

THE IMPOSSIBLE QUEST

CUCUMBER & BORAGE SANDWICHES

INGREDIENTS

- 8 slices white bread, crusts cut off
- Cream cheese
- 1 cucumber, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons chopped baby borage leaves
- A handful of borage flowers

METHOD

To make the sandwiches, spread cream cheese thinly on a slice of bread, then lay with slices of cucumber topped with a sprinkle of borage leaves, with another slice of bread spread with cream cheese on top. Cut into quarters and serve sprinkled with blue borage flowers.

Borage is a beautiful herb that is also very good for you. Also called 'starflower' for its blue star-shaped flowers, and 'bee bread' because it attracts so many bees, borage has long been thought to give courage and comfort to the heart. 'Borage for courage' is one old saying. The leaves and flowers used to be steeped in wine and drunk before battle.

Borage can be added to soups, salads, or made into delicious borage-lemonade, or used in desserts in the form of fresh or candied flowers, to mention just a few uses.

In summer, put the flowers in your ice-cube tray, cover with water, then freeze—the frozen flowers will make any drink look pretty!

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ROAST BOAR ON A SPIT

INGREDIENTS

- One wild boar (you can replace this with pork loin if wild boar is not readily available in your local forest)
- A handful of sea salt
- A slosh of olive oil
- 1 bag of apples
- Kitchen string

METHOD

Light a low fire under your spit.

Score skin of the pork with a sharp knife, then rub all over with oil and salt.

Tie pork onto the spit using kitchen string. Cut a slit down centre of pork to help fix it to the spit if necessary.

Place spit above fire, and keep it slowly rotating. Some cooks employ spit-dogs to run in a wheel to keep the spit rotating, or the work is done by a boy, known as a 'spit-jack'. Others do it by the magic of electricity.

Cook for one hour and twenty minutes per kilogram of pork. Roast an apple per person in the coals of the fire, then add a pile of fuel to crackle the skin.

Remove crackling (using your sword to fight off all those who attempt to steal some), then slice thickly and serve with roast apple and vegetables.

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CRYSTALLISED VIOLETS

INGREDIENTS

- A basket of violets, at least 20, with stems still attached
- One and a half cups of water
- 1 cup caster sugar
- 1 teaspoon rosewater (optional)
- Extra caster sugar to sprinkle

METHOD

Gently spray violets with water to clean. Allow to dry by spreading on paper towels.

Heat water, sugar and rosewater, till completely dissolved. Dip each violet in liquid sugar mixture with a pair of tweezers, then lay on baking paper and coat thoroughly with caster sugar. Allow to dry, then snip off stem with scissors. Store in an airtight glass container.

You can crystallise any flowers using this method, including rose petals, borage flowers, sweet peas, white mallow, comfrey, elder flowers and nasturtium. Make sure any flowers you crystallise are not poisonous before you eat them, though! (You would not want to crystallise nightshade flowers, for example.)

THE IMPOSSIBLE QUEST

BREAD SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 4 to 6 thick slices of crusty stale bread
- A pot of water
- Salt
- Herbs to hand: for example, thyme, bay leaves

METHOD

Bring the water to boil, salt it, and add the herbs. Let the mixture boil for a few minutes, and in the meantime crumble the pieces of bread and put them in your soup bowls. Spoon the broth over the bread, let it absorb the moisture for a few minutes, and serve.

If you are adding garlic, onion, bacon or sausage, sauté in oil first. If you are adding egg, whisk it vigorously first then stir in just before serving.

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MUSHROOM & ROOT STEW

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Fresh garlic, chopped
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 handful Portobello mushrooms, roughly chopped
- 1 handful shiitake mushrooms, roughly chopped
- Half a kilogram of root vegetables of your choice (if using turnips, make sure you add plenty of sweet roots such as carrot and parsnip, as turnips can be bitter)
- 2 cups vegetable stock
- Fresh herbs: rosemary, sage, thyme, parsley
- Salt and pepper

METHOD

Heat the oil in a large pot, then add the chopped garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Stir in the mushrooms, and cook for about three minutes, stirring frequently.

Stir in the chopped root vegetables, then add rosemary, sage and thyme. Cook for about 30 seconds, then add the stock. Cover, and reduce the heat to low. Simmer until the root vegetables are soft when pierced with a fork (about 12 minutes). Add in the parsley, salt and pepper, stir and then serve.

This stew can be made with any kind of mushroom or root vegetable—make it a little differently every time!

THE IMPOSSIBLE QUEST

ROAST RABBIT WITH WILD CARROTS AND BURDOCK ROOT

INGREDIENTS

- 2 small rabbits
- Butter
- Sea salt
- Herbs such as thyme, marjoram, rosemary, sage, or bay leaves
- Wild carrots
- Wild burdock roots
- Watercress leaves

METHOD

Rinse the rabbits and pat them dry, then rub all over with butter. Tie herbs together and stuff inside rabbits. Season with salt.

Roast on sticks over a fire, or in a hot oven, for about 20 to 25 minutes, until done through with no trace of pink remaining.

Chop carrots and burdock roots thinly, then fry quickly in butter.

Serve on a bed of fresh watercress.

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ELDERBERRY AND APPLE CRUMBLE

INGREDIENTS

FILLING:

- ½ cup elderberries
- 2 cups water
- Drizzle of honey
- 2 to 3 apples, chopped or sliced

CRUMBLE:

- ¾ cup ground or flaked almonds
- 1 cup whole oats
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon (optional)
- Salt (less if using salted butter)
- ½ cup melted butter
- ⅓ cup honey

METHOD

Pull the berries off their stalks and wash them. Core, peel and chop the apples. Cook elderberries slowly in water, then drizzle with honey. Stir in sliced apples, and allow to simmer a few minutes. Taste, and add extra honey if necessary (elderberries can be tart). Pour into an ovenproof dish.

You can replace elderberries with blackberries, raspberries or mulberries, but if so, use a little less honey.

In a large bowl, combine the ground or flaked almond, oats, cinnamon and salt. In a small saucepan combine honey and butter and heat till well melted. Pour butter and honey mixture into the dry ingredients and stir.

Pour apples and elderberries into a greased casserole pan and top with crumble.

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until the fruit mixture is bubbling at the edges and the topping is golden brown.

THE IMPOSSIBLE QUEST

COCKLE SOUP WITH SEAWEED

INGREDIENTS

- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- Olive oil
- A length of edible seaweed such as sugar kelp, spiral wrack or laver
- 500 ml fish stock
- 400g of cockles, rinsed in salt water
- Sea salt to season

You can add any available vegetables such as tomatoes, fennel bulbs, or potatoes, if you are lucky enough to have them to hand.

You can also add any variety of seafood you may have caught.

METHOD

In a large, wide pan, sweat the shallots and garlic in a little oil. Add the dried seaweed, chopped tomatoes and sliced fennel (if you have them) and stir together, then add fish stock (or water, if no fish stock available). Add potatoes (if you have them).

Lay cockles and any other fish or shellfish on top. Cover with a lid and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes. Discard any cockles that have failed to open.

Season to taste.