



Courtesy photos

Cindy Jackson (above) visits Siletz Tribal Head Start in Salem and along with her granddaughter, Sierra Hill, teaches the children about regalia and pow-wows.

Siletz Tribal Head Start in Lincoln City (right) celebrates Transportation Week with (l to r) JR Sweitz, his son Logan, Taylor Morris, Gianna Pistoresi, Sophia Simes, Sabryanna Wills, Savannah Vandaam, David Fuentes, Socetna Butler, Antonio Salas and Teachers Sarah and Rena.

Siletz Tribal Head Start

Siletz Tribal Head Start in Lincoln City studies transportation and parent JR Sweitz lets the students check out his truck. Gianna Pistoresi (right) blows the air horn.



Celebrating spring nettles

By Nancy Ludwig, MS, RD, LD, Siletz Tribal Head Start Nutritionist

As part of my role as a consultant nutritionist to Siletz Tribal Head Start, I offer information for families. This segment focuses on harvesting and the benefits of nettles, plus recipes.

Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) is a very useful plant for food, medicine and fiber.

Nettle leaves are gathered in early spring when they are just out of the ground, up to about 6 inches tall. They can be boiled or sautéed like spinach.

Nettle is an amazing wild vegetable that offers both blood cleansing and immune building properties. Nettles are considered a “super food” high in minerals, including potassium, calcium and magnesium; vitamins; protein; chlorophyll; and silicic and amino acids.

The high mineral content may be the reason nettle teas reduce the severity and occurrence of leg cramps, as well as menstrual cramps. Nettle also is used in hay fever, asthma, gouty arthritis and edema. In treating chronic illnesses, it is best used long term.

It is beneficial as a spring tonic. The young greens make a nutritious and tasty food boiled, steamed or stir-fried and in soups and casseroles. The needles soften when cooked.

Eating raw nettle is not recommended because of skin and mucus membrane irritation.

If you miss early spring nettles, you still can gather late spring and summer

nettles for tea. They should be harvested before they flower when the leaves are still bright green.

Most people use gloves and scissors for harvesting. If you gather them with your bare hands, you need to go slowly and have “good intentions.” Plants are intelligent and they seem open to those who come with respect.

Excessively large doses should not be used in pregnancy, however, pregnant women commonly consume tea in small quantities for the mineral content. I suggest that those who are allergic to bee stings be careful with nettles.

Nettle root, not the leaf, is used for men for BPH (benign prostatic hyperplasia).

Resources

Feeding the People Feeding the Spirit – Revitalizing Northwest Coastal Indian Food Culture by Elise Krohn, Valerie Segrest and the Northwest Indian College, 2010

Wild Rose and Western Red Cedar – The Gifts of the Northwest Plants by Elise Krohn, printed with partial support from the Northwest Indian College and Longhouse Media, 2007

Herbal Medicine from the Heart of the Earth by Sharol Tilgner, ND, published by Wise Acres Press Inc., 1999 and herbaltransitions.com/materiamedica/Urtica.htm

www.susunweed.com/herbal_ezine/June09/empower.htm

Nettle Pesto

From Feeding the People Feeding the Spirit

6 cups young fresh nettle leaves, rinsed
1 bunch basil, stems removed, washed and drained (about 2 cups leaves)
½ cup parmesan or romano cheese, grated
1/3 cup walnuts or pine nuts
1/3 cup olive oil, extra virgin
1 clove garlic, fresh peeled, chopped (amount needed varies with your taste)
1 teaspoon lemon juice
To taste – salt and pepper

Boil nettles in water (blanch) for one minute to remove the sting. Drain well, let cool and roughly chop.

Place nettles, basil, nuts, cheese, olive oil, garlic and lemon juice in a food processor or blender. Blend until smooth. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Place pesto in a clean jar and pour a little extra olive oil over the top. Cover with a lid. This will keep for 2-3 weeks in the refrigerator.

Try tossing this with pasta or baked vegetables. It also can be spread on crackers or fresh vegetables as a snack.

I often skip the cheese for a dairy-free version. Pesto can be mixed with mayonnaise to make interesting aioli as a dipping sauce or garnish. Pesto aioli is delicious with fish or steamed vegetables.

Please let me know what you think of these recipes. Siletz Tribal Head Start offers my time at no cost to you to support family nutrition over the telephone. Please contact me (503-588-5446) if you have nutrition concerns about your Head Start child.

Nettle Tea

Tea usually is made from dry leaf. Use one cup of dried nettle per quart of boiling water and infuse (let sit) for four hours. Strain the liquid. Compost the spent herb.

The tea holds in the refrigerator for several days. Because minerals are not well extracted in water alone, large amount of plant matter is used. The color ends up looking quite dark.

This tea infusion is particularly nourishing for women at any stage of life. It is also good for men, young and old.

Nettle Vinegar

Mineral extraction is improved with acid. Simply soak nettle leaves and stems in vinegar to extract the minerals. Often fresh plant is used for making vinegars, but dry plant works too.

Tightly pack a jar with nettles and fill the jar to the top with raw, organic apple cider vinegar for six weeks. Cover the jar and protect the metal lid from rust with plastic wrap or wax paper. Store it away from direct sun and keep plants covered with vinegar by adding more if needed.

Discard the spent leaves and stems in the compost and save the vinegar. Use the vinegar in salad dressings and marinades – any recipe calling for vinegar.