

Off Balance!

Invasive Species and Biodiversity



Recipe: Spaghetti and Weeds

Ingredients:

Spaghetti or linguine pasta. (Other shapes are OK too)
Dandelion greens or garlic mustard leaves picked on site
Parmesan cheese
Olive oil
Garlic salt, pepper, oregano as desired

You will also need: a chopping knife, plates, forks, cutting board, pot, colander for straining, potable water.

Do ahead: Cook the pasta and drain. Rinse briefly to get rid of the stickiness. Transport to the site in storage containers a bit bigger than needed; you can then toss in the rest of the ingredients using the same bowl.



Figure 2: Crosswinds middle school youth picked and ate dandelion greens.



Figure 1: Linguine and garlic mustard

Select the youngest leaves for eating – pre-flowering is best. The ones that have grown with the least sunlight (in the shade of a tree, under dead leaves or long grass) are the least bitter. Do not eat any that have been sprayed with pesticides, herbicides or fertilizer, or are on or next to a road. Cut away any roots, stems or flowers from the greens and discard. Soak in water for a few minutes, then rinse the greens well to remove any dirt. Chop the greens coarsely.

Bring a large pot of water to a full boil and drop the greens in by the handful. Cover, bring water quickly back to the boil and cook just until wilted, two or three minutes. Scoop out the greens and drain them in a colander.

Add a bit of olive oil and spices and the wilted dandelion greens and toss thoroughly. Serve on pasta plates, with a dandelion flower as a garnish if you like. Sprinkle loads of grated parmesan cheese while it's still hot.

Options and variations:

- Add pine nuts or sun-dried tomatoes (the ones in oil are best, drained and chopped before adding).
- If cooking facilities are available, cook the pasta on site, using the same water to cooking the greens.
- Try sautéing the greens with oil and garlic instead of boiling.
- If a mortar and pestle or electric food chopper is available, make garlic mustard pesto with garlic mustard instead of the traditional basil.