# Edible Flowers, From Garden to Table

Nine edible flowers to explore, how to approach them safely, and practical ways to bring them into your kitchen.

BY SHERI ANN RICHERSON • EXOTICGARDENING.COM + EXPERIMENTALHOMESTEADER.COM

| FLOWER | FLAVOR | FIRST KITCHEN IDEA |
|---|---|---|
| Violets | Mild, lightly sweet | Jelly or garnish |
| Dandelion | Honey-like petals | Flower jelly |
| Roses | Floral, fragrant | Rose petal jelly |
| Nasturtiums | Peppery | Salad or savory spread |
| Calendula | Mild, slightly bitter | Petals in a salad |
| Borage | Cucumber-like | Cold drink garnish |
| Lilac | Floral, fragrant | Lilac jelly |
| Butterfly pea | Mild, earthy | Color-changing tea |
| Scented geranium | Varies by cultivar | Infused sugar or syrup |

## My three non-negotiable rules

Identify it. Positively identify every flower before it goes near a plate. A picture online is not an identification.
Start small. Try one new flower at a time, in a small amount.
Know its history. Never eat flowers from a florist, nursery, or roadside where treatment and contamination are uncertain.

# Know Your Flowers Before You Harvest

The most important step is not picking the prettiest bloom. It is knowing exactly what you are bringing into the kitchen.

## Identify the plant, not just the color

Check the botanical name against a reliable, plant-specific identification resource. Verify which parts are used as food and whether special preparation is required. Edible petals do not mean every leaf, seed, root, or stem on that plant is edible. Look-alikes can be dangerous, and even plants with similar common names may not be interchangeable.

## Choose a trustworthy harvest

Use flowers from a growing area you control and know has not been treated with inappropriate chemicals. Avoid roadsides and bouquets sold for decoration. Select fresh, healthy blooms, and harvest only the amount you expect to use. Keep each kind of flower separate until you are ready to prepare it.

## Prepare flowers for their actual use

Inspect for insects and debris. Follow guidance specific to that flower about removing stems, bases, or other parts. If the preparation calls for rinsing, be gentle and dry the blossoms carefully. Flowers can bruise and wilt quickly, so prepare them close to serving time when possible.

### A useful first choice

Already growing nasturtiums? Their peppery flowers offer an approachable savory starting point. Have fragrant, unsprayed edible roses? Explore a tested rose petal jelly recipe. The best first flower is one you can positively identify and use confidently.

For growing guidance and plant choices, visit ExoticGardening.com. For kitchen projects and preservation recipes, visit ExperimentalHomesteader.com.

# Four Ways to Start Cooking With Flowers

Begin with one familiar dish, one flower, and a small amount. Notice how the flavor works before making a larger recipe.

## 01 Finish a fresh salad with nasturtiums

Prepare a salad you already enjoy with clean greens and vegetables. Taste a small amount of a properly identified, food-safe nasturtium flower on its own, then add a few blossoms just before serving. Their peppery character is best treated as a flavor choice, not just a decoration.

## 02 Add an edible garnish with purpose

A garnish should taste good with the dish. Choose a correctly identified edible flower, prepare the appropriate portion, and place it on a finished plate or beverage shortly before serving. Keep the portion modest. Some flowers contribute sweetness, some aroma, and others a savory bite.

## 03 Make rose petal jelly from a tested recipe

Fragrant edible roses offer a way to capture garden flavor in a preserve. Harvest suitable, unsprayed petals and follow a tested recipe with its exact measurements and processing instructions. Do not invent canning times or substitute a decorative-flower infusion for a tested preserve.

## 04 Explore a floral beverage

Butterfly pea is known for the striking color of its tea. Follow preparation directions appropriate to the specific ingredient you have, begin with a small serving, and pay attention to flavor as well as appearance.

### Go from inspiration to instructions

Find the full recipes for How to Make Rose Petal Jelly, How to Make Nasturtium Butter, and Rose Petal and Rose Hip Recipes at ExperimentalHomesteader.com. This free guide gives you starting ideas; the individual recipes provide the complete methods.

# Plan Your First Edible-Flower Harvest

Growing edible flowers is more rewarding when you already know how you want to use them.

## Grow for the meals you make

If you enjoy salads, look for edible flowers that complement savory foods. If you make preserves, fragrance and the amount you can harvest matter. If you enjoy homemade beverages, consider flowers that offer an interesting flavor or color. You do not need all nine flowers in the chart to begin.

## Use one plant in more than one way

Nasturtiums are an excellent example: try their peppery flowers in a fresh salad, then explore a nasturtium butter recipe. You will learn how the same flavor behaves in two very different foods. Keep notes on the amount you used, what it tasted like, and whether you would use it again.

## Keep simple records

Write down the plant's botanical name, the growing location, the edible portion used, the date harvested, and the recipe. Those details are more useful than remembering only that you tried a yellow or purple flower.

| YOUR FIRST PROJECT | WRITE YOUR PLAN |
|---|---|
| Flower and botanical name | _____ |
| Edible part I will use | _____ |
| Recipe or preparation | _____ |
| What I need to confirm | _____ |
| What I want to learn | _____ |

## Where to go next

ExoticGardening.com helps you grow the flowers. ExperimentalHomesteader.com helps you put them to use in recipes and home projects. For more ideas, explore Spicing Up Your Food With Edible Flowers Quick Guide at shop.experimentalhomesteader.com.

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# My Edible-Flower Kitchen Notes

Print one copy for each flower or kitchen experiment. You will build a record of what works in your garden and on your table.

## The flower

Common name and botanical name: _____

Where it was grown: _____

How I confirmed the edible portion: _____

## The recipe

What I am making: _____

Recipe or instructions I am following: _____

Harvest date and amount: _____

## The results

Flavor and aroma: _____

What worked well: _____

What I would change next time: _____

### Continue learning with Sheri Ann Richerson

Growing: ExoticGardening.com
Cooking, preserving, and homesteading: ExperimentalHomesteader.com
Quick Guide and classes: shop.experimentalhomesteader.com