

## ★ **The Forager's Pantry: Cooking with Wild Edibles**

**Ellen Zachos**

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Ellen Zachos is out to convert audiences with *Forager's Pantry*, an inviting, easy-to-follow guide to tasty, wild plant ingredients that grow all around us, waiting to be harvested and eaten.

Glowing photographs and simple yet alluring recipes make it easy to head out in the woods, an urban park, or one's own backyard, plundering weeds and flower beds for delicious foods. Zachos includes a wealth of information about sustainable and healthy new ingredients "with exceptional, unbuyable flavors" to play around with.

Organized by plant ingredient categories, each section describes sample plants and their flavor profiles and harvesting and preservation techniques, followed up by master recipes that serve as blueprints for subbing in similar foraged edibles. More specific recipes wrap each chapter, including for yucca flowers stuffed with sumac and chile-spiked cream cheese, cupcakes made from the maddeningly invasive Japanese knotweed, and Poppy Mallow Hummus. There are also many unusual master and specialty recipes for liqueurs, flavored vodkas, and fruit vinegars that acknowledge the resurgent popularity of cocktail culture.

The book builds kitchen confidence by requiring exponentially more elaborate culinary skills as it progresses, beginning with processes for dehydrating and freezing herbs and spices like bee balm and spruce tips, and moving into ideas for using them in flavored sugars, salts, and compound butters. Subsequent chapters demystify more involved processes, like distilling rosewater and grinding flours from nuts and tubers.

Zachos is enthusiastic and encouraging throughout. Snappy recipe introductions and humorous refrains about her love of labor-saving gadgets and kitchen techniques pervade the book, which also includes cautions about overharvesting and positively identifying foraged ingredients with field guides and other resources.

With increased interest in homesteading, home cooking, organic gardening, environmental issues, and self-sustaining and economical activities, *Forager's Pantry* is a cookbook that has wide appeal.

**RACHEL JAGARESKI (January / February 2021)**

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