

Edible Flowers

Many flowers will add beauty to your garden as well as your table. A large number of the flowers now blooming in your landscape are edible. It's amazing how much of the average flower garden is edible provided you don't use pesticides. A few of the most commonly used edible flowers are calendula, day lilies, chives, nasturtiums, pansies, pinks, roses, culinary herb blossoms, signet marigolds, bachelor buttons, snapdragons, and pansies. Which flowers taste best? It depends on what flavors you like. They range from spicy nasturtiums to minty pansies to floral roses. Even different colors of the same flower may taste different. The pale yellow day lilies are sweeter than the darker colors. Herb blossoms have the same flavor as their leaves, but with the exception of chamomile and lavender blossoms, the flavor is usually more subtle.

Flowers have been enjoyed as food since the beginning of time. Daylilies, lotus, and chrysanthemums have been commonly used in oriental dishes. Italians and Hispanics commonly use squash blossoms in their cooking. Asian Indians use rose petals in many recipes. Chartreuse, a classic green liqueur developed in France in the seventeenth century, boasts carnation petals as one of its secret ingredients. Dandelions were one of the bitter herbs referred to in the Old Testament of the Bible. Creative cooks are discovering the value and beauty of edible flowers. Edible flowers add distinctive color and flavor to salads, cakes, and pastries as well as impart a signature touch and elegance to any dish. Edible flowers have become a unique and festive addition in kitchens, restaurants, and gourmet markets across the country.

Eat only those flowers that you can identify as safe and edible. Don't assume that a flower is edible just because it is on a plate of food. Be especially wary of flowers on wedding cakes. Eat only flowers that have been grown organically, i.e. pesticide and herbicide free. Do not use flowers from florists, nurseries, garden centers, public gardens, or roadside locations. Do not eat flowers if you have allergies, asthma, or hay fever. As a general rule, eat only the petals of the flowers, discarding the pistils and stamens. Don't assume a flower is edible because it smells good; most flowers are inedible and many are poisonous. Introduce flowers into your diet gradually – in small quantities and one variety at a time. Enjoy the beauty edible flowers bring to your garden, the visual contrasts they impart to your dining table, and the unique taste experience they bring to your palate.

Other Edible Flower Sites

[Ten Rules of Edible Flowers](#) – Horticulture & Home Pest News, Iowa State University Extension

[Master Gardener Hot Line Edible Flower Links](#) – Champaign County, Illinois