

# Food for Times of Want

Used by permission from Karen M. Cockrell

Some cooks do not think ahead, even to the next day's meal. A sensible cook puts aside food for winter. An outstanding cook puts away enough food for the whole winter with enough left over to last through drought, crops destroyed by storm, and invasions by friends and family who tend to stop by at dinner time.

February is the month that one really starts to see if enough food has been stowed away. Hopefully you stored grain, dried bread, smoked meat and fish, pickled vegetables, dried fruits and wine, ale or mead. But, even the well provisioned will be missing fresh fruit and vegetables by the end of this month.

Nettles is a local plant that arrives when the snow is still on the ground. The way I see it, the discovery that Nettles are edible was probably a mistake. I guess it happened something like this.

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Once upon a time, a family was hungry. It was near the end of winter; snow was still on the ground. But a promise of spring was in the air. The mother was outdoors and noticed a tough green plant sprouting up through the snow. Greens! A fresh green plant they could EAT!

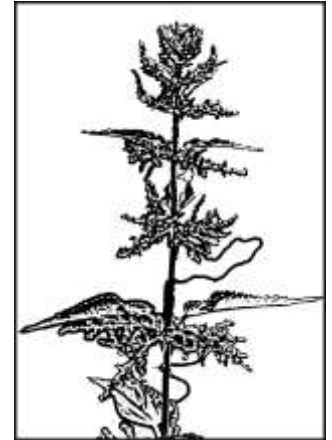
She picked it with her mitten wrapped hands and brought it to the kitchen. As water heated in the pot; she stripped the leaves from the stalks. Then she threw them into the boiling water. Several minutes later, she added a bit of butter to them and served this new vegetable to her family. It was wonderful!

Only later did they realize they had eaten stinging nettles. The boiling water transforms them into an edible green that tastes much like spinach. A tradition was born. As usual, over the years, the receipts got more and more complicated.

Here is one variant.

## Nettle Soup (will serve about 6)

- 1 lb. Nettles (OR use Spinach instead)
- 2 tbsp Butter
- 2 tbsp Flour
- 1 Pint Chicken Broth
- 1/2 cup Heavy Whipping Cream
- Salt & Pepper
- 3 Hard cooked eggs



Pick nettles in early spring while wearing gloves.

Pick only young, small plants.

Pull the leaves off the stems, discard the stems.

Boil water add the nettles and boil for 6 minutes (no less, this destroys their poison)

Drain well. Cut up the nettles as fine as possible.

Heat butter in the pan; sauté the nettles in it.

Add flour to this and stir.

Add broth stirring constantly, simmer for 10 minutes.

Salt & Pepper to taste.

Remove from heat, add in Cream and stir.

Serve immediately with slices of hard boiled egg in each bowl.