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Lovage and Sorrel: Uses and Recipes



Perennial vegetables – Today most vegetables are annuals: started in spring and finished by fall. But gardens once overflowed with edible perennials which require less work and resources; are often more nutritious, enhance the soil and biodiversity; and are more resilient to extreme weather events.

LOVAGE (*Levisticum officinale*):

A leafy perennial plant valued by cultures around the world and is particularly favored in Europe and Asia. With a history dating back to ancient Greek and Roman times, lovage was valued both in the kitchen and the apothecary.

It is biologically related to carrots, celery, and parsley; its crisp stems and vibrant foliage have a flavor profile combining celery, parsley, and a hint of anise. It needs minimal care and will readily reseed itself.

It is highly sought after for its leaves, roots, and seeds. The leaves are treated as an herb and used to flavor soups and broths, salads, sauces, and other vegetable dishes. Stems and roots are boiled or sautéed, while the seeds are used as a spice.

Harvesting – Cut leaves and stems often throughout growing season to encourage new growth. Flavor is best when leaves are young and tender (before plants begin to flower). Hollow stalks are cut close to base of plant. Allow flowering to obtain seeds. Remove seed heads in late summer when dry and brown; place in paper bag and rub to release seeds.

SORREL (*Rumex acetosa and sanguineus*):

A deep-rooted perennial that will last for years. Sorrel is an early spring crop, providing leafy greens when few other edibles are available. It has a tart flavor and contains powerful antioxidants.

You can use the arrow-shaped lemony-flavored leaves both raw in salads or cooked in soups and egg dishes. Certain varieties are used to make herbal teas and tinctures. There are a few different types of sorrel, each with unique flavors.

Garden Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) – the sorrel found in many European gardens with green leaves and a tangy, lemony flavor.

Red-Veined Sorrel (*Rumex sanguineus*) – with green leaves and deep red veins. Less tart than garden sorrel; stands out in a salad.

Cooking tones down the citrusy sourness but it loses color when cooked, so add to cooked dishes when not relying on sorrel for color; add leaves at last moment, as with baby spinach.

Harvesting – Use small, tender growth. Leaves from established plants are best in early spring when about 4 to 6 inches. Stop harvesting when flower stalks form as the leaves can turn bitter.

Recipes:

There are many recipes that include lovage and sorrel; many are variations on old-world recipes.

Lovage Tea – steep 1 teaspoon of finely chopped lovage leaves in a cup of boiling water for 5 minutes. Strain and enjoy.

Lovage Soup

- 2 tablespoons salted butter
 - 1 green onions (white and light green parts, chopped)
 - 1 yellow onion (peeled and chopped)
 - 6 cups of vegetable broth
 - 3 medium Russet potatoes (peeled and chopped)
 - 1 bunch (1 oz) lovage leaves (chopped fine)
 - heavy cream (optional, to serve)
1. Melt butter in heavy-bottomed stock pot over medium-high heat. When it froths, reduce heat to medium and stir in green and yellow onions. Sauté until fragrant, about five minutes.
 2. Pour in vegetable stock and stir in chopped potatoes. Simmer, covered, for about 30 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Stir in lovage and simmer, covered, for about five minutes.
 3. Remove from heat and blend with an immersion blender until smooth. Season with unrefined sea salt and freshly ground pepper. Optional: stir in a spoonful of heavy cream.

Sorrel and Lovage Soup

- 1 tablespoon butter
 - 1 tablespoon. olive oil
 - 1 red onion, thinly sliced
 - 2 small potatoes, thinly sliced
 - 1 carrot, thinly sliced
 - 3 to 4 cups (6 to 8 ounces) sorrel, stems removed
 - 5 cups of lovage leaves, finely chopped (can replace some with chard leaves)
 - sea salt and freshly ground pepper
 - 4 to 6 cups vegetable stock or water
 - lemon juice or white wine vinegar
 - 1/3 cup heavy cream (optional, to serve)
1. Warm butter and oil in soup pot. Add onion, potatoes, carrot, sorrel (and chard if using).
 2. Add 2/3 of the lovage and sprinkle on 1 1/2 teaspoons salt. Cover and cook over low heat for about 15 minutes until the greens have collapsed and the potatoes are partially cooked.
 3. If the pan seems too dry at any point, add water in small amounts so that nothing burns. Add the stock or water, bring to a boil, and simmer, partially covered for 15 minutes.
 4. Puree or leave the soup with some texture. Stir in the remaining lovage. Taste for salt and season with pepper and lemon juice or vinegar to taste to bring out the flavors. Optional: stir in the cream.

Sorrel Pesto

- 1 oz of pine nuts (or unsalted pumpkin seeds)
 - 3/4 oz of Parmesan, or vegetarian hard cheese, grated
 - 1/2 garlic clove, crushed
 - 1 1/16 oz of sorrel, stalks removed
 - 3/4 oz of basil
 - 3 1/2 fluid oz of olive oil
 - lemon juice, salt, and pepper to taste
1. Place nuts, cheese, garlic, herbs and olive oil in blender until you have a coarse pesto.
 2. Taste and season with salt, pepper and lemon juice.
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