

NETTLES



Stinging nettles are a highly nutritious edible plant, but are a little tricky to handle because their prickly leaves have little needle-like hairs that hook into your skin and release serotonin, formic acid and histamine. This burst of chemicals causes most people to experience an annoying burning sensation and often a rash.

If you decide to harvest nettles, you can wear gloves to avoid any reaction. However, if you happen to brush against them, dock leaves (the nettle's natural antidote) usually grow in very close proximity. It's thought that dock leaf sap contains an antihistamine which helps to soothe the affected skin, when rubbed over the area.

So you may be wondering why anyone would go through all the hassle of picking these pesky plants?

Taste: Once cooked, nettles taste like a mix between spinach and cucumber; fresh and wholesome. They make a great addition to dishes, adding a zing of flavour and a splash of colour. Nettle is great in sauces, risottos and soups.

Health: The nettle plant is full of nutrients that are really good for your health. They're packed full of iron and vitamin C, magnesium and calcium. They have been used for years by different cultures.

Fortunately brief exposure to high heat tames these prickly vines and transforms them into a flavorful dish of earthy and bright flavors.

The easiest way to do this is by blanching in boiling water and rinsing them afterward, squeezing out the water.

But it can also be accomplished by:

- Steaming for 5–10 minutes
- Boiling for 3–5 minutes
- Sautéing until wilted
- Air drying, oven drying, or using a dehydrator, will also destroy the plant's ability to deliver its irritants.



Suggestions for using nettles:

- Saute
- Soup
- Stew
- Sauteed
- Pesto
- On pasta, pizza, or sandwiches
- As a side for any protein
- Tea

Cooked nettles are also a great spinach substitute in soups, quiches, and stir-fries.



Simple Sautéed Stinging Nettles

adapted from Spruce Eats

2 servings

½ lb pound stinging nettles

1 tablespoons olive oil, or any other cooking fat

Salt, to taste

To clean the nettles you have 2 options. Wear gloves and swish them around in a large sink or basin filled with cool water. Lift the nettles out, leaving any grit behind, and drain them.

Or, bring a pot of salted water to a boil and blanch the nettles for 4 minutes. Cool them quickly in a bowl of ice water. Squeeze the nettles as dry as possible before sautéing them.

Once your nettles are cleaned or blanched, heat up a large pan over high heat—the wideness of the pan or skillet will help any liquid cook off quickly so the nettles sauté instead of steam. Add the oil or preferred cooking fat.

Add the nettles and cook, stirring frequently, until the greens are tender—about 2 minutes for blanched nettles and 5 to 8 for raw nettles. If sautéing raw nettles, make sure to keep the heat high so the liquid they throw off as they cook evaporates quickly. Sprinkle the nettles with salt to taste and serve immediately.