

Foraging: Finding Food in the Wild [B2]

Perché pagare la frutta e la verdura al supermercato quando è possibile ottenerla gratuitamente dalla natura? Si tratta di una pratica molto diffusa negli ultimi anni chiamata foraging.

Depending on where you live, food that you usually pay for can be [readily available](#) for free. It is all around: on trees, in fields or in forests. If you know what you are doing, you can pick it, prepare it and consume it safely. This is called '[foraging](#)', which refers to the [harvesting](#) of [wild](#) organic material from herbs and [berries](#) to [edible](#) flowers and [fungi](#). Many foraged foods are [tastier](#) and more nutritious than their cultivated equivalents, and as people become more interested in where their food comes from, [foraging](#) is becoming more popular.

IN THE STATES

In the US, [foraging](#) has become so popular that there are regional guides to common [wild edible](#) foods available online. In most places, however, [foraging](#) is regulated, so it's important to know and respect local laws and customs. It is also vital to know which plants, [berries](#) or mushrooms are safe to eat, and which are poisonous or even deadly. This is why to really enjoy the experience and to be safe about what you are picking and consuming, you are [to advised](#) to get expert help.

WILD EDIBLES

Debbie Naha-Koretzky is a licensed nutritionist, [foraging](#) instructor and expert in [wild edibles](#). She has a website called Wild Edibles Lady, and has written a book called Foraging Pennsylvania and New Jersey: Finding, Identifying, and Preparing Edible Wild Foods. Naha-Koretzky also conducts private [foraging](#) walks and [runs](#) a variety of programmes in the states of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. To find out more, Speak Up joined Naha-Koretzky on a walk. As she explained, she became interested in [foraging](#) as a

student. **Debbie Naha-Koretzky (American accent):** When I was in [undergraduate school](#), someone told me that you could eat the [dandelions](#) on the campus [lawn](#). And that was the beginning of it. I was just so amazed by that. And I wanted to know more and more about what grows out there in the [wild](#) that is food for us, that is food for humans. I was studying biology at the time and I just always found it intriguing that there were things out there in the [wild](#) that were actually [edible](#). And [I took it from there](#). Then I got a masters degree in clinical nutrition and I worked for a long time as a professional licensed nutritionist. But I was always very interested in knowing more about the nutrition of [wild](#) things. So I always studied as much as I could, found as many books as I could... Back then when I first started, there was no computer, there was no internet, so you didn't have that as a resource. So I just found as much as I could read, and if there was anybody who could take me out into the [wild](#) and show me what you could forage, what [edible](#) plants in their habitat, where they grow... I just found whatever information I could. Took lots of pictures and eventually wrote a book!

WHERE TO GO

The variety and quality of [wild edible](#)s on offer depends on where you live. But there are [edibles](#) that you can find almost anywhere, says Naha-Koretzky. **Debbie Naha-Koretzky:** Even though I'm on the East Coast and you're on the West Coast and some people may be somewhere else in Italy, we'll always find things that are [edible](#). And some plants are so [widespread](#) that you'll find them almost around the world, like [dandelions](#). I always tell people that there are [wild edible](#) plants everywhere. You don't need to go into the forest, you don't need to go very far. You can find things in your own [backyard](#). You find things around the [edges](#) of a [parking lot](#)! But location is very important, because you don't want to eat something where there's lots of pollution or lots of [car exhaust](#) or [farm runoff](#), industrial [waste](#) areas... You want to make sure it's a relatively clean location. You want to be safe. You want to know the identity of that plant and what part of the plant to use, if it has to be processed in some way. Like some plants you have to cook it to

make it safe, or some plants in order for it to be okay to eat the fruit has to be [ripe](#) and it's not safe if it's under[ripe](#).

SEASONAL STUFF

We then asked Naha-Koretzky to share her favourite [edibles](#) from each season. **Debbie Naha-Koretzky:** I have a few favourites from each season. Late winter, early spring, something that I look forward to finding are [sting](#) ing nettles. A lot of people are surprised to know that nettles are [edible](#). But they're not only [edible](#), but they're very, very nutritious. It's a very nutritious [green](#). You just have to know how to pick it safely and [handle](#) it safely, and as soon as you get nettles into hot water, [boiling](#) water, the [sting](#) is gone, it's deactivated. So you can make a really nice pot of nettle soup. I always carry my heavy [rubber gloves](#) with me, so I can forage the growing [tops](#) of [sting](#) ing nettles. Another spring plant that I really like is [bitter](#) cress, that's in the [mustard](#) family. It kind of tastes like [watercress](#).

DELIGHT IN DANDELIONS

Naha-Koretzky favourite [edible](#) flower is the [humble](#) dandelion. We asked her why. **Debbie Naha-Koretzky:** Dandelions are another spring plant. And I really like [dandelions](#). That's the one that got me started [foraging](#). And the whole dandelion is [edible](#). You can eat the entire plant from the flower to the leaves to the roots. Very nutritious! You can [dig up](#) the dandelion root. It has a long white [taproot](#) and [wash that off](#), [chop](#) it and [roast](#) it in the oven until it gets dark and [roasty](#), and use it to make like a coffee-type substitute. So the whole dandelion plant. And there's a lot of nutrients in a dandelion! It's a very unappreciated plant.

TRULY VERSATILE

The dandelion is a very versatile plant that can be consumed cooked or [raw](#), as Naha-Koretzky explains. **Debbie Naha-Koretzky:** The young [greens](#) are good in salad because it's a slightly [bitter green](#). And once the weather gets really hot and the flower starts to form, the [green](#)s get a little bit more

[bitter](#). So some people don't like to eat them when the plant gets older, but you can eat the leaves in salad, or you can cook them. So [raw](#) or cooked. I like taking the flowers, dandelion flowers, and [dipping](#) them in a [batter](#) and frying them up in a little olive oil and make dandelion [fritters](#).

VITAMIN BOOST

So how does the nutritional value of [wild edible](#)s compare to that of cultivated ones? **Debbie Naha-Koretzky**: Wild foods, [wild edible](#)s tend to be more nutritious than their cultivated [counterparts](#). Some things you can't even get in the supermarket. But in general, there's more vitamins, more antioxidants, found in the [wild](#) plants than in the farmed, cultivated plants. There are a few reasons for that, because when we cultivate plants, we tend to select for those plants that are less [bitter](#) [tasting](#), or those fruits that are larger and sweeter... and maybe more uniform in size, prettier... And very often that [detracts](#) from the nutrients.

OTHER BENEFITS

Foraging has other benefits too, says Naha-Koretzky. It helps us connect with our planet physically and psychologically, and helps us appreciate food more. **Debbie Naha-Koretzky**: It gets us out there and, yeah, connects us with nature and with a lot of different tastes that maybe we've never experienced. There are plants out there that you can't buy. I call them unbuyable flavours, and you can experience that!

THE FEAR FACTOR

There is a danger factor: some plants, [berries](#) and [fungi](#) are highly poisonous. We asked Naha-Koretzky to tell us more. **Debbie Naha-Koretzky**: You want to absolutely know what you're [foraging](#), what you're about to eat. I always tell people, "You wanna know that plant 101 per cent. You wanna know the identity of it, if there are any possible [lookalikes](#)." With some plants the [lookalikes](#) can be a little [tougher](#). Sometimes people want to think that there is like a [rule of thumb](#). Here's one that I hear a lot, "If the

birds eat it, you can.” Or, “I’ve seen animals eating that, that means it’s okay for us,” and that’s a real way to get into trouble. Or they’ll say things like, “All red [berries](#) are poisonous,” and that’s not true either.

ASK AN EXPERT

But as she explains, with expert guidance, research and field experience anyone can become an [accomplished](#) forager. **Debbie Naha-Koretzky:** Before you eat something, you want to find out from different [sources](#). Ideally, have somebody take you out there and meet the plant face to face in its natural habitat. And you get to smell it, you get to feel it. Getting to know the plant in its environment is really helpful. www.wildedible.njpa.com

Glossary

- **handle** = maneggiare
- **boiling** = bollente
- **batter** = pastella
- **rule of thumb** = regola generale
- **roast** = arrostitire
- **raw** = cruda
- **bitter** = amari
- **fritters** = frittelle
- **edible** = commestibili
- **funghi** = funghi
- **backyard** = cortile
- **sting** = pizzico
- **detracts** = ridurre
- **stinging nettles** = ortiche
- **chop** = tagliare a pezzi
- **tougher** = più difficili
- **accomplished** = esperto
- **foraging** = ricerca di cibo
- **berries** = bacche
- **I took it from there** = da lì ho seguito la mia strada
- **car exhaust** = gas di scarico dell'auto
- **bittercress** = billeri dei prati
- **to advised** = consigliare
- **undergraduate school** = studi universitari
- **edges** = bordi, cigli
- **ripe** = maturo
- **dig up** = scavare
- **taproot** = radice a fittone
- **lookalikes** = simili
- **runs** = gestire
- **dandelions** = denti di leone
- **watercress** = crescione
- **humble** = umile, modesto

- **wash that off** = andar via con l'acqua
- **counterparts** = omologo, equivalente
- **sources** = fonti
- **readily available** = facilmente disponibile
- **tastier** = più gustosi
- **widespread** = diffuse
- **waste** = rifiuti
- **wild** = selvatico, selvaggio
- **underripe** = acerbo
- **tops** = sommità
- **dipping** = immergere
- **green** = vegetale dalla foglia verde
- **rubber gloves** = guanti di gomma
- **mustard** = senape
- **harvesting** = raccogliere
- **lawn** = prato
- **parking lot** = parcheggio
- **farm runoff** = scarichi agricoli