

# by the sea

WILD FOOD WALKS

Words by Dr Jo Henley

Walks along the Cornish coastal path are always rewarding, but especially so if you can gather a little something for supper afterwards. People often ask me about the edible seashore - the foreshore and the coastal fringe are both bountiful larders if you are up for a culinary adventure. It is advisable, however, to brush up a little on your foraging skills beforehand, if you can.

Last month I was lucky enough to upskill my own foraging abilities, having been invited to take part in a wild food foraging walk with local expert Rachel Lambert. Furthermore, this was a 'Forage, Cook and Dine' event; being an enthusiastic cook, this made the experience even more enticing for me. The walk we took started from Lamorna Cove, following the coast path for a leisurely hour or two. Our foraging challenge was to collect eight ingredients, from which we would construct and cook a three-course evening meal.

Foraging for wild food has become extremely fashionable in recent years, and I think all foragers would testify it is a brilliant, sustainable way to supplement your diet, explore the local environment and connect yourself with nature a little better. Rachel, who leads wild food walks for a variety of ages and abilities throughout Cornwall, describes the wild food experience more in terms of an adventure. Her clients usually come from one of two camps: those who know nothing and want to be inspired into the world of wild food, and those who know something but want to gain confidence in their abilities to forage for themselves.

The eight ingredients we collected were: three-cornered leek (colloquially known as wild garlic), common hogweed shoots (also known as poor man's asparagus), scurvy grass, yarrow, sorrell, sea beet (or sea spinach), wild chervil (also known as cow parsley) and gorse flowers. Each plant collected was described and explained in terms of both its



identifying features and its culinary and medicinal uses. Our attention was also drawn to some foraging do's and don'ts - some plants having non-edible parts, some being mistaken for poisonous varieties and others being protected species which should all be left well alone.

In terms of the cooking, we returned from our wild food walk, baskets laden with natural goodies, to a small cottage in the cove. Here we cooked, as a collective, three courses which, though distinctive in taste, were deliciously different. Our menu was as follows: hogweed shoot bruschetta with rock samphire hollandaise; followed by Newlyn crab cakes with scurvy grass pesto, buttered sea spinach and wild flower leaf salad; finished off with gorse flower macarons with gorse syrup.

Foraging is a great family activity and children's eyes often widen when you mention hunting for food in an outdoor setting. Lambert extends her offerings to family groups, it being an adventurous activity, at any time of year. Though the ingredients found above will not necessarily be harvestable this month, there is always something that can be collected from the coast, to add a different flavour to your feast. And the great thing is, particularly in Cornwall, that you don't have to go far to find interesting or delicious things. 🍄

*For more information on Wild Food foraging or to book an experience, contact Rachel Lambert on 07903 412014 e-mail: [rachel@wildwalks-southwest.co.uk](mailto:rachel@wildwalks-southwest.co.uk) or visit [www.wildwalks-southwest.co.uk](http://www.wildwalks-southwest.co.uk)*

