

COMPLEMENTS OF THE SEASON: GREEN HERBS & EDIBLE FLOWERS

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Green
Herbs

Edible
Flowers

From The Garden To The Table

Now we begin to find bouquets of aromatic **fresh green herbs** in the garden or market place—just in time to enliven our Summer fare! Tall spikes of savory and big bunches of basil are eagerly received, with plenty of pesto anticipated.

Before spices arrived from the East, herbs were traditional for medicinals and cookery in Western culture, reaching a high point of cultivation in the cloister garden. Hildegard of Bingen epitomized this in her 12th Century work at convents along the Rhine River, where royalty and religious flocked for the healing and strength she ministered.

Efforts to revive this tradition are again appearing in the European cradle of Western culture. In the forefront is the work of the Arbeitskreis Fur Ernahrungsforschung, an Anthroposophical nutrition research center in Bad Liebenzell, Germany. Through the Anthroposophic chef who advised us in the early weeks of opening our restaurant in Cologne and at the behest of some of our customers who were familiar with their culinary arts, we embarked on the Western path in our cuisine.

We have carried this Western tradition into our work over the past 10 years here in the U.S. Considering seasonal vegetable fare from local Biodynamic® and CSA gardens, and the abundance a crop can bring forth, we have found that **Any vegetable** can be served frequently and still be **welcome at the table simply by varying the herbs** that flavor it. Indeed a boon when bumper crops appear!

Summer Savory complements early **cabbage**. Try some of its fine, narrow leaves fresh in slaw; chop stems for cooked recipes; add long stems with leaves to soup pot and remove after cooking. Savory's also good with **Swiss Chard, egg-plant and beans**. It **aids digestion**. Use in place of allspice, pepper or mint in Summer recipes. When its plentiful, we blend it with parsley for pesto, spreads and dips.

Tarragon subtly flavors cabbage, asparagus, cucumbers and lettuce. Known in France as one of the "Fine Herbs", along with chervil, parsley & thyme. Combines nicely with dill or fennel.

Dill is ever popular with its aroma and light pickle flavor. Sprinkled on asparagus, string beans, peas, salads and all the brassicas—among others—dill cheers the appetite! At its best harvested just before its yellow blossoms open.

Oregano is famous in pizza and other Italian dishes. It's a bit peppery when fresh—use sparingly to spark salads! It enhances broccoli, green beans, spinach, the summer squashes, peppers and Mediterranean or Mexican cookery.

And **ah, sweet basil!** **Remarkable** in salads, **tremendous** with tomatoes & summer squashes, a **favorite** minced into pesto, basil keeps flies away. Its **cool qualities** grace a myriad of dishes all around the Mediterranean. Toss bite-sized leaves into green salads; snip fresh into zucchini slaw or pancakes; add lots of whole leaves last minute to ratatouille. Chop basil with stems for soups. **Combine basil with savory** to pep up spirits on hot, humid days.

Gaining in popularity is **cilantro—the pungent herb of the coriander plant**. Long used in Peruvian dishes, but until recently considered only a bug-chaser in Western cultures, it is at home with Indian curries and Tex-Mex fare. Folks are either delighted or distanced by exotic cilantro!

And who can forget **rosemary** after reading Heinz Grotzke's article written for *BIODYNAMICS* in Summer 1975? Or parsley, sage, & thyme—the herbs most familiar to Americans, especially in relation to Thanksgiving.

In their **green fresh form** we can **use herbs lavishly**, as 4 times the amount of fresh herbs are a close equivalent to using them dried. When dried properly, herbal essences are concentrated, no longer being distributed in the green leaf fluids.

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Refrigerate fresh green herbs in a jar, like bouquets, with stems in an inch of water—and a plastic bag over the leafy tops in frost-free refrigerators. Or wash, spin well, and store in a damp cloth in the refrigerator vegetable drawer.

In observing Biodynamic practices, one can recognize a relationship between the preparations, companion planting, and the seasons with the use of herbs in culinary arts. While the life of the plants are provided an environment to develop their fullness, the life of the human being is similarly enhanced through complementary nourishment. Maria Geuter's *HERBS IN NUTRITION* is enlightening in this regard.

Like the flowers of Summer, so might we blossom!

"Gather ye flowers while you may!"

For a few short months, edible varieties **from woodlands, field and garden** entice the senses in bouquets and garnishes at the table. Containing the heightened qualities of a plant, **edible flowers delight with their sweet or snappy bite**. Served fresh, they gaily garnish our food and are rarely heated—squash blossoms and day lily buds being exceptions.

Have no fear for harming flowers when biting into them. They are at the peak of life and **reach fulfillment when releasing their essences**—into the air or the mouth. A variety of flowers await our enjoyment.

White and purple violets blink colorfully when strewn on a tossed green salad. Their nectar is cupped where blossom joins stem, and sweetly bursts when bitten.

Likewise, **flowers on herbs** are delicious—in salads, as a fresh garnish on a dish containing the herb leaf or afloat on top of a cup of Summer vegetable broth.

Nasturtiums come into our kitchen with leaves like cool green fans or water lily pads and brightly colored flowers that bring us a sense of the Sun. There is a hint of pepper in their taste, combining coolness and subtle spice **for a lift in Summer**. It is said they possess anti-biotic qualities. Toss bite-size nasturtium leaves with salad greens or line the salad bowl with the larger leaves. Place the flowers on top to delight the eye as well as the taste buds. Guaranteed to perk everyone up! **Nasturtiums and cucumbers** are complementary too—nice as a salad or in Summer sandwiches.

Sprinkle **rose petals** on salads—vegetable or fruit. A jar of rose petals and water steeped in the Sun make a light refreshing tea. Lifter of the spirit and comforter in stress, even as a garnish, **the aromatic rose is an elixir** for the heart of children and adults.

Borage blossoms bring courage—their leaves as well. Serve fresh in salads or cold drinks; float atop punch. **Elder flowers** make a lovely, light tea—perfect for those cool damp afternoons when **their warming qualities** might be welcome or as a prescription for Summer colds and sore throats. **Dry some** to save for just such occasions. Leave enough for the berries from which a delicious hot fruit soup can be made to bolster us against Winter colds!

In Japan, where **chrysanthemums** are revered, their petals are often found floating in steaming hot broth. In China the flowers are used in teas for calmness and clarity of vision. **Linden flowers** are similarly served as tea in Europe.

Thus in Summer may we be nourished and flourish.

Excerpts from *LOUISE'S LEAVES*, published as a book by the Bio-Dynamic Farming & Gardening Association. In addition BDA is publishing a complementary herbs for vegetables and whole grain cookery chart compiled by Louise. All rights reserved.