

Eating Edible Flowers

The culinary use of edible flowers is not a recent trend; it can be traced back thousands of years to the Greeks, Romans, and Chinese. Flowers were traditionally incorporated into many various cuisines –from Asian and East Indian to European, Victorian English, and Middle Eastern. Think of the lush rose petals in Indian food and the bright squash blossoms in the Italian meals.

Edible flowers fell out of grace, but they are making a huge come-back, not only as a fancy garnish, but also as an effective seasoning. Of course, flowers are not everyone's cup of tea when it comes to cooking. The secret is to learn to pick the right ones and to combine them properly with other ingredients.

The buds and blooms of different plants offer a wide range of flavour, colour, and a tinge of whimsy. Some are irresistibly fragrant and tasty, others are spicy and sharp. Some are lemony or weedy while others are floral or herbaceous. The rich palette of taste and colour make edible flowers a perfect addition to almost every dish. Spruce up the regular meal with these surprisingly delicious blooms.

Not All Flowers Are Edible

Not every flower that you have in your garden is edible. Even though the buds may not be poisonous, they don't all taste good! Luckily, most of the blooms of fruits, veggies, and herbs work just as great as their fully-grown counterparts. It's advisable to consume only plants that have been grown without pesticides or with such that are suitable for edible crops. If you buy flowers from expert gardeners, a nursery or garden centres, check to see if they are labelled as edible. Make sure you are not allergic to a certain type of plant before you use it. That said, here are a couple of tips on how

to harvest and store your edible flowers.

- Pick the blooms and buds just before you use them for the best flavour
- Harvest during the cool of the day, after the dew evaporates
- Brush off any soil and remove any insects hiding within
- Wash the flowers gently and let them air-dry over a paper towel
- If not used right away, keep them in the fridge for no longer than 10 days
- They can be dried, frozen or preserved in vinegar or oil

Some Flowers You Can Grow and Eat

You can choose from a variety of annuals, biennials, and perennials that will look gorgeous in your garden and will add unique taste to your meals. Planting some of these flowers can introduce benefits both to your garden and your cooking routine. If you are looking for your next gardening projects, here are a couple of ideas you might want to consider:

Nasturtium



There are many reasons to consider planting nasturtium in your garden. These vibrant and versatile annuals serve a double duty – as an exquisite culinary delight and as a natural pest control. The sun-loving greenery will bloom from midsummer until the first frost.

Its peppery tasting flowers can be added to fresh salads or used in your favourite pesto recipe. You can also skip the mustard, and stuff the spicy petals into your sandwiches with creamy cheese and sliced tomatoes.

Squash Blossoms



These are probably some of the most widely used edible flowers, especially in the Italian cuisine. Squash blossoms are the flowers of the late-season pumpkins, zucchini, summer squash, and winter squash. The orange and yellow buds can be used raw in a salad or stuffed with cheese. They taste like a more delicate version of squash and can be fried or cooked with creamy rice.

Dill



Dill offers remarkable benefits for both your health and your garden. It contains enzymes that help reduce the free radicals and carcinogens in the human body. Plus it prevents bone loss and has anti-bacterial properties. According to the gardening experts, the blossoms can attract pollinators and beneficial insects into your backyard. The flowers have light dill flavour and are usually added to jars with cucumber pickles.

Chives Blossoms



Chives don't require any garden maintenance or efforts. Your site is probably filled with these lavender-pink flowers, so why not try them out? Toss them in a fresh salad, add them in a casserole, or cook them with fresh vegetables. Their taste resembles onions so don't use too many of these pungent flowers.

Violet



Viola odorata or sweet violet is an all time classic when it comes to cooking with edible flowers. It was a favourite treat of English royalty and a popular ingredient during the Victorian era. The taste of this flower pairs well with lemon and chocolate. You can use it in different recipes – from crèmes and desserts to tarts and salads. Violets can be quite challenging when it comes to cooking, because you will need a lot of them to extract enough flavour.

For more unusual gardening ideas, be sure to read the Home Garden blog.

Further Reading:

- Foods, Vitamins, and Herbs That Kill Cancer
- Get to Know Microgreens – Easy to Grow & Better than Sprouts
- Five Common Weeds to Cultivate for Health and Nutrition
- The Amazing Benefits of Stinging Nettles, with Recipes
- Useful Tips for Growing Food in the Big City
- Elderberries and Recipes

Sources:

- *Tasty Edible Flowers* – Apartment Therapy
- *Flowers You Can Grow and Eat* – Rodale's Organic Life
- *Stuffed Squash Blossoms* – Recipe Hubs