



Edible Flowers

Warning: Not all flowers are edible. Some delicious-looking flowers are poisonous and can lead to serious illness or even death. Pansies are a good example because there are over 60 commercial varieties of pansies with only three that are safe to eat. Flowers should be chosen from edible plants that are listed in a reliable source and should be eaten only in the amounts specified in recipes. Individuals prone to allergies may have an allergic reaction to flowers. If you have any doubt about the identity of a flower, do not eat it. Your best bet is to use flowers which are commercially grown especially for eating.

Edible flowers are not new. People have been eating flowers and using them in culinary creations dating back to the Romans. In the 17th century, edible flowers began to play a more important role in food presentation. Wealthier homes had gardens full of flowers for medicinal and culinary purposes.

Preserved flowers were found in an array of baked goods and excellent liqueurs. Flowers have been used in countless ways, crystallized for decoration; ground into sugar for flavoring; made into syrups; preserved in jams and jellies; and used in sauces.

If you grow your own flowers, do not use pesticides. Pick them at mid-morning on a warm, dry day. Pick flowers at their peak. Avoid unopened buds, and faded or wilted flowers as they will be bitter in flavor. Once picked, rinse them in a pan of cool water to flush out any insects. Pat the flowers dry and place the petals on trays lined

with a damp cloth. Wrap each tray. Refrigerate the flowers to keep them fresh for up to one week

Glossary of Edible Flowers

- ✿ Calendula are yellow or gold flowers with a slightly green, tangy, peppery taste. They are nice with corn muffins.
- ✿ Carnations are pink, yellow, white or red flowers with a bland and sometimes bitter flavor.
- ✿ Chrysanthemums are white, yellow, orange, red, pink and purple flowers. Each color has a different flavor and some are strong and bitter.
- ✿ Daisies are white with yellow centers and have a mild flavor.
- ✿ Dandelions are yellow with a bitter flavor.

Day lilies come in many shades of orange and yellow with a slightly sweet, nut-like flavor. Day lilies are interesting with pasta and mushrooms.

- ✿ Scented Geraniums are pink, red, white or purple flowers and may be slightly sour or bitter. Geraniums make a nice addition to cake batter.
- ✿ Herb flowers include chives, rosemary, thyme, oregano, marjoram, basil, onion, garlic, cilantro and sage. They are recommended for salads, atop vegetables and as a pizza topping.
- ✿ Johnny jump-ups are violet, mauve, yellow and white flowers with a light winter-green flavor. They are great in salads and as a garnish for pastry and desserts.

- ✿ Lavender are purplish flowers with a lemon flavor. They are excellent in cream for desserts.
- ✿ Lilacs are white, violet, blue, pink, white, yellow and magenta flowers with a light floral flavor. Some can be slightly bitter.
- ✿ Marigolds are yellow, orange and gold flowers with a mild peppery taste. Some varieties are less intense and bitter; others are citrusy and milder.
- ✿ Nasturtiums come in a rainbow of colors and are piquant like watercress. They are great in salads, salsas, compound butters, vinaigrettes, grilled dishes and stuffed with guacamole.
- ✿ Pansies are blue, orange and purple flowers with a mild flavor. They are great as a garnish, in salads and for candying.
- ✿ Rose petals come in white, yellow, orange, pink and red flowers with a sweet to bitter flavor. Red flowers have a mineral flavor while lighter

colored varieties are more delicate in taste. Rose petals are great in jams, sugars, vinegars, syrups, jellies and teas.

- ✿ Squash blossoms are usually orange and yellow flowers with a vegetable flavor of raw squash. They are great for stuffing, frying or sauteing whole, or cut into julienne for pancakes, omelets, soups and salad.
- ✿ Tulips come in a wide variety of colors and have little flavor, but can be slightly sweet or bitter.
- ✿ Violets are purple flowers with a mild taste except for *Viola odorata*, which is sweet. Violets are excellent for candying, as garnishes for desserts and good in salads.

The most easily grown edible flowers are nasturtiums, day lilies, marigolds and dandelions. Nasturtiums are almost indestructible and you can eat both the leaf and the blossom. They produce blossoms all summer. Day lilies have the flavor of chestnuts and are good added to soups, stuffings and stir-fry

dishes. They are excellent dipped in batter and deep fried. Marigold petals enhance everything, from cottage cheese to wine. Dandelions can be steamed or used in salads and omelets. They are best known as the main ingredient in dandelion wine which has a light sherry flavor.

Using flowers in the kitchen can be very creative. Introduce your taste buds to edible flowers with caution.

First, smell the flower and then nibble at the flower, rather than to eat it whole.

Scatter petals lightly over a dish. Edible flowers are ideal for floating in punch, crystallized atop desserts, frozen in ice cubes, and pressed into soft cheese.

Heat wilts the petals so add to hot dishes at the last moment. To prevent discoloration of the petals, use enamel, glass, or stainless steel cookware.

Entertaining with edible flowers can be spectacular but the end result should be a harmonious blend of flavors and colors

Bon appetit!

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