

## NETTLES



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### *Urtica dioica*

[UR-ti-kuh dy-oh-EE-kuh]

**Family:** Urticaceae

**Names:** Stinging Nettle; Grande Ortie, Ortie dioïque (French); (Grosse); Nessel, Brennessel (German); Ortica (Italian); Ortiga (Spanish); Pokrzywa zwyczajna (Polish); Brännässla (Swedish); Stornesle (Norwegian); Stor nælde (Danish); Nokkonen (Finnish); Sérbylisnetla (Icelandic); Tlaltzitzicaztli, Atzixicaztli, Tzitzicazquilitl, Chichicazatli (Nahuatl); La'al (Maya)

**Description:** Bristly herb with few branches. Has a height from 3-6 feet and a width of 2-3 feet. The flowers are small, white, loosely clustered. The leaves are oval, coming to a point, deeply serrated around the edge, downy, covered with stinging hairs to 6 inches long. Even a slight pressure releases fluid from a capsule at the base of each hollow stinger hair. Blooms from June to September.

**Cultivation:** A perennial to zone 2 with germination in 10-14 days. Space 1-2 feet apart. Soil temperature 65-75F. Prefers full sun to partial shade and damp soil, rich with nitrogen. Propagate by seed, cuttings or root division. Likes to grow by running water. As a companion plant: increases flavor and taste of surrounding plants, essential oils, stimulates rich humus formation, rich in iron and vitamins. Use as a mulch. Plant near broccoli. Recent experiments by organic gardening groups have confirmed some early ideas about companion planting. Experiments by Dr. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer bear out the theory that stinging nettle increases the oil in peppermint and by hindering the fermentation process in plant juices confers greater keeping qualities on tomatoes.

**History:** Nettles have supplied fiber for cloth and paper from the Bronze Age into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The name is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *netel*, which some authorities think originated from *noedl* (a needle) because of its stingers. More likely, it comes from *net*, from the Latin fishnet, *nassa*, which was made out of nettles. *Urtica* is from the Latin *urere*, meaning "to sting". It was cultivated in Scotland, Denmark, and Norway to make fine linen, coarse sailcloth and strong fishnets. Eventually, flax was preferred but nettles were still used to weave coarse household cloths, called scotchcloth, from the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. To make cloth, the nettles were cut, dried, and steeped in water then the fibers were separated and spun into yarn. In the Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale *The Princess and the Eleven Swans*, the coats the princess made for her brothers were woven from nettles.

Nettles are associated with St. Patrick. It was known in Ireland by the name "Ivar's daughter" and was widely used in Ireland and Scotland for greens and for beverages, as well as the cloth. In South America it is reported to be a most worthwhile plant of healing, considered invaluable for bruises, sprains and many kinds of healing. Nettle also supplies many by-products such as sugar, starch, protein, and ethyl alcohol. In France, paper was made of the fiber.

In German mythology the Nettle was consecrated to Thor the Thunder God. In the Tyrol, during thunderstorms the mountaineers threw nettles on the fire to avert danger, to pacify the God and to guard themselves from lightning. In Germany it was once believed that Nettles gathered before sunrise would drive evil spirits away from cattle. In Ireland they were once known as the Devils Apron. In medieval times Nettles carried around the person gave a certain charm which drove away evil, harmful spirits. It is often repeated that the Roman soldiers brought the Nettle to Britain, as they were told that the climate was so cold that they would need to rub their limbs with the stinging plant in order to prevent numbness from the chill. The Roman writer Caius Petronius maintained that a man's virility improved when he was whipped with nettle branches below the kidneys and the belly button. For centuries, rheumatics were also whipped to expel the sickness.

The Aztecs Herbal of 1552 recommends sniffing a mixture of crushed nettles in milk to stop a nosebleed. The Aztec Herbal also prescribed a combination of nettles crushed in water and boiled as a poultice for arthritis.

Pregnant Native American women drank nettle herbal tea to strengthen their babies, their uterus and their blood. In the medical treatise *King's America Dispensatory*, the Eclectics advised using it as a diuretic and to treat cystitis and urinary incontinence. They claimed it was astringent and hemostatic, and recommended it in a decoction made from the

fresh plant for use against eczema, diarrhea and hemorrhoids.

**Constituents:** formic acid (which causes the painful reaction) is found in the hairs; incoles (histamine, serotonin); acetylcholine; glucoquinones; minerals (iron, silica, potassium, manganese, sulphur); vitamins A, C; high in chlorophyll; tannins.

**Properties:** astringent, diuretic, tonic, nutritive, stops bleeding, circulatory stimulant, promotes milk flow, lowers blood sugar levels, prevents scurvy

**Energetics:** bland, slightly bitter, cool

**Meridians/Organs affected:** small intestines, bladder, lungs

**Medicinal Uses:** Nettle leaves are a blood builder often used as a spring tonic and to treat anemia and poor circulation. They contain both iron and vitamin C, which aids iron absorption. In the past, nettle was eaten or sipped to reduce uric acid and to treat gout and arthritis. It encouraged mother's milk, lowers blood sugar and decreases profuse menstruation. It acts as a light laxative and diuretic (possibly due to its flavonoids and high potassium content). Both a tea and a poultice of cooked nettles are used to treat eczema and other skin conditions (combines well with figwort and burdock). An astringent that stops bleeding, the powder is snuffed to stop nosebleeds. Curled dock leaves provide a remedy for the nettle's sting and the fresh juice of nettles themselves relieves the sting as well. Nettle is used by asthmatics-mix the juice of the leaves or roots with honey, take to relieve bronchial or asthmatic troubles. The seeds were once thought to allay consumption, the infusion being taken in wine glass doses. They were also given in wine as a cure for ague, in powder form they were used for goiter, also important in reducing diets. It was thought that a fever could be cured by pulling a nettle up by the roots, reciting the names of the sick

man and his parents. Nettle tea was once used for dropsy and as a diuretic. Tincture of nettle is made of 2 oz of the green herb to one pint of proof spirit; Infusions are made by adding 1 oz of the herb to a pint of boiling water.

Nettle Seed is the least known part of Nettles. In Europe, the seed is used as a restorative tonic for old and worn out horses. Nettle Seed can be used as a kidney trophorestorative-literally a food for the kidneys. A recent study published in the Journal of The American Herbalist Guild [4(2):22-25] shows that Nettle Seed increases kidney glomerular function and reduces serum creatinine levels. Many herbalists have seen significant benefits from using Nettle Seed tincture in patients with glomerulonephritis, chronic nephritis with degeneration, and to protect the kidneys from nephrotoxic medications.

#### *Remedies (of aerial parts)*

*Infusion:* take to stimulate the circulation and to cleanse the system in arthritis, rheumatism, gout, and eczema. Also increases milk flow in nursing mothers. The fresh shoots make a revitalizing spring tonic

*Tincture:* used in combinations for arthritic disorders, skin problems, and heavy uterine bleeding.

*Compress:* soak a pad in the tincture, and apply to painful arthritic joints, gout, neuralgia, sprains, tendonitis, and sciatica

*Ointment:* apply to hemorrhoids

*Wash:* apply to burns, insect bites and wounds

*Juice:* liquidize the whole fresh plant to make a good tonic for debilitated conditions and anemia and to soothe nettle stings. Prescribed for cardiac insufficiency with edema

*Powder:* the powdered leaves are inhaled as snuff for nosebleeds

*Decoction of root:* use as a rinse for dandruff, falling hair and as a general conditioner; Take 1 cup daily for enlarged prostate.

*Prostate-Reducing Tincture:* 1 oz tincture of saw palmetto berries, ½ oz each tinctures of nettle root, sarsaparilla root, wild yam root,

Echinacea root and pipsissewa or uva ursi leaves. Combine ingredients. Take half a dropperful 3 times a day. For a maintenance dose, take once a day.

#### *Allergy Tea*

2 Tbsp nettle leaves

1 tsp Oregon grape root

2 cups boiling water

Combine all the herbs in a glass container and cover with the water; steep for 30 minutes; strain. Take one-quarter cup three times a day.

#### *Anemia Tea*

2 tsp barberry root

2 tsp Oregon grape root

4 Tbsp nettle leaves

2 cups cold water

Combine the herbs in a glass container. Cover with the water. Soak overnight. Strain. Take up to one-half cup three times daily.

#### *Pleurisy Tea*

2 chamomile flowers

3 nettle leaves

3 coltsfoot leaves

1 cup boiling water

Combine the above herbs in a container. Take two teaspoons of the mixture and cover with the boiling water; steep for 30 minutes; strain. Take up to two cups a day, a tablespoon at a time.

#### *Bronchitis Tea*

1 tsp elecampane root

2 Tbsp nettle leaves

1 cup boiling water

Combine the above herbs. Pour the boiling water over the herbs and steep for 30 minutes; strain. Sweeten with honey, if desired. Take up to two cups a day.

#### *Veterinary Uses:*

*Chickens:* stinging nettle seeds strongly stimulate the laying capacity of hens. During

the winter, mix them with the grain feed once in a while.

*Dogs:* a powder made from dried nettle herb can occasionally be mixed into your dog's food. It will give your pet a shiny coat and help prevent rheumatic conditions.

*Geese and Ducks:* fresh, finely chopped nettles make excellent fodder for rearing young geese and ducks. For ducks from the time of hatching until the 10<sup>th</sup> week, feed them barley meal, wheat bran, chopped nettles, and rolled oats. Mix these ingredients in equal parts with enough sour cream to make a thick mash. For Geese from the time of hatching until the second week, feed them hard-cooked eggs and nettles, both finely chopped, mixed in equal parts, and unmoistened. From the third week on, feed them barley groats, wheat bran, and finely chopped nettles. Again, mix them in equal parts without moistening them. Use this feed until the young gees are halfway fledged.

*Horses:* Nettles are a strong medicine and should not be fed in excess to a horse. A little of the seed scattered occasionally into the fodder is sufficient to keep the animal healthy.

*Dairy Cattle and Sheep:* Stinging nettles stimulate milk production. During winter give a bunch of dried nettles every day to cows and sheep.

**Cosmetic Uses:** Nettle juice is valuable for stimulating hair growth and may be used daily both internally and externally. To stimulate hair growth, use a stiff brush to apply nettle juice to the roots. An infusion of the tops sweetened with honey will, taken internally, purify the blood and clear the complexion, while it may be used externally for the same purpose when applied to the face with cotton pads.

#### NETTLE HAIR LOTION

3 ½ oz fresh nettles, complete with roots  
1/3 oz broken bay leaves  
7 oz 95 proof alcohol  
4 tsp castor oil  
2 tsp wheat germ oil  
1 tsp essential oil of lavender

1 ½ pts mineral water or cider vinegar

Protecting your hands with rubber gloves, wash the nettles under running water. Make sure that all the soil has been washed off the roots. Cut the nettles into small pieces with stainless steel scissors, directly over the jug of the blender. Add the alcohol. Blend for a minute at low speed and a minute at high speed, until you have a liquid green pulp. Transfer to a wide-mouthed glass jar, add the bay leaves, seal and steep for 13 days, shaking occasionally. Strain the mixture through a fine sieve and then a paper filter, squeezing out the pulp. Pour into a bottle and add the water or cider vinegar, castor oil, wheat germ oil and soil of lavender. Shake well before use. Between hair washes rub the lotion into the scalp using a piece of cotton. It will help prevent oily hair and dandruff. You can also use it before or after shampooing. Before shampooing, massage into the hair and scalp and leave for 10-15 minutes. If used after shampooing, add a T per quart of water to the final rinse.

#### Cider Vinegar Conditioning Rinse

1 pt cider vinegar  
1 oz fresh nettles  
2/3 oz chopped ivy leaves  
1/3 oz walnut leaves  
1/3 oz sage leaves  
1/3 oz rosemary leaves  
1/3 oz thyme leaves  
2 oz 95 proof alcohol  
2 tsp castor oil

This treatment is especially recommended for brown hair. Steep the herbs in the vinegar and alcohol for two weeks in a wide-mouthed, airtight jar, shaking the jar occasionally. The nettles must be well washed and then patted dry with a towel and finely chopped with a sharp blade or in a blender. Strain the liquid from the chopped herbs into a bottle first through a sieve and then through the paper filter. Add the oil. Use immediately after shampooing adding a Tbsp to the final rinse or you can massage small amounts into

the scalp. Good treatment for dandruff and itchy scalp

*To Remove Wrinkles:*

Infuse ½ lb of stinging nettle “tops” in ½ pint of boiling water for 20 minutes. Strain and when cool add a tablespoonful of witch hazel and apply to the face and neck with a cotton pad. Let dry on.

**Ritual Uses:** Gender: Hot; Planet: Mars; Element: Fire; Basic Powers: Protection and exorcism. Stuff a small cloth doll with nettles to remove a curse and send it back to the sender. Write on the doll the name of the sender (if you know it; if not, never mind) and then bury or burn it. Sprinkle the herb around the room to protect or to add to protection sachets. Burn during exorcism ceremonies.

**Other Uses:** Nettles are also good for livestock: cattle, chickens, horses. They were mowed and used as a fodder plant in Sweden and Russia. Also important in conditioning horses, it furnishes albuminoid and fat. In Egypt, horse dealers used the seed in horse feed to give the animals a sleek coat. Flies have a distaste for it, fresh leaves will keep them away. Planted near bee hives the nettle drives away frogs; it will curdle milk and the juice will seal cracks in wooden buckets. Also a dye plant, nettles make a beautiful permanent green dye. The roots boiled with alum produce yellow which was used to dye yarns, also to stand eggs yellow on Maundy Thursday (for Easter).

*Dye:* 1 pot nettles

2 tsp chrome

1 lb wool

4 gal water

A pot of nettles (stems and leaves), chopped and covered with water, is boiled for 1 hour. Strain out the plant material and add enough water to make up the 4 gallons. Dissolve the chrome right in the hot ooze. Slowly warm the wool by successively warmer rinse waters and add it to the ooze. Cover. Simmer it for ¾

hour. Cool and rinse until the water runs clear. Color: strong tan or light brown.

Stinging nettle is a compost activator. Add a few handfuls of chopped fresh leaves to the compost pile. It also makes a rich organic fertilizer. Put leaves in a big garbage bin, cover with water and steep for 2 weeks. Dilute 1:20 for watering ornamental plants and vegetables or 1:10 for spraying on leaves. Does not keep.

**Culinary Uses:** When cooked or dried for winter use, nettles lose their sting. Pick the young leaves before they flower which taste somewhat like steamed spinach. The roots can be collected in the fall and winter and utilized as a starchy root vegetable. A concentrated decoction of nettle leaves saturated with salt has been used for curdling milk. Be sure to collect them wearing work gloves and a long-sleeved shirt.

**Recipes:**

**Nettle Wine**

Pick 2 quarts of young nettles-the tops only. Simmer them in 2 quarts of water with thin slices of lemon peel and four pieces of dried ginger root for one hour. Strain and add 2 more quarts of liquid, use hot water. Pour into a stone crock, it must hold more than a gallon, add the juice of 3 lemons, stir and when the wine is cooled to lukewarm, add wine yeast, cover and leave in a warm place for 6 days, stir daily. Transfer to a fermentation vessel and fit an airlock. When the wine clears put into a clean jar and keep for four months before bottling.

**Nettle Beer**

Pick 2 quarts of young nettle tops, boil for 20 minutes in 3 gallons of cold water. Prepare a stone crock (a five gallon size), place three pounds of sugar in it and pour the hot liquid over it, stir until lukewarm, add 1 oz of dried yeast and 3 oz of bruised whole ginger. Cover and leave in a warm place for seven days, then siphon off into clean screw topped bottles, add a teaspoon of sugar to each one. Store in a

cool, not cold, place until clear. Nettle beer was considered to be medicinal and was drunk in the spring as a tonic. Nettle tea is recommended for feverish gout-the nettles may be used either green or dry. For curing a spring cold-Boil 2 cups of nettle tops for 10 minutes in 1 qt of cold water and add 1 T of hot powdered ginger beaten in ½ cup of honey, stir until well blended. Pour into heat proof mugs and fill with light cream, drink, keep warm and cozy.

### **Scotch Nettle Pudding**

To 1 gallon of nettle tops add 2 large leeks or onions, 2 heads of broccoli or cabbage and ¼ lb of rice. Clean vegetables, chop broccoli and leeks, mix with the nettles. Place all together in a muslin bag alternately with the rice, tie tightly. Boil in salted water long enough to cook the vegetables, serve with gravy or melted butter.

### **Creamed Nettles**

1 lb nettle tops  
4 Tbsp butter  
¼ tsp salt  
¼ tsp pepper  
½ cup cream  
1 medium onion, minced  
¼ cup snipped chives  
2 cloves garlic, minced

Place nettles in a medium-sized saucepan. Pour in just enough water to cover; add 2 tablespoons of the butter, salt, and pepper. Simmer until tender. Strain; discard the nettles and return the juice to the pan. Mix in the cream, onion, chives, garlic, and 2 tablespoons of the butter. Bring to a simmer over low heat. (A Kitchen Witch's Cookbook)

### **Nettle and Potato Soup**

20 nettle tops, leaves stripped from stalks  
1 onion, finely chopped  
1 Tbsp oil or bacon fat  
1 quart ham or chicken stock or water and 2 chicken stock cubes  
2-4 floury potatoes, peeled and chopped  
4 Tbsp sour cream or Greek yogurt

### **Chopped chives**

Wash the nettle leaves and shake dry in a colander. Fry the onion gently in the oil or fat without allowing it to brown. Add the nettle leaves and cook for about 5 minutes or until wilted. Pour on the stock and bring to the boil. Add the potatoes. Cook for 15 minutes. Cool a little, then liquidize till smooth and return to the pan. Check the seasoning. Serve each helping with a blob of sour cream and chopped chives. (Fruits of the Forest)

### **Poached Eggs with Nettle Puree**

8 oz nettles, weighed after removing tough stalks  
salt and pepper  
2 Tbsp double cream  
½ oz butter  
2 eggs  
2 slices hot buttered whole wheat toast

Boil a little salted water and drop in the washed and finely chopped nettles. Simmer until they are soft. Drain very well, pressing out all the water with a spoon. Stir in the butter and cream and season to taste. Keep hot. Poach the eggs and prepare the buttered toast. Fluff up the nettle puree and divide between the two pieces of toast. Put a poached egg on top of each and serve at once. (Food from the Countryside)

### **Sooke Harbour House Egg Roulade of Smoked Salmon, Morel Duxelles, and Stinging Nettle Leaves with Stinging Nettle and Tulip Petal Sauces**

#### *Egg Roulade:*

4 cups whole milk  
3/8 lb unsalted butter (3/4 cup)  
1 ½ cups all-purpose flour  
6 large free-range eggs, separated  
2 Tbsp dry white wine such as Canadian Gewurztraminer  
2 Tbsp sour cream  
1 tsp sea salt  
¼ cup chopped herbs such as parsley, tarragon, oregano

#### *Stinging Nettles:*

8 cups stinging nettle leaves

*Morel Duxelles:*

1 ½ lbs more, cremini, or other strongly flavored mushrooms, or a combination

6 Tbsp unsalted butter

½ cup sunflower oil

1 cup finely diced onion

¼ cup dry white wine

*Cream Sauce Base (for the two sauces):*

3 cups light whipping cream

1 cup dry white wine

*Roulade of Smoked Salmon:*

Reserved egg roulade

½ lb smoked sockeye salmon, sliced

reserved morel duxelles

Reserved stinging nettles

*Tulip Petal Sauce:*

8 tulip petals, sliced into 1/16-inch julienne

cup reserved cream sauce

*Stinging Nettle Sauce:*

1 cup reserved cream sauce

¼ cup reserved stinging nettle juice

1 Tbsp stinging nettle juice

tulip petals

whole chive leaves

To prepare the egg roulade, preheat the oven to 350F.. Line a 17 by 11-inch jellyroll pan with parchment paper. In a medium-sized saucepan, heat the milk until it is steaming. Set the milk aside. In another medium-sized saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. When the butter has melted and the bubbles have subsided, stir in the flour. Cook, stirring with a wooden spoon, for 3-4 minutes until the flour mixture starts to turn a golden color. Remove the flour mixture from the heat, and allow to cool for 2 minutes. Whisk the egg yolks into the flour mixture, one at a time, and combine thoroughly. Add the wine, sour cream, salt, milk, and herbs and stir well to incorporate. In a stainless steel or glass bowl, beat the egg white with a wire whisk until stiff peaks form. Stir one-third of the beaten egg white into the herb mixture. Fold the remaining egg white into the herb mixture until it is evenly mixed and no egg white remains

visible. Spread the egg mixture evenly into the jellyroll pan. Bake until the egg mixture becomes an even, golden color and has set firmly, about 20 minutes. Remove the egg roulade from the oven, turn it out immediately onto a tea towel, and set the egg roulade aside to cool

To prepare the sting nettles, blanch the stinging nettle leaves in boiling water for 1 minute. Immediately plunge the blanched nettles into ice water. Remove the nettles from the ice water after 2 minutes. Squeeze the nettles well to remove any excess moisture. Set aside two-thirds of the nettles for the salmon roulade assembly. Juice the remaining nettles in a juicer with a fine-mesh screen, following manufacturer's directions. Cover the juice, and refrigerate it for the stinging nettle sauce, which is made just before the dish is served.

To prepare the morel duxelles, clean the mushrooms by brushing them off. Avoid using any water to clean the mushrooms unless it is absolutely necessary. Chop the mushroom finely by hand, or if using a food processor, chop them 1 cup at a time, pulsing until the mushrooms are finely chopped. Combine the butter and oil in a medium-size sauté pan over medium heat. When the butter has melted and the bubbles have subsided, add the onion, and cook for about 3 minutes. Do not allow the onion to brown. Add the wine, and cook until it has evaporated and the onion is transparent, about 3 minutes. Add the mushrooms, and cook, stirring, until all the released mushroom liquid has evaporated, about 5 minutes. Set aside the morel duxelles for the salmon roulade assembly.

To prepare the cream sauce base, bring the cream and wine to a boil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Whisk the cream mixture as it boils to prevent it from bubbling over. Reduce by one-half to make a smooth, thick cream sauce. Divide the cream sauce into 2 equal portions of 1 cup each. Set each aside, covered with plastic wrap, until the tulip and stinging nettle sauces are prepared. Meanwhile, assemble the salmon roulade.

To assemble the roulade, place the cooled egg roulade, still on the tea towel, in front of you on a flat surface with the longest side nearest you. Carefully remove the parchment paper. Lay slices of salmon on the egg roulade, starting at the edge closest to you and covering all but a 3-inch strip at the top (the side farthest from you). Spread the reserved morel duxelles over the salmon slices. Chop the reserved stinging nettles, and spread evenly over the morel duxelles. Using the tea towel, gently roll the filled roulade away from you to form an evenly shaped log. Be patient; the roulade is fragile. Carefully transfer the roulade onto a 2-foot length of heavy-duty aluminum foil. Tightly wrap the foil around the roulade, pinching in the ends to seal the oil. Place the roulade on a baking sheet, and let it stand for at least 30 minutes to become firm. (The roulade may be stored in the refrigerator as long as overnight.) Preheat the oven to 350F. Heat the aluminum wrapped roulade log for about 8-10 minutes. If the roulade has been refrigerated, heat it for 10-15 minutes or until warmed through. Warm the serving plates at the same time.

To prepare the tulip and stinging nettle sauces, carefully heat each of the reserved cups of cream sauce in a separate small saucepan over medium-low heat for about 5 minutes. To finish the tulip petal sauce, combine the tulip petals with 1 cup of the cream sauce, and remove from the heat. To finish the stinging nettle sauce, combine ¼ cup of the reserved stinging nettle juice with the other cup of the cream sauce, and remove from the heat. Set aside the remaining stinging nettle juice for garnishing the serving plates.

To serve the salmon roulade, carefully remove the aluminum foil and place the roulade on a cutting board. Slice the roulade into 8 (2-inch) slices, and place two of them on each of the heated plates. Spoon about 3 tablespoons of each cream sauce around the slices of roulade, and dot the sauces with the reserved stinging nettle juice. Garnish with the optional tulip petals and whole chive leaves, and serve

immediately. Additional cream sauces can be served on the side. 4 servings. Notes: use only tulips grown organically and not from the florist. Use only the solidly colored portion of the tulip petals and not the area from the base of the petal. The egg roulade, cream reduction and stinging nettle juice can be prepared the day before and stored, covered, in the refrigerator. (My Favorite Herb)

### **Nettle Lasagna**

1 medium onion, chopped  
3-5 garlic cloves, chopped  
¼ cup olive oil  
3 handfuls dried nettles, crushed  
½ Tbsp kelp, crushed  
8-10 fresh or dried shiitake mushrooms, chopped  
¼ cup pickled dandelion roots, chopped  
¼ cup Parmesan cheese  
fresh or dried rosemary, sage, oregano and thyme to taste  
crushed tomatoes and tomato sauce to make 4 cups  
8 cups fresh young nettle tops  
9-12 lasagna noodles, boiled and drained  
¾ - lb goat or sheep feta cheese, crumbled

Sauté onion and garlic in olive oil until golden. Add everything up to and including tomato sauce and simmer 1 hour. As sauce is simmering, steam the fresh nettles for 10-15 minutes, drain and drink the pot liquor. Layer a pan with sauce, cooked lasagna noodles, sauce, nettles, feta, sauce, noodles, etc., ending with feta as the final topping. Bake in 350F for 30 minutes or until bubbly all the way through. Serves 12. (An Herbal Feast)

### **Nettle Lasagna**

2 lbs hoary nettle  
2 oz pancetta cut into thin strips(or bacon)  
2 cloves of garlic  
3 eggs  
8 oz of unbleached flour  
4 tbsp of oil  
2 oz of grated Parmesan cheese



salt & pepper

bechamel sauce (see recipe below)

Pour the flour on the countertop, add the eggs, 1 tbsp of oil and a pinch of salt. Knead and flatten the mixture with a rolling pin. Then cut your pasta into large strips to fit your baking dish and toss into boiling water until the float. Boil the nettle for a minute, drain and squeeze the water out of them. Lightly brown the pancetta with garlic and a dash of olive oil. Oil your baking pan and cover with a layer of pasta, then add the Nettle sauce, and bechamel sauce. Continue adding layers in this way until you run out of ingredients. Dust the top with a handful of grated cheese. Cook at 150C for about 30 minutes.

#### *Bechamel Sauce*

5 tablespoons butter

4 tablespoons flour

3 cups milk

2 teaspoons salt

1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

In a medium saucepan, heat butter until melted. Add flour and stir until smooth. Over medium heat, cook until light golden brown, about 6 to 7 minutes. Meanwhile, heat milk in separate pan until just about to boil. Add milk to butter mixture 1 cup at a time, whisking continuously until very smooth and bring to a boil. Cook 10 minutes and remove from heat. Season with salt and nutmeg and set aside.

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#### **Resources:**

Companion Plants, [www.companionplants.com](http://www.companionplants.com)  
seed

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