC news channel, KATU!

I'm feeling hungry today, honestly, but I do have plenty of energy. I went for a 20-minute jog this morning and in the afternoon I walked 4 miles before foraging. I'm craving Thai food -- jasmine rice. Mmmm.

I am totally considering fishing right now. On my to-do list for tomorrow is to try making coffee from chicory roots. I'm also interested in digging up dandelion roots and thistle roots. And fishing, though since I've never gone before in Portland, I'll need to find a knowledgeable friend to show me some good spots.

I love to hear from readers!
Contact me at RebeccaELerner@gmail.com

"Wild Girl" Becky Lerner is a journalist who writes about foraging and primitive skills at www.FirstWays.com.

Main article:

Living on Foraged Wild Foods for a Solid Week in the City

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