

Herbed Nettle Pancakes

This herbed, savory pancake can be made in any season with any green. But it's a fun excuse to use this nutrition-packed wild spring green. Make these large and serve with a salad for lunch or make mini pancakes for appetizers. Make a batch and freeze to reheat later for a cocktail party.

INGREDIENTS

4 oz. nettles or your favorite green
2 medium shallots (or small onion)
2 garlic cloves
1-2 teaspoons herbs (parsley, chives, thyme, rosemary, cilantro, basil or a combination of your favorites)
2 1/2 cups flour
2 cups milk
Salt and ground pepper to taste

Optional:

chopped mushrooms
grated cheese

Nettles have hundreds of hypodermic-like needles that release a toxin when brushed, causing a slight sting and possibly rash. The easiest way to prepare them is to dump the whole bag (assuming you've purchased a bag at a farmers market) into a pot of boiling salted water for 2-3 minutes. Drain and then clip any tougher stems off with scissors. If very fresh, you can eat the stem. Cooking eliminates the stinging effect.



Chard, nettles and shiitake

Topped with plain yogurt and red pepper puree

Prepare the vegetables

If using nettles, follow the method at left. Or you can chop any green like chard, collards or kale into thin strips, then chop those ribbons smaller. (You want the greens to be evenly distributed in the batter.) For the nettles, drain and squeeze out all the excess water (reserve liquid as a tonic!). Chop into small bits on a cutting board. Set aside.

Finely chop the shallots or onions. Heat a little olive oil in a skillet and saute until the onions are translucent. If using mushrooms, small dice and then add to skillet with the onions and a little salt. Part way through, add the minced garlic. Sauté a couple minutes more. Add to the greens and set aside.

Prepare the herbs and add to vegetable mixture.

Prepare the batter

Measure out the flour in a bowl add about a teaspoon of salt and some fresh pepper. Crack the eggs in a small bowl and beat. Stir in the milk. Add the eggs and milk slowly to the flour and stir till well combined. Fold in the vegetables and herbs until combined.

Heat an oven to 175 degrees and line a cookie sheet with paper towels (to soak up the excess oil) and keep pancakes warm as you work. Heat a pancake griddle or your favorite skillet on medium-low to medium. Heat the oil, and when it spatters add your batter 1/8 to 1/4 cup at a time depending on desired size of pancakes. For hors d'oeuvres pancakes use 1 T to 1/8 cup batter. (Use two separate pans to speed the process.) Cook pancakes 2 or 3 minutes on each side or till golden brown.

Serve warm or room temperature. Top with creme fraiche or plain yogurt, additional snipped herbs, a dollop of roasted red pepper sauce or salsa verde.

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