



Nettle Tip and Cheese Bread

One of my favourite things about Spring time is the abundance of fresh wild greens that can appear in a matter of weeks. Here I'll take you through how to make a delicious nettle and cheese bread in a dutch oven. Then I'll go through some variations that can be more helpful in some group settings.

Nettles

One of the most well known wild edibles is the humble stinging nettle.

Nettles have the medicine of fire:

- Awakening: Energises internal organs
- Detoxes
- Remineralises your body
- Used externally on burns and itchy hot rashes (with stings crushed and squishing the juices out)

Ages

All ages

Duration

2 hours (allowing an hour for prep, 20 minutes for rising and 40 minutes for cooking on a well established cooking fire).

How To

- Make your cooking fire and build it up with woods that create good hot embers such as beech, oak, holly.
- Harvest your nettles:
 - One of the best ways we've found with children is for them to have a pair of scissors and a cup and simply snip the tips into the cup.
 - As adults you can simply pluck the tips off. You're likely to get some stings this way, some people seem not to mind and others trust they help prevent arthritis!
 - Another consideration is whether you're gathering them from a safe place free of pollutants, pesticides etc. There is a video on safe foraging practice to learn more on this point. Finally it's best to gather nettle tips in the Springtime when they are young and their vibrant energy is in the leaves. Later in the year their energy goes into the flowers and then seeds at which point it is not so nutritional or tasty to forage the leaves. Of course if you come across an area

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that's been strimmed they will re-grow and be at that young tender stage later in the year.

- Wash your nettle tips and process them by cutting them until they are very small pieces. This works well as a group activity where each member cuts a small cup full with their pair of scissors.
- Warm your dutch oven by the fire and continue to tend the fire.
- Make the bread dough - I'll leave you to find your own recipe for this. (Here I add 400g flour with a generous pinch of both sea salt and sugar and mix these together with the easy bake instant yeast. I add in the processed nettle tips, olive oil and warm water. I just do it by eye). Stir and then knead. Add in the grated cheese and knead again.
- It's helpful to cover the dough in a fine coating of flour before placing it into the bread tin. You can also grease the tin or line it with baking parchment if you want.
- Place the dough in the bread tin into the warm dutch oven to start to rise for 15-20minutes.
- Bake the bread by significantly raising the heat all the way around the loaf for around 40-50minutes. I've found it best to have the dutch oven a short distance above the embers, around 15cm and cover the dutch oven lid in embers as well. You can do this by either lifting embers one by one onto the lid, chop-stick style, or by using a spade head to cover the lid in embers. Ideally at this stage you wouldn't have flames under the dutch oven. It can work to have a small flaming fire off to one side and tend this to generate more embers if you're concerned you don't have enough.
- Once you feel like the bread is done, you can test it in a traditional way such as knocking on the loaf to see if it sounds hollow, sticking a skewer in and seeing if any dough comes out on it or you can just go with your intuition, take it out and slice it.
- Slice, share and enjoy. Lashings of butter are a good addition.

Equipment Needed

- Fire gloves
- Trivet or Tripod
- Bowl
- Dutch Oven
- Bread tin (could also have a small bit of metal between the tin and the dutch oven base)
- Scissors
- Cups if harvesting nettles as a group
- Jug or second bowl
- Spoon
- Bread board
- Knife
- Moulinette is helpful to process the nettle tips more quickly if processing them on your own. In a group having each child do their cup full with a pair of scissors each works really well though.

Ingredients

Here is the list of ingredients I used in the film, however you can make any bread dough and mix in nettle tips and cheese.

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- Plain Flour
- Yeast
- Olive Oil
- Warm water
- Salt generous pinch
- Sugar generous pinch
- Cheese (pre grated)
- Freshly gathered Nettle tips

You will need a well established cooking fire that has an abundant ember bed at the time you want to start baking the bread.

Variations

- Make a bread dough and add in chopped nettle tips. Put a piece about the size of a golf ball onto the end of a prepared non-toxic stick and cook as a damper. When cooked through (you can check by letting it cool for a few minutes and then try twisting it and when cooked through it should no longer stick to the stick). Once cooked you can take it off the stick and insert a rod of cheese and enjoy.
- You can use a bread dough with additional chopped nettle tips and cook as 'ash cakes' on the embers of a fire. Once they've cooked through you could add grated cheese to melt on top.
- You can make a strong nettle tip tea and add this instead of adding warm water. This tends to colour the bread, so it comes out even greener which can be a fun novelty.

Teacher Tricks and Tips

- Children love being involved in as much of the cooking as possible so it's best to bring enough cups and scissors for everyone to gather and chop the nettle tips.

Invisible Learning

- Deepening relationship to plants and their gifts
- Deepening relationship to place

Hazards to Highlight

- Ensure it is nettles that you are foraging
- Forage from a safe place - watch: foraging considerations - safe foraging practice

Risk Assessment Considerations

These are the risk assessment consideration documents to be referred to for this activity.

- Plant Based Activities
- Fire Activities
- Site risk assessment (specific to your site)

Links

- [Safe Foraging Practice](#)

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- Respectful Harvest
- Nourishing Nettle Tips
- Spring Green Pesto

Tags

- Foraging, Wild food, Nutrition, Spring, nettles, bread, baking, cooking, dutch oven

