

Nettle, Stinging Nettle

Family	Urticacea
Botanical	Rutica urens
Parts Used	Aerial parts
USDA Hardiness	4 - 10
Light	Full Sun to partial shade
Soil	Well drained
Duration	Perennial



Propagation Seed or division.

Water As needed

Growing Stinging nettles are an important larval food for many types of butterflies and moths. The plant prefers loose soil, preferably with a layer of organic matter to encourage growth. Nettle is responsive to nitrogen and will require high phosphate levels for rapid growth rates.

Medicinal Uses Expectorant, demulcent, nutritive, hemostatic, alterative, astringent

Benefits Stinging nettle tea is a great spring tonic and a good addition to the diet of anyone recovering from a long illness or who has chronic weakness, fatigue or anemia.

Preparation Steep the dry or fresh leaves in boiled water for 10 minutes and strain. What you have left is a delicious and nutritious green broth. It is also a great internal cleanser, useful for urinary tract problems and inflammatory conditions and is said to be helpful to and protective of the prostate.

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Culinary Uses Nettle leaves make a fabulous tea or soup stock.

Steamed nettles are a great side dish all their own. Try topping with vinegar, sesame seeds and sesame oil or almond slivers. Add them to any recipe calling for spinach or greens.

Spring Lasagna with Asparagus, Peas and Stinging Nettles Serves 6-8

Ingredients:

1 pound sweet Italian sausage, casings removed
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
2 pounds asparagus, trimmed
1 medium white onion, diced
5 cups loose stinging nettle leaves (see note)
2 cups fresh or frozen peas
6 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
4 1/2 cups whole milk
1/2 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese
4 ounces mild goat cheese
Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper
2 lemons, very thinly sliced
12 no-boil lasagna noodles



Note on preparing stinging nettles: Wearing gloves, place fresh nettles on a cutting board. Separate the leaves from the stalk. You can use the stems and leaves from the top 6 or 8 leaves on each stalk. You can also use the lower leaves, but discard the thicker stems as well as the main stalk, as they will be too thick and reedy to eat.

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Prepare stinging nettle leaves (see note above), and prepare asparagus: Cut the tips off of each asparagus spear and reserve them. Then cut asparagus spears into 1/2-inch pieces and set aside.

In a large saucepan over medium high heat, cook sausage, breaking up pieces, until no longer pink, about 6 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer sausage to paper towel-lined plate.

Into same saucepan, add 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil, then the pieces of asparagus spears. Sauté asparagus until crisp-tender, about 4 minutes. Remove from pan and set aside.

Add remaining olive oil to pan, then add diced onion and sauté until just softened and beginning to turn golden brown, about 3 minutes. Add stinging nettle leaves and sauté until wilted and cooked through, about 3 more minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.

Cover lemon slices with cold water by 3 inches in a saucepan. Bring to a boil.

Reduce heat; simmer for 7 minutes. Transfer to a paper-towel-lined plate using a slotted spoon.

Make the roux: Melt butter in a different saucepan over high heat. Stir in flour; cook for 2 minutes. Whisk in milk. Bring to a boil, stirring. Reduce heat. Simmer for 1 minute. Remove from heat. Whisk in Parmesan and goat cheese, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper.

Spread 1/4 cup of the roux in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish, then top with a layer of noodles. Top with sautéed asparagus, half the sausage, one third of the remaining

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roux, and another layer of noodles. Top that with sautéed nettles and onions, peas, half the remaining roux, half the lemon slices, the remaining sausage and another layer of noodles. Arrange the remaining lemon slices and the reserved asparagus tips on the top layer, then pour on the remaining roux. Cover dish with parchment and bake 28 minutes, until top is golden and bubbly. (You may want to finish it under a broiler for 2 minutes.) Let stand 10 minutes.

Historical Facts

Stinging nettle is mentioned in the Nine herbs charm. It has been used in Europe for centuries as food in early spring when other sources of food were scarce, as a nutritive spring tonic and to build the strength and milk production of pregnant and lactating women and livestock and as medicine for various conditions. Hippocrates recorded 61 medicinal uses of the plant in the fourth and fifth centuries BCE.

Nettle was once widely used for its stem fibres which were retted and spun like flax. In Denmark, burial shrouds made of the resulting cloth have been found dating back 5000 years or more. Native Americans used the fibre for making fishing nets and for cordage.

Additional Tips

Nutrition Facts

Nettles are high in protein, vitamin C & A and Iron