

Dandelion

By Kami McBride

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If you haven't noticed, dandelion leaves are bitter. The American diet centers around sweet and salty tastes so many people haven't developed a palate for bitter foods. You can work your way into liking bitters by adding just a little bit to your food at a time. You can chop dandelion greens up small enough to mix it into your salad and not even know it is there. Put some dandelion leaf on your sandwich, use it as a garnish like parsley and don't forget to put it into your pestos!

The green leaf of dandelion is good just about any time of the year that you can get it. Chop it up, put it in your salads and soups or make tea with it. Dandelion leaf is one of the highest known plant sources of Vitamin A. It is full of vitamins and minerals and its nutritional density is much more potent than any of the other vegetables in your refrigerator.

The bitter taste of dandelion helps you to digest your food more efficiently and is a tonic to the liver. With your liver managing more than 600 functions in your body, giving it some tonifying food is a good thing. Supporting the liver is one of the best ways to help with menstrual problems, allergies and other inflammatory conditions such as acne. Dandelion also alleviates edema and helps reduce pre-menstrual headaches and swelling.

Bitter foods also help the body uptake insulin more efficiently so it is a great herb for warding off diabetes. It always amazes me that we have such an incredible food and medicine growing practically in every yard and most people put poison on it! Instead of pulling the dandelion out of your lawn, eat them.

Dandelion leaf is also a tonic food for the gall bladder. Your gall bladder is what helps you to emulsify and digest fats and helps to make healthy cholesterol and hormones. Dandelion leaf increases the flow of healthy bile and helps to reduce unhealthy cholesterol. Another reason to develop the taste for the bitter green taste of dandelion!

I have had several students over the years who talked about their old fashioned German grandmothers that made the entire family do a spring cleaning by eating steamed and raw dandelion greens only for one or two days. Eating dandelion greens in the spring is a very old remedy for throwing off the sedentary accumulation of winter and helping the body do its own form of spring cleaning.

It is spring, eat your bitter greens.

Dandelion Sautee

2 cups bunch chopped dandelion greens

2 cups chard

2 cups kale (or whatever green is in your box this week)

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar

1 clove minced garlic

1 tablespoon minced culinary herbs such as thyme, rosemary or chives

Salt

First blend the olive oil, vinegar, garlic and herbs to make a dressing.
Sautee or steam the greens and add dressing just before serving.

Dandelion Leaf Tea

2 cups water

2 chopped dandelion leaves

Put dandelion leaf and water into a stainless steel pot, bring to a boil, then turn

off the heat. Let sit for another half hour with the heat off and then strain out the herb. You can drink it room temperature or re-heat.

Kami McBride has taught herbal medicine since 1988. Through her classes and personal wellness consultations she helps people understand how whole foods and herbal medicine are an important aspect of everyone's preventive health care plan. Kami has helped thousands of people learn to use herbs in their daily lives in ways that are healthy, safe and fun and she teaches classes in herbal medicine and women's health at her school and herb gardens in Vacaville, California.

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