Ooh! Ooh! Cardoons!



Cardoons

What would it be like if you had a garden that yielded abundant food but required no care? What if the vegetables it offered were loaded with nutrition, and you didn’t even need to pull weeds around it or feed it compost?

Sound too good to be true? Au contraire! In the spring, I rarely buy any vegetables and instead meander over to my beloved patch of burdock.

As Italian-Americans, we called them cardoons.

They can also be found in Italian markets and upscale food stores specializing in exotic produce, but for me, the best place to find them is in the wild.

Aren’t burdocks a weed, you may ask? Why do I want to eat weeds?

Because this is a good weed! The burdock root has been used

for centuries as a “blood purifier” to clear the lungs, kidneys and bloodstream of toxins. It is also used as a diuretic and as a topical remedy for skin problems such as eczema, acne, hives, rosacea and psoriasis. Burdock root is also said to aid digestion by stimulating the production of bile in the liver.

In the spring, just after the lilacs bloom, the burdock shows itself in full bloom. This is the best time to harvest them before the stems become bitter and tough and before the root gets too woody.

We lived in the city when I was growing up, so we didn’t have burdock growing nearby. A trip to the country was in order every late spring to harvest our favorite vegetable.

Cardoons thrive in disturbed soil.

This means that the best patches were found near railroad tracks and abandoned buildings. Finding a patch that wasn’t tainted by unclean soil was important … not too close to the road, not near railroad ties and far enough away from buildings that might have been painted with lead.



Cardoon patch

Once we discovered a good patch, we’d return year after year. We considered it *our* cardoon patch, and although it was often on abandoned land, we felt it belonged to us.

When we got home with a carload of stems, everyone joined in the kitchen for the cleaning process. I have memories of doing this with as many as ten of us, making a mess in the kitchen, laughing and loving that we got all this good food without having stepped into a grocery store. To this day, it makes me feel freer that I can produce such a meal independent of the conventional store-bought process. It's a meal I can "get away with," and I love that.

After harvesting the stems, we scrubbed and cut them into bite-sized pieces, pulling off the strings when apparent, and placed them in a pot with just enough water to steam them until fork tender.

Today, I save the juice to drink later. It's a reputed tonic, strong and to my palate, very tasty.



Dredge in raw egg and flour

Then I strain the stems and dredge them in a raw egg bath, followed by flouring them with wheat flour or almond flour, salt, pepper and sometimes garlic. I love them best fried in lard or tallow in a very hot frying pan. The deeper the oil and hotter the pan, the more crispy the results. Oh, yum!

Today I live in the country where my cardoon patch is on an old, out-of-use driveway in the back of our property. After harvesting a big basketful, I visit my garlic patch,

followed by a trip to our chicken coop for a few eggs and head to the house.

I fry these delights in my homemade lard that I rendered from the fat my farmer down the road gave me. The only thing I have to purchase for this meal is the flour and salt.

I so adore these wild vegetables, that I could eat them exclusively for many days, so I harvest in abundance.

Move over iceberg lettuce from across the continent!

Delicious, nutritious, free and self-directed. I can barely think of many meals as delightful and intelligent as this.

Bye-Bye Bug Bites

Next week: My protocol for tick bites to help prevent Lyme

Ok, so you're in a cardoon patch, and you get bit. A hornet, blood-thirsty mosquito, a tick. No matter. Any time you get a bite or sting, this is what you do:

1) Make sure you have *Ledum palustre* 200C on hand. It is the principal remedy for insect bites. *Any* insect. It will not only bring the pain down to a mild purr but will essentially antidote the ill effects of venom and even bacteria if employed properly.

2) The protocol is to take *Ledum* 200 every 3 hours when the pain, swelling, etc. is severe and less frequently when signs of symptoms have been resolved. This could be within minutes, hours, days or weeks, depending on the nature of the bite, or your sensitivity to such.

3) If the bite is from a tick, the protocol to protect from

tick fevers, etc. is twice daily for one week, then every other day for another week followed by once weekly for a month. More on this in my next blog.

4) My second choice for insect bites, especially those where there is significant swelling either locally or elsewhere is *Apis mellifica* 30C or 200C. If *Ledum* doesn't reduce the pain, swelling and any other symptoms after at least 3 doses, *Apis* may be the correct remedy for the situation.

5) Continue until all is well.

So, dig around this summer. Forage for the best wild vegetables around, and don't give bugs a thought – because you've got homeopathy!