



A comprehensive guide to bringing wild food indoors.

The Forager's Pantry takes readers through spices and herbs, flowers, fruit, greens, nuts and seeds, tubers and roots, and mushrooms, showing how some of the best ingredients come directly from nature itself. Adventurous cooks will learn to combine new foods with familiar staples, explore wild ingredients, and bring creativity to the kitchen.



ELLEN ZACHOS'S work has appeared in *Eating Well*, *Horticulture*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Country Gardens*, and more. *The Forager's Pantry* is her eighth book.

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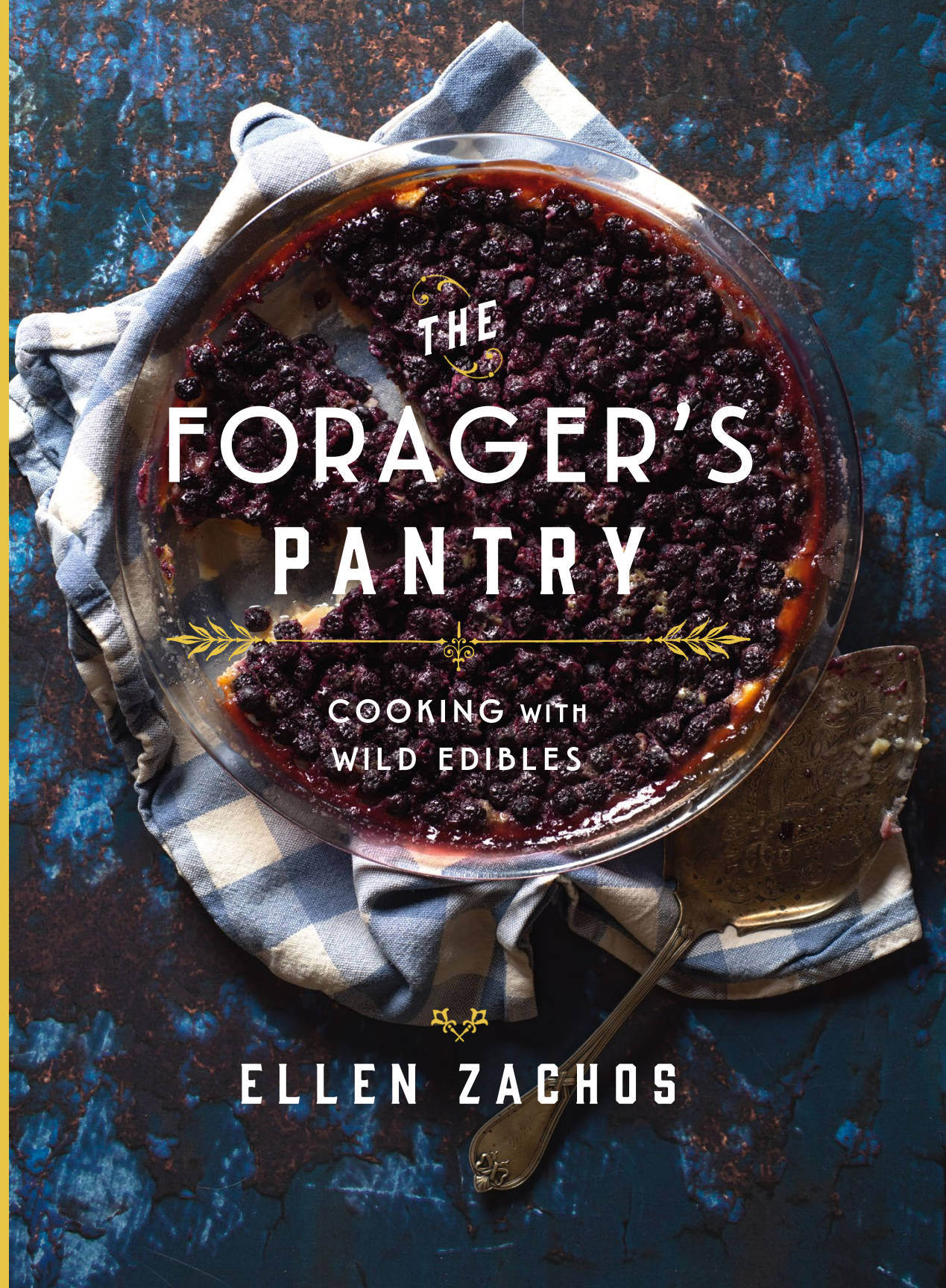
ZACHOS



THE FORAGER'S PANTRY



GIBBS SMITH



THE FORAGER'S PANTRY

COOKING WITH WILD EDIBLES

ELLEN ZACHOS

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OYSTER MUSHROOM STEAKS

This recipe is so simple it's barely a recipe. Oyster mushrooms often have very large caps, and it isn't a stretch to think of those caps as steaks. By searing them between two very hot pieces of metal, you caramelize the outside of the steaks while rendering the interior soft, warm, and almost melty.

YIELD: 2 TO 4 SERVINGS

4 large oyster mushroom caps	1/2 teaspoon ground, dried field garlic
1 tablespoon olive oil	1/2 teaspoon dried bee balm
1/2 teaspoon salt	
1/4 teaspoon pepper	

Trim any remnants of stem from the underside of the caps; these mushrooms need to lie flat.

In a bowl, combine the olive oil, salt, pepper, garlic powder, and bee balm and whisk to combine. Place the mushroom caps in the olive oil and allow them to marinate while you prepare the implements.

Heat a cast iron griddle until it is *very* hot. A few drops of water flicked on the griddle should jump around wildly. On a second burner, heat a large, empty cast iron pan over medium-high heat. Place the mushroom caps on the griddle, arranged in such a way that the bottom of the cast iron pan can cover them all. Then put the hot cast iron pan on top of the mushrooms. The weight of the pan will press the mushrooms flat. After 3 minutes, lift the pan to check on the progress. The steaks should be slightly browned and crispy. It may take up to 5–6 minutes.



HERB & CHEESE QUICK BREAD

Sometimes I don't have the patience to make a bread that needs to sit and rise, in which case I make this quick bread. The texture and flavor are superb, the recipe is easy, and you can use any number of wild herbs and cheeses to keep the flavor combinations interesting. I first made it with bee balm and feta, but I've loved every combo I've tried.

YIELD: 1 (9 X 5-INCH) LOAF

- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ⅓ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 3 tablespoons dried, crumbled bee balm
- 3 large eggs
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½ cup Greek yogurt
- 2 cups grated cheese of choice

Preheat the oven to 350°F and spray a 9 x 5-inch loaf pan with nonstick cooking spray.

In a large bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, salt, pepper, and foraged herbs.

In another bowl, whisk together the eggs, olive oil, and yogurt. Fold the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients, then gently incorporate the cheese. I like feta, mozzarella, or a sharp cheddar.

Transfer the batter to the loaf pan and bake for 30 minutes or until a skewer inserted in the center comes out clean. Let the bread cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then turn it out and let it cool completely. Serve with a skim of butter.

NOTES: If you make this recipe with pink peppercorns, leave out the black pepper.

If you make this with mugwort, remember that mugwort has a very interesting texture when ground. Unlike many spices, it doesn't form a pourable powder. Instead it becomes fluffy. Don't freak out, it's normal.

Transfer the ground mugwort to a bowl and add enough water to hydrate the herb. You'll have to stir it together because the mugwort is so light that it floats on the water. Once it's been hydrated, pour the herb into a strainer to drain. Press the liquid out of the mugwort, then use as directed above.

herb/spice quantity adjustments	
field garlic powder	3 tablespoons
cow parsnip seed	2 tablespoons
mugwort	6 tablespoons
mushroom powder	6 tablespoons
pink peppercorns	1 tablespoon
sumac powder	4½ tablespoons



FLOWER SORBET

What, exactly, is a sorbet? It's a frozen dessert made with sugar and fruit juice or flavored water. No dairy. And since you're now an expert at making foraged flower syrups, making a sorbet should be a piece of cake.

The prettiest sorbet I've made is with locust flowers. The addition of lemon juice turns the infusion from purple to bright magenta. You can also make delicious sorbets from pineapple weed, plum blossoms, magnolia flowers, honeysuckle flowers, and rose petals.

YIELD: APPROXIMATELY 4 CUPS

2 cups flower blossoms

2 cups water

2 cups sugar, divided

1 lemon, juice only

Remove the flowers from their stems and put them in a bowl. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar, and, with a pestle, mash the flowers into the sugar. Keep at it, mashing and stirring, until the flowers have formed a sort of paste. My 2 cups of flowers reduced to about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of paste.

Combine the water and the remaining sugar in a saucepan and bring it to a boil, whisking to dissolve the sugar. Add the flower paste, stir, and reduce the heat to a simmer. Let the syrup simmer for 10 minutes, then remove it from the heat, cover, and let it cool for at least an hour or overnight.

Strain off the solids, pressing down on them to extract as much liquid as possible. Then strain the syrup one more time to catch any little bits and pieces that may have come through with the pressing.

Add the lemon juice. If you're using locust flowers, prepare to be amazed by the color change. The dark purple syrup turns magenta when it reacts with the acid.

Refrigerate the syrup for at least an hour, then process in your ice cream maker.

If you have a few leftover blossoms, sprinkle them on top of the sorbet when you serve it. A feast for the eyes and the stomach.



PUFF PASTRY SWIRLS

Will I sound like a broken record if I tell you I don't make my own puff pastry?

Pepperidge Farm does an excellent job, and I always keep a few packages frozen for when I get the urge to make these swirls. The fluffy, crispy, buttery texture of puff pastry offers the perfect counterpoint to creamy, rich wild greens. You may use any combination you like in this recipe. The alliums and cheese help tame the bitterness of any sharp greens you may use.

YIELD: 12 TO 15 SWIRLS

½ cup roughly chopped onion or shallot

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 cup cooked wild greens, chopped, and squeezed to remove as much water as possible

¼ teaspoon field garlic powder

¾ cup cheese of choice (for bitter greens, use a strongly flavored cheese)

1 egg

1 tablespoon water

A small handful of all-purpose flour (for dusting)

1 sheet puff pastry, thawed

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Sauté the onion in olive oil until it is soft and translucent. Add the greens and garlic powder and stir over low heat to combine. Remove from the heat and transfer to a bowl, allowing the greens mixture to cool slightly.

Add the cheese to the greens mixture and thoroughly combine. Set the bowl aside.

Beat the egg and water with a fork in a small bowl.

Spread the flour on your work surface and unfold the puff pastry sheet on top of the flour. This will prevent the pastry dough from sticking. Gently roll the dough a few times, both left to right and top to bottom, to smooth out the dough. Frozen puff pastry may crack along the fold lines and a gentle rolling will put the pieces back together. Brush the top of the sheet with the egg wash, then spread the cheese and greens mixture evenly over the puff pastry, pressing it down gently. Leave a border of about 1 inch on all four sides of the puff pastry.

Roll the puff pastry dough like a jelly roll. If the pastry sheet is rectangular, start at one of the short ends. If it's square, start from any side.

Using a serrated knife, cut the roll into ½-inch slices and lay them flat on a baking sheet (you'll probably need two). A serrated blade will cut through the thawed pastry dough much more easily than a smooth blade. Work slowly.

These swirls don't expand a lot with baking, so you can place each slice within 1 inch of the next. Use the remainder of the egg wash to brush the tops of the slices, then bake for 15 minutes or until the pastry edges are golden brown.

Remove the swirls from the baking sheet and let them cool on a rack or platter. Serve while still warm.



MASTER
RECIPE

CHOCOLATE NUT CANDY

This recipe is ridiculously simple and no one can eat just one. If the idea of using store-bought chocolate chips doesn't appeal to you, feel free to make your own chocolate. Personally, I appreciate the ease of working with chocolate chips; I have no desire to temper my own chocolate.¹ This recipe works with any nut of choice.

YIELD: 30 TO 40 CANDIES

½ cup foraged nuts

1 tablespoon sea salt

2 cups chocolate chips

Roughly chop the foraged nuts.

Using a double boiler, melt the chocolate chips. You can also do this in a microwave, using 30-second intervals to gradually melt the chocolate.

Stir the chopped nuts into the melted chocolate, then transfer spoonfuls of the chocolate nut mixture to a sheet of waxed paper. Use your fingers to sprinkle a mini-pinch of sea salt on top of each chocolate, then let the chocolate sit long enough to solidify.

I told you it was simple! I'm especially fond of this candy made with California bay nuts, because their slightly bitter flavor perfectly balances the sweet chocolate and whisper of salt. It's also excellent with pine nuts and hickory nuts.

1. Tempering chocolate is different from tempering eggs. Tempering gives chocolate a shiny, even surface. It requires heating and then cooling melted chocolate to very specific temperatures, and the whole idea makes me nervous. What if I let the chocolate cool to 83°F instead of 82°F? Do I have to start all over again?!



DEVILED EGGS WITH BLACK TRUMPETS

You could make this with any strongly flavored mushroom, but the dark color of the black trumpets really stands out against the egg yolks. This dish is perfect for a fancy picnic or any summer lunch.

YIELD: 12 DEVILED EGGS

6 large eggs

2 tablespoons mayonnaise

2 tablespoons sour cream

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon finely diced onion or shallot

½ cup finely chopped black trumpet mushrooms

¼ teaspoon salt

Place the eggs in a pot of cold water and bring to a boil over high heat. (Starting the eggs in cold water prevents them from cracking as they boil.) When the water begins to boil, reduce the heat to medium and set a timer for 10 minutes. Drain the boiled eggs and place them in a bowl of ice water to chill them quickly. Hard-boiled eggs can be refrigerated for up to a week.

When you're ready to assemble the deviled eggs, peel the eggs, slice them in half, and remove the yolks. Set the whites aside.

In a bowl, mash the yolks with a fork, then combine with the mayonnaise, sour cream, and mustard to form a smooth paste. It will be easier to make a smooth yolk filling if you mash the yolks alone first. (Maybe you'll use your own foraged mayo and mustard . . .) Set aside.

Warm the olive oil and cook the onion or shallot over medium-low heat until translucent. Add the mushrooms and cook until tender. Remove from heat and allow them to cool.

Use a spoon or pastry bag to fill the egg white halves with the yolk mixture, then sprinkle the black trumpets on top of the yolks. Serve at room temperature.

NOTE: If you boil the eggs a few days before making this dish, you'll find they're easier to peel without taking chunks out of the egg whites. If you have chickens, your eggs will probably be fresh enough to peel easily without the chill time.

