

TABLEFORTWO

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EDIBLE FLOWERS

...A Rose by Any Other Name

I know what you're thinking: edible what? But we eat flowers all the time. Broccoli, cauliflower, artichokes, are all flowers. The garden variety: roses, nasturtiums, and the like, are not as common to the table, but are nonetheless tasty and fun to have every once in a while, especially now that they are in summer bloom. They're even good for you. In fact, flowers are exceptionally high in vitamins C and D.

Flowers can add a colorful and delicate dimension to summer salads as well as your tempura repertoire. Glacéed blossoms or rose petals in a tender sorbet can offer the exotic and simple all at the same time.

So, take the time to smell the roses, and try a nibble, too!

I have prepared a menu that will be fun for both of you to gather and prepare. Choose a day off, relax, and make a treasure hunt out of it. Collecting the ingredients for this meal may take you to the Farmers' Market, a friend's yard, or even the florist.

Some of these flowers you may already have growing in your garden. If you do, then make sure to check if you have sprayed for insects lately. Take the appropriate precautions by reading the label on the insecticide, washing everything thoroughly, and checking with your garden supply if need be.

Please don't eat the daisies! Substituting flowers could be disastrous or even poisonous. Not all flowers are edible!

Here is a guide to the flowers that you will need:

Nasturtiums— wash and remove stems. Use the whole flower; all colors are good, but the red ones tend to have more flavor which is spicy sweet.

Squash Blossoms— wash and leave on about 2-3" of the stems. This time of year, there is a bumper crop of zucchini, yellow crook-neck, and even pumpkin blossoms are good. The blossoms are sweet and meaty.

Roses— wash, remove centers and stems. Pink or white rose petals are preferable and not so "perfumey" tasting. Rose petals taste like they smell, very sweet and slightly perfumed.

Dandelions— use just the tender, whole greens for salads. The flowers are used in making dandelion wine and the root is used for a hot beverage that resembles coffee. The greens taste slightly spicy.

Garlic Flowers— wash, remove the stems and pick off the tiny florets from the main flower. They taste a lot like garlic, only milder.

Here's the Menu:

Squash Blossom Tempura with Orange Water Sauce
Dandelion Salad with Nasturtiums
Rose Petal and Kiwi Sorbet

Squash Blossom Tempura with Orange Water Sauce

10-12 squash blossoms
1 bunch cilantro or parsley
10 radishes cut into flowers
8 butterfly prawns, cleaned, de-veined, and split open lengthwise
1 package tempura batter mix

Sauce:

6 ounces orange blossom water
1 ounce rice wine
2 tablespoons honey
1 teaspoon freshly ground ginger root
1 teaspoon soy sauce

Prepare the sauce by first bringing to a boil the orange water, wine, soy, and honey. Add ginger, cover and simmer for about 15 minutes. Remove from the heat, and allow to cool to room temperature before serving.

Thoroughly wash and dry all the tempura ingredients and follow the directions for cooking on the batter mix. Dip the flowers and vegetables in the sauce.

Dandelion Salad with Nasturtiums

2-3 ounces dandelion greens
10 nasturtiums
1 head bibb lettuce
1 garlic flower

Toss with a mild vinaigrette dressing, adding fresh ground pepper to taste.

Rose Petal and Kiwi Sorbet

6-8 large rose petals
1 cup pureed kiwi fruit
1/4 cup confectioners' sugar
1/4 cup honey
1 cup warm water
1/2 cup strong mint tea, cooled to room temperature
2 egg whites, beaten until stiff



Place rose petals on an ungreased cookie sheet and dust with confectioners' sugar. Bake at 325 for about 15 minutes, cool and tear petals into small pieces. Dissolve honey, water and tea, adding rose petals and kiwi. Combine and freeze until firm around the edges. Turn the partially frozen mixture into a chilled bowl and whip until smooth, but not melted. Quickly fold in egg whites and freeze until firm. Garnish with mint sprigs and rose buds.

Next Time: Tapas: Little Meals for Nibblers