Spring 2024

Early Spring Seasonal Eating Guide

Emma Owens

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Early Spring

SEASONAL EATING GUIDE
APRIL 2024
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Photos and words by Emma Owens
Recipes from the web
Advised by Dr. Julie Dugger
With assistance from T. Abe Lloyd
What is seasonal eating? AND WHY DO IT?

Seasonal eating is a style of eating that prioritizes including local foods into your diet that are seasonal to the area you live.

In order to find out what foods are seasonal, you can check out a web resource for your region. I’ve attached a link below for Whatcom County in particular: For cultivated foods

“Seasonal” is also a loaded word. Each season, each year is going to vary depending on temperature, rainfall, elevation, and more! This trend will only continue due to our changing climate. Noticing is most important when foraging. :) Next page includes seasonal wild foods in Whatcom County.

there are numerous benefits!

**economic** - supporting local farmers at neighborhood markets is beneficial for the local economy. PLUS seasonal veggies tend to be cheaper at grocery stores because they’re in excess.

**environmental** - less transportation for produce creates a lower carbon footprint. ALSO seasonal produce requires fewer pesticides and uses more sustainable farming practices due to its alignment with natural cycles of temperature, rainfall, etc.

**health/taste** - seasonal foods tend to be more nutrient dense, because they’re harvested at peak, natural ripeness, which also contributes to a better flavor! Eating seasonally also encourages a variation in your typical diet, which can add bonus nutrients.

**mental** - being knowledgable of seasonal foods, noticing bloom times of wild foods, being involved in the community, and connecting to the plants around you all foster sense of place. SUPER fulfilling.
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Familiarize yourself with the plant
- find a good book or resource to help you identify, name, and notice differences between your plant and others.
- learn about it!

Ask questions
- what makes it recognizable?
- does it have any toxic/poisonous lookalikes?
- what climate/habitat does it enjoy?
- what part should be harvested?
- is it rare? invasive?

Be respectful of the land
- don’t forage on national park land, private land without permission, or nature preserves.
- only take as much as you need, use everything you take and make sure to leave a healthy population behind.

Find some likely spots
- you’re not likely to get lucky anywhere you go, unless it’s a super common plant.
- think of some places to go before you head out, or you risk no loot!
April 1—Stinging Nettle

SCIENTIFIC NAME: URTICA DIOICA
LOCATION FOUND: ARROYO PARK
IN SEASON: MARCH – MAY!

identifying nettle:
- opposite leaves
- green stems
- serrated leaves
- singular (nonbranching) stems
- found in disturbed areas, and moist environments

HEALTH BENEFITS:
- according to the NIH, leaves are used to aid symptoms of arthritis and allergies
- high in fiber, minerals and vitamins.
- they have anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, anti-infectious properties, and more! pretty much… anti all sorts of bad stuff.

NOTES & HOW TO:
- bring scissors and gloves… they are called “stinging” for a reason!
- snip just the top ~4 leaves (fresh growth)
- check back in! possibility for multiple harvests throughout the spring!
- you’ll want to snag these bad boys at about at ~4–10 inches tall. When they’re at their most tender
- thought of as a noxious weed in certain places… we’ll show them!
Recipe Card

<table>
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<tr>
<th>NAME OF DISH :</th>
<th>Nettle Pesto</th>
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<td>SERVES :</td>
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<td>PREP TIME :</td>
<td>10 MINS</td>
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<td>COOK TIME :</td>
<td>10 MINS</td>
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INGREDIENTS

- 3 C fresh nettle leaves
- 4 garlic cloves
- ¾ C pine nuts
- ¼ C olive oil
- ½ tsp sea salt
- 1 Tbs lemon juice
- ¾ C parmesan or asiago cheese, shredded (optional)

BLEND. So quick. So easy. SO yummy

DIRECTIONS

- DO NOT FORGET TO BLANCH 1st! (this will rid you of the stingers.)
- check for bugs! ***
- from there, anything you want!
- soups, sauces, salad dressing?
- I made pesto pasta and then put it into kale salad (another seasonal veggie for april)!
- I also added a maple blossom to top it off for an extra seasonal splash :)

3 C fresh nettle leaves
4 garlic cloves
¾ C pine nuts
¼ C olive oil
½ tsp sea salt
1 Tbs lemon juice
¾ C parmesan or asiago cheese, shredded (optional)
April 7 - Rhubarb

SCIENTIFIC NAME: RHEUM RHABARBARUM

LOCATION FOUND: CABRERA FARM STAND

IN SEASON: EARLY SPRING - EARLY SUMMER

NOTES & HOW TO:

- only the stalks are edible. The leaves are poisonous because they contain high levels of Oxalic acid... bad stuff
- if you don’t want to use them right away, keep them in a glass of water to retain their rigidity
- it is technically a vegetable (part of the buckwheat family) and one of the first to go in season!

HEALTH BENEFITS:

- rhubarb stalks are high in vitamin K
- Red color comes from anthocyanin, which is known for its anti cancer properties
- Positive blood pressure and blood vessel effects
- originated in China, where roots were used for medicinal purposes

FRESH VEGETABLES & FRUITS

From our small family farm in Skagit Valley
Recipe Card

NAME OF DISH : RHUBARB CAKE
SERVES : 3  
PREP TIME : 30 Minutes  
COOK TIME : 45 mins

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup half and half, cream, or buttermilk  
1 tsp lemon juice
1/2 cup unsalted butter at room temperature  
1 cup granulated sugar plus 2 tsp for sprinkling
1 large egg, at room temperature  
1 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
2 cups all purpose flour, saving out 1 Tbsp to toss with rhubarb  
2 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp salt
2 cups thinly sliced rhubarb (add other fruit like apple/strawberry for extra sweetness :)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350F Lightly butter a 9×9 square baking pan
2. Stir the lemon juice into the half and half and set aside
3. Cream the soft butter and sugar in a stand mixer, or with electric beaters, until fluffy and pale yellow. Beat in the egg and vanilla, scraping down the bowl as necessary.
4. Take 1 Tbsp of the flour to the rhubarb and toss well.
5. Whisk together the remaining flour, baking powder, and salt.
6. Slowly incorporate the dry ingredients to wet
7. Spread batter into pan and sprinkle with sugar
8. Bake @ 350 for 40-45 mins
April 11-Big Leaf Maple

Scientific Name: Acer Macrophyllum

Location Found: Maritime Heritage Park

In Season: April (depends where you are)

Identifying Maple:
- 5 lobed, palm shaped leaves
- Tall trees, sometimes over 100 ft
- Old trees tend to gather moss
- Yellow/greenish blossoms are drooping and clustered

Historical Uses:
- According to the USDA, historically, the bark has been ground into powder and used as a thickening agent in soups.
- Fibers in the inner bark can also be used for making ropes and baskets.
- Leaves were sometimes used to store food due to their size and could also add flavor to dishes.

Notes:
- Young and tender flowers are the most delicious and can be eaten raw right off the stem!
- Blossoms are delicate, handle with care
- Often found mixed in with red alder, western red cedar, doug fir, and western hemlock
- Do not overharvest... leave ample seeds for reseeding
April 15 - Radish

**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** RAPHANUS SATIVUS

**LOCATION FOUND:** CABRERA FARM STAND

**IN SEASON:** APRIL – JUNE

**NOTES:**
- Radishes are a long taproot, eaten as a root vegetable, but the entire plant is edible!
- They were originally domesticated in Asia.
- Known as a companion vegetable, because they suffer from few pests and diseases.
- Skin colors can vary in color. Red, pink, purple, yellow, white, green and black are all common colors.
- Sharp taste is attributed to the various chemical compounds present, such as glucosinolate, myrosinase, and isothiocyanate.

**HEALTH BENEFITS:**
- High in vitamin C relative to their small size.
- Full of fiber, promoting gut health.
- Part of the Brassica family, and are classified as cruciferous vegetables, which are known for their anti cancer properties.
Recipe Card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF DISH</th>
<th>Radish green chimichurri</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SERVES</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREP TIME</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COOK TIME</td>
<td>45 mins</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**INGREDIENTS**

- 1 cup radish greens (from 1-2 bunches)
- 1/2 cup cilantro
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 3-4 cloves garlic
- 1/4 cup red wine or sherry vinegar
- 1 jalapeno
- 1/4 teaspoon cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)
- salt and pepper, to taste

**DIRECTIONS**

- Add all ingredients to blender and puree till it looks like pesto!
- Serve immediately or store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a week.
- For an extra burst of flavor, consider adding a squeeze of fresh lemon juice or a pinch of red pepper flakes.
- Not only perfect for grilled meats and tacos but also makes a delightful spread for sandwiches, a topping for pasta, or a zesty dip for veggies.
April 19-Giant Horsetail

Scientific Name: Equisetum Telmateia

Location Found: Happy Valley Neighborhood

In Season: Mid March - Mid April

Identifying Horsetail:
- This is a great resource for identifying ripe horsetail and preparing to eat it.
- Pick while cones are still whitish and they are short (5-10 cm).
- I ate these guys raw... they taste like celery!

A Note about “Invasives”

Horsetails are considered invasive weeds due to their easy propagation and ability to overtake agricultural fields, despite being native to the Pacific Northwest and other continents. All species have trace amounts of toxins that are dangerous to livestock. They are a prehistoric plant that is related to the fern.

Sooo.. invasive to who? Where?
April 24-Leek

**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** ALLIUM AMPELOPRASUM

**LOCATION FOUND:** CABRERA FARM STAND

**IN SEASON:** FEBRUARY - JUNE

**NOTES:**
- save the greens to make sauce!
  (if you couldn’t tell I love making green sauces from leafy veggies)
- native to the Mediterranean and the middle east
- very long season crop and cold weather hardy
- when planting, avoid brassicas as a companion plant because they compete for similar nutrients in the soil
- the Allium genus was among the first veggies to be cultivated

**HEALTH BENEFITS:**
- according to NIH, leeks have many bioactive compounds that are beneficial to humans
- such as: promotion of blood circulation, lowering of cholesterol, relief of fatigue, anti-inflammation, anti-oxidation, and the lowering of fat and blood sugar levels.
Recipe Card

**NAME OF DISH:** Carrot Leek Soup

| SERVES: 5 | PREP TIME: 15 mins | COOK TIME: 45 mins |

**INGREDIENTS**
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 4 cups peeled, cubed carrots (from about 6 medium carrots)
- 2 medium leeks, white part only, chopped
- Salt and black pepper
- 8 cups water or vegetable broth
- 2 tablespoons yellow or white miso
- 1 small lime
- Thinly sliced chives, for garnish (optional)

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Melt butter in a pot over medium heat, add carrots and leeks. Sauté for a minute or 2, then add broth. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to a simmer. Cook until carrots are soft, about 15 minutes.

2. Reserve 2 cups liquid, then purée the remaining contents with an immersion blender in the pot. Use reserved liquid to adjust the purée’s thickness.

3. To serve, heat soup and whisk in miso. Divide among 4 bowls. Grate a little lime zest over each bowl. Quarter the lime and add a good squeeze of lime juice into each bowl. Scatter with chives, if using.
April 29 - Salmonberry

Scientific Name: Rubus spectabilis

Location Found: Fairhaven Park

In Season: April - June

Identifying Salmonberry:
- Shrubs that can grow to be 3-12 ft tall, straight or arching stems
- Woody stems, with fine prickles
- They have three leaflets and are shiny on top
- Flowers are 2-3 cm in diameter and have five pinkish-purple petals

Health Benefits:
- Packed with vitamins and minerals such as vitamin A and C
- Historically, leaves have been used to make tea which can treat diarrhea or dysentery
- Leaves and bark can be used as an astringent for burns and open sores
- High levels of antioxidants, which aid cell health
This spring, I embarked on a journey to dedicate time to cooking. I experimented with dishes I had never made before, using ingredients I had never tried, and at times had never heard of.

I feel more energized, my skin is clearer, and my friends now know me as "the one who can cook," a title I wear with pride. I have gained a new sense of confidence in the kitchen and have come to appreciate the importance of slow food over fast food. Our culture is often too focused on speed; taking your time is essential. As a college student with two part-time jobs, I didn’t think I had time to cook. However, committing to this project allowed me to carve out space in my busy life for something truly rewarding.

Another idea I want to mention is the privilege associated with having access to a healthy diet. Not everyone can afford to eat produce from the farmers market every week. I know I can’t! But buying a few things seasonally here and there can do wonders for your health and sense of place.
Next Steps

I hope to continue to find and share recipes using underrepresented and underappreciated produce with others so we all eat them! By cooking with seasonal/local foods you’ll receive countless health benefits and support our planet! P.S Remember to use the whole plant!

honorable mentions: kohlrabi, bok choy, spinach... leafy greens and cruciferous veggies for the win!!!