

## Special Feature »

# Finding Feasts

## Foraging nourishes both mind and body

Why go wild?

After all, foraging takes time. Lots of it. Put in a long day of picking and still you might look down at your harvest and think a simple trip to the grocery store would have yielded a lot more. And perhaps that is true in terms of quantity.

But you get a lot more than food when you gather.

Flavor, for one. You won't find a berry quite as small and pert as the red huckleberry at the store. You might find chanterelles in a store, but they came from the wild. Efforts to cultivate chanterelles have never been successful, as these wild mushrooms have complex relationships with the forests in which they grow. Why not go to the source yourself?

Foraging is also a great motivation to hike. Seeking out a new delectable is one more reason to traipse through woods, explore an open field or walk the shoreline. Tasting wild plants is a way to engage all your senses as you hike.

And in the end, there's even a little food for thought. As you venture into the natural world to forage, you can comprehend the complexity and majesty of an environment in a new way. As author Alan Detwiler suggests, foraging "adds to the perception that the world is a good place that is to be enjoyed." In this piece, we've highlighted four edibles that you are likely to find on rambles in Washington's wildlands. Learn to identify them on your next hike. As you gather wild edibles for their deliciousness, you'll cultivate your own connection to nature.



### Early Spring Salad

Recipe by Langdon Cook

- Miner's lettuce
- Beets, cubed and cooked
- Crumbled goat cheese
- Roasted walnuts
- Vinaigrette

Toss all ingredients together and serve fresh.

### Miner's Lettuce

*Claytonia sibirica*, *Claytonia perfoliata*\*  
Early March through late June

Several different varieties of this beautiful spring lettuce grow in Washington's moist and shady forests. Their leaves can vary from light and delicate to thick and succulent.

Also called Western spring beauty, winter purslane or Indian lettuce, *Claytonia perfoliata* is native to the western United States and is particularly abundant in the Pacific Northwest. One of the first spring greens to emerge, this is the best-known species of miner's lettuce. *Claytonia perfoliata*'s flower stalk emerges from the center of its spade-shaped or roundish leaves. Think "perforate."

*Claytonia sibirica* (also known as Siberian spring beauty, Siberian miner's lettuce, candy flower or pink purslane) is native to both Siberia and western North America. On this species, the leaves are lanceolate; they taper to a point like the head of a lance.

Miner's lettuce leaves are reminiscent of spinach yet with a wild, but not overpowering flavor. Either plant works well as the base for a spring salad.

\*This plant is alternatively known botanically as *Montia perfoliata* or *Montia sibirica*.

## Red Huckleberry *Vaccinium parvifolium*

### Early July through late August

Found widely throughout Pacific Northwest lowlands, the red huckleberry shrub is an airy arrangement of delicate bright green leaves and petite red berries. This shade-tolerant plant prefers soil rich in decaying wood and can often be seen sprouting from stumps or fallen logs.

Red huckleberries offer a nice tart flavor and crisp flesh. They can be enjoyed raw as you hike, or you can gather them for use in pies, jams and jellies, or even a wine. The berries can be dried, mashed or pressed for juice. Red huckleberry leaves are also edible and can be used fresh or dried to make tea.

Historically, red huckleberries were harvested by virtually all tribes within the range of the plant, including the S'klallam, Lummi, Makah, Quileute, Quinault, Skagit, Skokomish, Snohomish, Swinomish and tribes throughout western British Columbia.

Here are two tips for harvesting red hucks. You can place a basket or open bag underneath a laden branch and then give the branch a shake. The berries will fall easily from their stem. Or you can build a customized picking bucket by securing a length of string, cord or strong ribbon to any reasonably sized plastic container. Wearing this contraption around your neck will give you two hands free for picking. You'll be more efficient, and efficiency, in this case, is really delicious.

## Red Huckleberry Tartlet *Recipe by Langdon Cook*

### Tart Dough

- 1/2 cup flour
- 3 tbsp. cold unsalted butter, cut up
- 2 tbsp. confectioner sugar
- 2 tbsp. cold water

Combine flour, sugar, and butter in a food processor. Pulse until grainy. Add the water a tablespoon at a time to food processor while running. Pulse until dough forms. Use your hands to finish combining any dough the processor missed. Roll into a cylinder, wrap in plastic, and refrigerate for 30 minutes minimum, up to a day.

### Sweet Cheese Filling

- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, cut into 8 pieces
- 6 tbsp. sugar
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 1/2 tbsp. flour
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- lemon zest of half a small lemon

Combine cream cheese and sugar in food processor. Whir until smooth. Add flour, egg, vanilla, and lemon zest and whir again until creamy.

### Berry Topping

- 1 cup wild berries
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 2 tsp cornstarch

Briefly cook berries with sugar and cornstarch until juices are syrupy.

Slice chilled dough into a dozen disks. Flatten disks into 3-inch diameter rounds on a lightly floured surface before pressing each into a muffin tin and forming into a cup.

Give each tartlet a dollop of sweet cheese filling followed by a spoonful of cooked red huckleberries. Add a few fresh blackberries or blueberries if you have them. Bake the tartlets for around 20 minutes at 400 degrees.

## Tasty Hikes

Miner's lettuce abounds on low-elevation river trails such as the **Big Quilcene River Trail**. You'll also find it in botanically rich places, like the trail along **Catherine Creek**.

Red hucks are easy to find on many hikes, from **Tiger Mountain** to **Old Robe Canyon**. You can also look for them in the rain forest. Try the **Graves Creek Trail**, as it winds its way along the Quinault River.

After you've learn to properly identify them, look for chanterelles on the trail to **Goat Lake** in the North Cascades or **Rachel Lake** in the central Cascades.

Looking for bull kelp? Reach the beach via the **Freshwater Bay Trail** outside Port Angeles. Another good bet on the northwest coast is the **Salt Creek Recreation Area**.



## Berry Patches

You can find berries on many of Washington's mountain trails, but there are only so many places where you can pick them to your heart's content. If you are looking for bountiful berry patches, try these hikes.

**Shedroof Divide**, Salmo-Priest Wilderness, Colville National Forest

**Schiebers Meadow**, Mount Baker National Recreation Area

**PCT near White Pass**, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, near Glacier Peak

**Granite Mountain**, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, near Snoqualmie Pass

**Naches Loop Trail**, Mount Rainier National Park

**Lemei Lake Trail**, Indian Heaven Wilderness, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

## Cream of Chanterelle Soup

Recipe by Langdon Cook

6 tbsp. butter  
 1 med. onion, diced  
 1 lb. fresh chanterelles, diced (frozen dry-sauteed is also acceptable)  
 1 to 3 ounces dried porcini, rehydrated in 1/2 to 1 cup hot water  
 1/4 cup flour  
 4 cups beef stock  
 1/4 tsp. white pepper  
 1/8 tsp. ground nutmeg  
 salt to taste  
 1 1/2 to 2 cups heavy cream

Melt butter in large pot. Add onions and cook over medium heat until caramelized.

Add chanterelles, raise heat, cook 5 minutes, stirring.

Pulverize porcini into dust with food processor and rehydrate.

Blend in flour with sauteed mushrooms and onions. Add stock slowly. Add porcini mush and any leftover water.

Bring to boil, reduce heat to simmer 5 minutes. Add spices.

Lower heat and add cream.

Serves 4 to 6.

## Chanterelle *Cantharellus cibarius*

September – November

Chanterelles come primarily in white and yellow. The classic Pacific golden chanterelles are *Cantharellus formosus* and the white version is *Cantharellus subalpinus*. Other chanterelles do live in this area, including the rainbow chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius* var. *roseocanus*) which has a pink cast and a fluorescent tint to its folds, but these are much less common and thus harder to find.

Yellow and white chanterelles grow in forested areas on either side of the Cascade crest. To find these mushrooms, plan on venturing into logging country; the yellow chanterelle is particularly prolific in second-growth Douglas-fir and hemlocks in the western Cascades. Chanterelles start fruiting when the soil temperature hits 45 degrees. Their season peaks in mid-October, and it typically lasts until the first hard freeze hits.

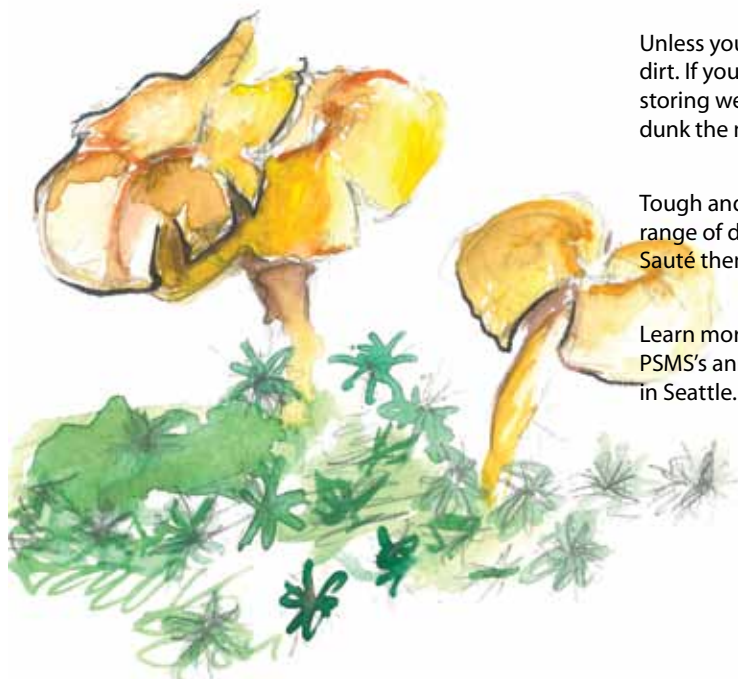
Many folks are wary of picking mushrooms, quite understandably, as eating the wrong kind of mushroom can kill you. You can read up on the mushrooms' defining characteristics and look at photographs of them before you head out, but always go with an experienced "mushroomer" first and get their on-the-ground advice and feedback. Chanterelles are a good mushroom for novice foragers; it is hard to confuse them with anything that can seriously harm you, although the woolly chanterelle (*Gomphus floccosus*) is inedible to some people and can upset your stomach if ingested. When trying any new mushroom, only try several tablespoons and wait twenty-four hours to ensure that you do not have an individual reaction to the mushroom.

Once you are ready to go out and collect, you need to follow a few regulations. Any chanterelles you collect must have a cap diameter of more than 1 inch, and the total amount you can gather varies depending on where you are. In Olympic and Mount Rainier National Parks, the limit is 1 quart; there is no mushroom collecting allowed in the North Cascades National Park complex. Each national forest district has its own quota, ranging from 1 to 5 gallons, and permits are sometimes required. For the specifics, consult the **Puget Sound Mycological Society** (PSMS). They have compiled all the rules for every park and forest service district into one document. Find it online at [www.psms.org/MushroomRules.pdf](http://www.psms.org/MushroomRules.pdf).

Unless your mushrooms are very dirty, it's best to just brush them and pick off any dirt. If you feel you have to wash them, do so immediately before use rather than storing wet mushrooms. If you find insect larvae nibbling on your chanterelles, dunk the mushrooms in salted water for a few minutes before cooking.

Tough and mild, chanterelles have a slight spicy edge, and they work well in a range of dishes. Add a splash of olive oil and garlic and serve them as appetizers. Sauté them for use in risottos, pastas and soups or to top meat and fish.

Learn more about Pacific Northwest mushrooms (and taste them, too) at the PSMS's annual show held October 16-17, 2010, at the Center for Urban Horticulture in Seattle.



**CAUTION:** If you are unsure about a mushroom, please contact [id@psms.org](mailto:id@psms.org) before trying it to find an identifier who can help you.

## Bull Kelp *Nereocystis luetkeana*

*Best May and June, available year-round*

The range of this kelp stretches from Southern California to Alaska's Aleutian Islands and it thrives in the turbid waters. Hike any rocky shore along Puget Sound or the Pacific Ocean and you're likely to see clusters of bull kelp just offshore, growing in the subtidal zone.

Bull kelp can grow from a tiny spore into a 200-foot-long plant in just one summer; it is the fastest growing seaweed in the world.

People refer to this seaweed by a number of names—bull whip kelp, ribbon kelp, bulb kelp, giant kelp, sea kelp, horse-tail kelp, and sea otter's cabbage—to list just a few. Native people used dried kelp stipes (its "stems") to make fishing line, and kelp bulbs were used to hold fish oil. Today, kelp extract (algin) is used industrially to thicken ice cream, salad dressing, hand lotion, and even paint.

May and June are the prime harvesting months for bull kelp, but you can find it year-round in many places along the coast. Avoid kelp with white splotches, as this indicates old age. Rinse it well; you do not need to peel or soak it. Cut the "hair" off the heads.

Curious about seaweed, but not quite ready for a salad that just washed up on the beach? Try kelp pickles first. Their zingy taste is reminiscent of those made from cucumbers or other familiar dirt-grown garden vegetables.

*Illustrations by Niki Sherey*

*Text by Lace Thornberg and Langdon Cook*

## Kelp Pickles

*Recipe and harvesting advice adapted from Alaskan Harvest*

- 5 quarts bull kelp stipe, cut into rings
- 2 cups onions, thinly sliced
- 5 cups vinegar
- 5 cups sugar
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 1/2 tsp. turmeric
- 1 tsp. ground cloves
- 1 tsp. celery seeds
- 2 tsp. mustard seeds

Chop kelp into the size of pickles you would like. You'll get the best pickles from the kelp's bulb and stem (stipe).

Combine everything but the kelp and onions in a large soup pot, then add the vegetables and bring to a boil.

Pack them into sterilized jars and then process for 10 minutes in boiling water. Alternatively, you can pack your jars and then use a canner and follow the canner's instructions for processing.

Let stand for about a month for the best flavor before eating.

*Makes about 8 pints.*

**For more recipes that make use of foragables, see p.36.**

## FORAGING RESOURCES

### Agencies and Organizations

Puget Sound Mycological Society, [www.psms.org](http://www.psms.org)

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing>

### Field Guides

***All That the Rain Promises and More: A Hip Pocket Guide to Western Mushrooms*** by David Arora

***Mushrooms Demystified*** by David Arora

***North Pacific Seaweeds*** by Rita M. O'Clair and Sandra C. Lindstrom

***Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast: Washington, Oregon, British Columbia & Alaska*** by Jim Pojar

### Suppliers

Foraged and Found Edibles, [www.foragedandfoundedibles.com](http://www.foragedandfoundedibles.com)

## GET FAT

For more recipes by author and forager Langdon Cook, read his book, *Fat of the Land: Adventures of a 21st Century Forager*, and follow his blog, <http://fat-of-the-land.blogspot.com>.

