

# SUSTAINABLE GASTRONOMY TOURISM IN SLOVENIA IN CONNECTION WITH WILD PLANTS OF SLOVENIAN FORESTS AND MEADOWS

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***Abstract:** The article discusses the wild plants of Slovenia in the context of the title Slovenia – European Region of Gastronomy 2021 and in connection with sustainable gastronomic tourism. Wild plants thrive on uncultivated soils and are not subject to herbicides and pesticides which gives them special value. The article presents an overview of the most common wild plants that grow in Slovenia and whose use is well known and popular. We found that there are many records in Slovenia's culinary literature on the preparation of wild plants. By studying the dishes, we classified them into groups and found that there are many dishes that could fit into Slovenia's gastronomic offer. As Slovenia wants to present itself as a unique boutique destination with sustainable tourism, the possibility of using wild plants from unspoiled nature is an overlooked opportunity in sustainable gastronomy.*

***Keywords:** sustainable tourism, gastronomy, wild plants, nutritional value, usability*

## INTRODUCTION

In 2021, Slovenia is the holder of the title of European Region of Gastronomy and has set itself the following goals: promoting national cuisine and gastronomy; sustainable development and concern for how to feed the planet; developing and promoting sustainable gastronomic tourism and gastronomic offers in tourism; a comprehensive improvement of the culinary offer in bars, on the streets, and during events; strengthening the field of education for the needs of gastronomy and cuisine in tourism; developing food and food related cultural diversity, supporting self-sufficiency, and foods and dishes of protected origin; connecting the rural and urban; emphasizing the importance of a healthy diet for our health; supporting small and medium-sized enterprises.

In this context, we would like to draw attention to the richness and potential of wild plants in sustainable gastronomic tourism in Slovenia and the possibility of including them in the tourist and gastronomic offer, which also coincides with the goals and guidelines of Slovenia's candidacy for the 2021 European Region of Gastronomy.

Wild plants of Slovenia can be discussed in terms of diversity, nutritional value and usability. Our ancestors developed cultivated plants from wild plants, as they were consequently easier to grow and, above all, met the mass need for plant crops. With the development of plant cultivation, crossbreeding and thus the creation of new species that are more friendly to agriculture, man has lost the need for gathering.

Wild plants are a specialty, as they are naturally present in forests and thus thrive on uncultivated soils. As a result, these soils are not permeated with herbicides and pesticides, and are not depleted of natural nutrients due to annual cultivation on the same arable land. As a result, it is possible to predict a higher content of minerals in wild plants (similar to organically grown plants).

In many parts of the world, the percentage of forests is relatively small and is declining every year. Slovenia is a clear exception here, as according to the annual report on forests of The Slovenian Forest Service for 2017, 58.2% of the total area of the Republic of Slovenia is covered by forests. This ranks Slovenia fourth in the European Union in terms of the percentage of forest area and is therefore an excellent country for collecting and observing wild plants.

As can be seen in literature, many wild plants were used as part of a home pharmacy (e.g. the cuckoo flower) in the past. It is true, however, that wild plants cannot be used as independent dishes in most cases, but they are therefore an excellent addition or spice that brightens the plate and adds a great deal of aromas, flavours and wonderful colours. As an added value, the dishes are also inspired by stories about wild plants, which are closely connected with the Slovenian cultural and culinary heritage.

## **STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS**

One of the foundations of Slovenian tourism is sustainable tourism. Regarding the topic of sustainable gastronomic tourism in Slovenia, the key points are presented in the following documents: Strategy for Sustainable Growth of Slovenian Tourism 2017-2021, Action Plan for the Development and Marketing of Slovenian Gastronomic Tourism 2019-2023, Slovenia's candidacy for the European Region of Gastronomy 2021 and last but not least the Resolution on the National Program on Nutrition and Physical Activity for Health 2015-2025.

The Strategy for Sustainable Growth of Slovenian Tourism 2017–2021 defines sustainable tourism as one of the foundations for the

development of Slovenian tourism. It consists of three pillars: economic development, social development, and environmental protection. The vision of sustainable tourism is a balance between all three pillars, which also represents a balance in society and nature, and is carried out indefinitely in individual regions - without deteriorating conditions in the original natural environment. (Kastelic 2019)

The Action Plan for the Development and Marketing of Slovenian Gastronomic Tourism 2019 - 2023 states that the main goal is to increase the recognition of Slovenia as a gastronomic destination, and not as one that only offers gastronomy. The gastronomy marketing action plan was created with three purposes: to create higher added value - the development and marketing of gastronomy, to ensure sustainability and to increase international recognition.




In its candidacy for European Region of Gastronomy, Slovenia defined itself as a meeting point of local tastes and gastronomic diversity.





In addition to the mentioned documents, it is necessary to mention the Resolution on the National Program on Nutrition and Physical Activity for Health 2015-2025. One of the identified priority areas mentioned in this document is to promote the offer of healthy choices in catering and tourism in connection with offers in local environments and with the aim of making Slovenia an excellent, green, active, and healthy destination. (June 2016)



## **THE DIVERSITY AND USABILITY OF WILD PLANTS**

There is such a variety and diversity of wild plants and in this respect, we can compare them to cultivated leafy vegetables. By reviewing scientific literature in this field, we were able to find the most common wild plants that grow in Slovenia and whose use is well known and popular. They are systematically shown below. In addition to the description of plants, instructions for harvesting them, and their medicinal properties, we have also presented their consumption recommendations (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Edible wild plants that grow in Slovenia

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WILD GARLIC (ALLIUM URSINUM)</b></p> <p>The plant contains an essential oil and tastes like garlic. Spring leaves contain 20-50% of vitamin C, about 7 mg of carotene, chlorophyll, flavonoids, and minerals. Wild garlic can be used all year round in our nutrition. We collect young or developed leaves, buds of inflorescences with stalks, young fruits and bulbs. The leaves and bulbs are a delicious spice for soups, meat dishes, salads, sauces, and side dishes. It is recommended to use them fresh or steamed, as they lose their smell and taste when dried or cooked in water. Unripe three-part fruits can be used as a spicy seasoning, as they taste very hot. Raw bulbs are suitable for pickling. It is necessary to wash them well, cut off their roots, load them into jars and pour strong homemade vinegar over them. They can be put in oil in the same way.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 1: Wild garlic</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: slovenskenovice.si</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STINGING NETTLE (URTICA DIOICA)</b></p> <p>They bloom from June to September. Along the stem and leaves, the nettle has numerous stinging hairs that are hollow and contain an irritatingly toxic mixture. The burning hairs have a hard and brittle tip that breaks at the slightest touch. The contents of the plant spill over the skin, causing burning pain.</p> <p>We use young tops and leaves in cooking. The most common method of preparation is like the preparation of spinach or chard. Nettle is used in various condiments, fillings, soups, spreads, and salads. Nettle can be added to cheese spreads or made into nettle beer. The plant can also be eaten raw, but in smaller quantities than soup. When cooking nettle, we must be especially careful not to drain the water in which it was cooked, as this would discard the minerals. Nettle can also be dried, ground to a powder and added to dishes little by little to enrich them with minerals.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 2: Stinging nettle</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: nadlani.si</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>COMMON DANDELION (TARAXACUM OFFICINALE)</b></p> <p>We collect young tender shoots, which we cut just above the root so that the leaves remain in the bouquet. We can also collect older leaves, flower buds and flowers, as well as roots in winter. Older dandelion, especially after flowering, is bitter and therefore useless when it comes to cooking. Young leaves are most often used for various salads, and older leaves are best cooked as a condiment. When cooking, the water should be changed several times to lose the bitterness. Flower buds are eaten raw in salads or cooked. It is necessary to remove the sheathing leaves at the base of the flowers because they are quite bitter. They can be pickled in vinegar and used as capers. Whole fresh roots, if not too bitter, are boiled or cut into rings and fried in oil. We prepare a coffee-like medicinal drink from dried and roasted roots.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 3: Common dandelion</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: biodinamika-podravje.si</i></p>





<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CHICKWEED (STELLARIA MEDIA)</b></p> <p>It grows in gardens, vineyards, and orchards. It is one of the most common and most useful wild plants. We collect young above-ground parts of plants and the shoots of older plants. Their taste is reminiscent of sweet corn. It contains a lot of iron, calcium, magnesium, vitamin C, beta carotene and other vitamins and minerals. It is used for salads, risottos, and stewed as a side dish.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 4: Chickweed</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: neodvisnost.si</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>APOSERIS FOETIDA</b></p> <p>In addition to dandelion, Aposteris foedita is one of the first wild salads in the spring. Unlike dandelion, it grows in the forest, so some people know it as forest dandelion. Aposteris foedita has a pronounced and characteristic smell of potatoes, so in some places it is named after potatoes. At first glance, it looks like dandelion. Young leaves are harvested throughout the year, as they are softer than dandelion leaves. The leaves are cut from the ground similar to how dandelion leaves are cut. From spring onwards, we also collect older leaves, stems with buds, and inflorescences.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 5: Aposteris foedita</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: pinterest.com</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GROUND ELDER (AEGOPODIUM PODAGRARIA)</b></p> <p>At the end of winter and in early spring, we collect very young leaves, then stem shoots, buds and flowers, as well as already developed leaves. The leaves and flowers can be dried and kept in closed glass jars. Ground elder combines both spice and vegetable properties, so it can be used in both ways. Very young, reddish to light green leaves that do not yet have open leaf surfaces are most useful for salads. The developed leaves are tougher, so we cut them very finely and add them to salads, cook them or bake them. When exposed to heat, the essential oils change in composition, so cooked or baked ground elder tastes different than raw ground elder. Stem shoots, buds, and flowers are more aromatic and better used as spices. They are usually finely chopped and sprinkled on already prepared dishes.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 6: Ground elder</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: smara.si</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>YARROW (ACHILLEA MILLEFOLIUM)</b></p> <p>Yarrow blooms from June until October. It contains vitamins A, C and K, potassium, bitters, azulene essential oil, organic acids, and other compounds, including alkaloids.</p> <p>Young yarrow leaves, which have a strong and pleasant taste, are harvested in nature from March onwards. Flowering plants are harvested from May onwards and in the summer months. The leaves are best in spring but can also be harvested in summer. Smaller amounts of collected leaves are sufficient for food. We pick them fresh then dry them and used the crushed dried yarrow as a spice. Whole plants can also be dried, sliced, and stored in glass jars. Young leaves can be added to soups, spring salads and vegetable stews. Yarrow, together with other herbs, is added to cottage cheese spreads and mayonnaise. It is also useful for making liqueurs and herbal spirits - bitters.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 7: Yarrow</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: duhovnost.eu</i></p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>COMMON PURSLANE (PORTULACA OLERACEA)</b></p> <p>It originates from Anatolia. Common purslane is used fresh as a leafy vegetable all summer. Juicy leaves and stems can be used as spinach or as an addition to salads, herbal sauces, and cottage cheese. The leaves have a refreshing, slightly acidic (like lemon) and slightly salty taste. Green-leaved varieties have slightly thicker leaves and are more resistant and taste better than yellow and golden-yellow varieties. Common purslane is rich in vitamins A, C, B, and minerals (Mg, K, Ca, Fe). Young leaves, which are harvested in the summer before flowering, are used fresh in salads or cooked in vegetable soups (minestrone) and can also be preserved in oil. Young shoots and leaves go well with simple fresh salads. If common purslane is cooked, it acquires an undesirable slimy texture for many. This is solved by mixing it with other vegetables with a stronger aroma (cooked separately) after cooking. We use it for various omelettes, it is also excellent when breaded. We can even pickle it in vinegar.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Image 8: Common purslane</i></p>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: slovenskenovice.si</i></p>
<p><b>BITTERCRESSES</b></p> <p>Bittercresses are related to watercress, so the plants have a similar taste and effect. Eight types of bittercress grow in Slovenia, but hairy bittercress, cuckoo flower, wavy bittercress, and large bittercress are mainly used for food.</p> <p>We do not cook bittercresses because it changes their pleasantly spicy taste and they lose their healthy sulphur compounds and other ingredients. They contain glucosinolates (sulphur compounds that are powerful antioxidants), a lot of beta carotene, vitamin C, and other vitamins and minerals. The leaf rosettes and young flower stalks with buds and flowers are edible. We add them to salads, offer them with meat and other dishes that go well with horseradish or radish. We use them to prepare excellent salad dressings and spreads.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CUCKOO FLOWER (CARDAMINE PRETENSIS)</b></p> <p>People would relieve pain and cramps with tear from cuckoo flower. They would also prepare soups and salads from the young leaves.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Image 9: Cuckoo flower</i></p>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: clanki.kupiprodam.si</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HAIRY BITTERCRESS (CARDAMINE HIRSUTA)</b></p> <p>It has a spicy taste like horseradish. We collect young leaf rosettes and the tops of the shoots together with the buds, flowers, and fruits, (the whole plant excluding the roots) to add to salads. Later, we collect only young shoots.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Image 10: Hairy bittercress</i></p>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: urbanatura.si</i></p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DROOPING BITTERCRESS (CARDAMINE ENNEAPHYLLOS)</b></p> <p>It is a perennial plant that grows in the soil with horizontal rhizomes. We collect pale yellow flower heads, which taste slightly like horseradish and are slightly spicy. The flowers are a very tasty addition to spring salads.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 11: Drooping bittercress</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: petersfoto.si</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FIVE-LEAFLET BITTERCRESS (CARDAMINE PENTAPHYLLOS)</b></p> <p>It is distinguished from other bittercresses by the shape of the lower stem leaves, which are palmately divided into five leaflets. We collect pink flowers to add to salads.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 12: Five-leaflet bittercress</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: petersfoto.si</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CORALROOT (CARDAMINE BULBIFERA)</b></p> <p>Coralroot grows in forested areas and is recognizable by the buds in the foliage of the upper stem leaves. We collect flowers and young leaves for salads, and the buds are also edible.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 13: Coralroot</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: notranjski-park.si</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AMARANTHACEAE</b></p> <p>It comes from Central America, where it was prized primarily by Indians as it represented their daily food. The seeds of cultivated Amaranthaceae and their hybrids are known as amaranth. It is a quality and nutritionally strong food. Today, Amaranthaceae can be bought in health food stores. Wild plant leaves are usually so tough by summer that they are inedible, but Amaranthaceae can be eaten until mid-August. It can be prepared in soups, salads, vegetable patties, cooked in risottos or steamed and drizzled with olive oil.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 14: Amaranthaceae</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: veggiecombo.eu</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GARLIC MUSTARD (ALLIARIA PETIOLATA)</b></p> <p>The plant got its name because of the characteristic smell of garlic, which is most easily detected if its leaf is crushed between the fingers. Young shoots, leaves, flowers, buds, and green fruits are used for various salads. While cooking garlic mustard, its garlic aroma is lost, and the bitter taste stands out. We cook very young leaves and use them only as an addition to other vegetables. Using the ground leaves and nuts, a spread is made, with the addition of sesame- or any other cold-pressed oil.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 15: Garlic mustard</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: notranjski-park.si</i></p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HOPS (HUMULUS LUPULUS)</b></p> <p>It blooms from July to August. It is important to harvest the shoots when they are still brittle, otherwise they are too filamentous. We usually collect about 20 cm long shoots. Smaller quantities of raw shoots are cut into salads, they are also prepared stewed with eggs, like asparagus, or in risottos. They can be steamed for a few minutes or with a little water and offered cooked as a vegetable side dish. We pour a little water into a pot and add some hop shoots. Then, we bring everything to a boil and cook over medium heat for a few minutes to soften the shoots. After, we put them in a bowl with the water, or on a plate. Lastly, we drizzle them with olive, pumpkin oil or ground walnuts, salt to taste and sprinkle with finely chopped wild garlic. The most characteristic taste is obtained if they are only briefly steamed and prepared as a stand-alone dish. We only need a little olive oil, herbal salt, or soy sauce to complement the taste. Parmesan also suits them very well.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 16: Hops</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: bodieko.si</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CICELY (MYRRHIS ODORATA)</b></p> <p>The plant, especially if crushed between the fingers, smells of anise. We collect young leaves, inflorescence buds, stalks of developed leaves and green fruits. The young leaves, which, depending on the altitude, are harvested from May to July, are excellent vegetables. The leaves are cut into salads, added to soups, spreads and other dishes. Due to their fresh taste and anise aroma, it is a shame to cook them. The flower stalk is also useful 20 cm below the flower, we also use the leaf stalks if they are soft and juicy. Unripe (green) or ripe (black) fruits have a similar aromatic taste as the leaves. They can be dried and later used for tea or as a spice. Due to its similar taste to anise, it goes well with both sweet and savoury dishes.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 17: Cicely</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: aroma-herbal.com</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SHAGGY SOLDIER AND GALLANT SOLDIER (GALINSOGA CILIATA, GALINSOGA PARVIFLORA)</b></p> <p>We know two types of Galinsoga. Both are herbaceous annuals that grow about 75 cm high on fertile soils. We gather young shoots and leaves for food. Both types contain three to four times more iron than spinach. Shoots are suitable as a salad plant and for cooking in stews or side dishes.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 18: Galinsoga</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: zelisnerastline.blogspot.com</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GROUND-IVY (GLECHOMA HEDERACEA)</b></p> <p>It blooms from April to June and in autumn. The whole plant has a strong and aromatic scent. We use young leaves and shoots, leaves before flowering and flowers for food. Young leaves are often an integral part of spring salads due to their characteristic fresh taste. Cooked leaves are a great addition to cheese spreads, soups, or stews. Ground ivy is added to fresh vegetable soups, daisies, yarrow, primrose leaves and common violet leaves. Because it loses its aroma during cooking, it is usually added to dishes just before the end of cooking. It was sometimes used as a substitute for parsley, chopped and sprinkled on meat, vegetable dishes and soups. It can also be used to flavour vinegar and herbal spreads. Ground ivy belongs to a mixture of herbs for liqueur and various bitters. In England, it was used in the late Middle Ages to flavour, clarify and preserve beer, as hops was banned for some time.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 19: Ground ivy</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: katjarebolj.com</i></p>



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>RIBWORT PLANTAIN (PLANTAGO LANCEOLATA)</b></p> <p>Ribwort plantain is a perennial plant. Fresh ribwort plantain can be eaten as a vegetable in salads. The leaves can be prepared similarly to spinach, Swiss chard, or nettle. Young shoots are steamed and stewed in oil and garlic, and young inflorescences are a great addition to salads if they are quickly fried in olive oil. In terms of healing effects and taste, they are related to the shoots of asparagus and butcher's broom. Fresh young ribwort plantain with its root is great for spring soups. For side dishes and condiments, it is best used in the following mixture: 2/4 nettle, 1/4 thistle and 1/4 plantain leaves.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Image 20: Ribwort plantain</i></p>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: slovenskenovice.si</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUMMER SAVORY (SATUREJA HORTENSIS)</b></p> <p>Summer savory is harvested in the morning hours and before flowering, as the leaves have the best taste and the most pronounced aroma, which is somewhat reminiscent of mint. Freshly picked summer savory is not sold almost anywhere, but seedlings are available in horticulture shops, which can be planted and placed on a windowsill. Summer savory is kept in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to ten days; it can be frozen, preserved in vinegar or oil, and when dried, it retains its aroma well. As summer savory has a more "spicy" taste than thyme, it goes well with strong vegetables, such as cabbage, brussels sprouts, cucumbers, and cooked vegetable salads, as well as roasted veal and pork, rabbit meat, horseradish sauce, goat cheese, tomato sauces, marinades, and fish, especially trout. Due to its strong taste, it is added to dishes at the beginning of cooking.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Image 21: Summer savory</i></p>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: klubgaia.com</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE (HELIANTHUS TUBEROSIS)</b></p> <p>In our climate, it begins to bloom in August, and not rarely only in October. Jerusalem artichoke tuber contains 78% water and 22% dry matter as well as about 20% inulin (polysaccharide). In addition to inulin, the dry matter of the tuber contains about 2% protein and 0.2% fat. Minerals wise, it contains iron, silicon, potassium, phosphorus, and calcium. It contains vitamins A, B1, B2 and C and the phosphatides choline and lecithin. The method of using Jerusalem artichoke tubers is similar to that of potatoes. Compared to potatoes, Jerusalem artichokes can also be eaten raw, that is fresh or half-cooked. Fresh tubers have a unique taste. Raw tubers can be cut or grated into salads, and pieces of it are served with spice sauces. Cooked, stewed, or baked tubers are juicier and lighter than potatoes. It can be served as a starter, in soups, side dishes and salads.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Image 22: Jerusalem artichoke - flower</i></p>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: schoener-wohnen.de</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Image 23: Jerusalem artichoke - root</i></p>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: gartenbista.de</i></p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PRIMROSE (PRIMULA VULGARIS)</b></p> <p>Primrose leaves and flowers are used in herbal liqueurs, for salads or just as an addition or decoration. Older trumpet leaves can be used as an addition to vegetable soups and condiments. They are used in small quantities because they contain saponins (bitter to taste and foam in mixtures with water). Candied trumpet flowers can be used as an interesting decoration.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Image 24: Primrose</i></p>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: notranjski-park.si</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>COMMON DAISY (BELLIS PERENNIS)</b></p> <p>As an addition to salads, we collect flowers and young leaves of daisies, which have a fresh and slightly bitter taste. The flowers can be used to decorate salads, and fresh or candied daisies can be used to decorate dishes, especially ice cream or fruit salads. We can also collect small flower buds, which are suitable for salads as well as for pickling in vinegar. The common daisy is a medicinal plant. We dry its flowers for tea. Decorative daisies with richer flowers are equally useful.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Image 25: Common daisy</i></p>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: substral.si</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>COMMON VIOLET (VIOLA ODORATA)</b></p> <p>There are hundreds of known varieties of the common violet, with different colours to them. To add to salads, we collect flowers of all colours and a small amount of young leaves. We thicken soups and spring vegetables with the leaves and flower buds. We scent and decorate ice cream and other desserts with the flowers. In Toulouse, France (the city of violets), they make delicious cookies, pralines, candies, and jams. The aroma of violets is obtained by pouring hot water over the flowers. During this process, the light purple colour, which is suitable for various desserts, is eliminated. Because the flowers are very small, we need at least a few hundred to obtain their aroma.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Image 26: Common violet</i></p>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: lifestyle.ena.com</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GARDEN ORACHE (ATRIPLEX HORTENSIS)</b></p> <p>Garden orache has been grown as a vegetable in the past, and its leaves have been used as a substitute for spinach or as an addition to salads. Garden orache originates from south-eastern Europe and western Asia. In the Mediterranean area, it was grown as a garden vegetable more than 4,000 years ago.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Image 27: Garden orache</i></p>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source: gartlc.mojforum.si</i></p>

## THE USABILITY OF WILD PLANTS IN COOKING

Based on a review of the Slovenian culinary literature, we conclude that it is possible to find many dishes in Slovenia's culinary heritage that could potentially be used in restaurants. We reviewed the dishes and presented in the table below according to their characteristics and place on a menu (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Wild plant dishes and their classification

<b>Dish type</b>	<b>Individual dishes by groups</b>
<b>SOUPS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Mashed potato soup with wild garlic</li> <li>❖ Wild garlic cappuccino soup</li> <li>❖ Dandelion soup</li> <li>❖ Green creamy soup from edible wild plants</li> <li>❖ Maidenstears soup</li> <li>❖ Chickweed soup with chickpeas</li> <li>❖ Soup with worm fern</li> <li>❖ Meadow goat's-beard in soup</li> <li>❖ Cold cream soup with avocado and wild greens</li> <li>❖ Nettle soup with pine nuts</li> <li>❖ Thick creamy wild beetroot soup</li> <li>❖ Milky nettle soup</li> </ul>
<b>STARTERS</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cold starters</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Chickweed sorbet</li> <li>❖ Dandelion and olive salad</li> <li>❖ Meadow goat's-beard with vegetables</li> <li>❖ Bean spread with summer savory</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Warm starters</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Dandelion with bacon</li> <li>❖ ground elder with wholemeal pasta</li> <li>❖ Dandelion omelette</li> <li>❖ Maidenstears risotto</li> <li>❖ Nettle risotto</li> <li>❖ Pasta with maidenstears</li> <li>❖ Omelette with dandelion flowers</li> <li>❖ Potato omelette with porcinis and summer savory</li> <li>❖ Nettle gnocchi</li> <li>❖ Ravioli with goat cheese and nettle</li> </ul>

<p><b>MAIN COURSES</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Dandelion with Turkish style rice</li> <li>❖ Tagliatelle with dandelion sauce</li> <li>❖ Pasta with garlic and dandelion</li> <li>❖ Dandelion with roast beef</li> <li>❖ Dandelion with lentils</li> <li>❖ Dandelion in shiitake cap with grated egg</li> <li>❖ Nettle and button mushroom roll</li> <li>❖ Common purslane fried with eggs</li> <li>❖ Fried wild garlic</li> <li>❖ Simple hops shoots</li> <li>❖ Oven baked fish with summer savory and green beans</li> <li>❖ Roast beef with mushrooms and summer savory</li> <li>❖ Pork tenderloin with elderberry, with a polenta and vegetable souffle</li> </ul>
<p><b>SALADS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Purslane with cucumbers and tomatoes</li> <li>❖ Julian salad</li> <li>❖ Colourful wild salad</li> <li>❖ The first autumn wild salad</li> <li>❖ May salad with violets</li> <li>❖ Dandelion salad with mandarin oranges</li> <li>❖ Dandelion salad with primrose</li> <li>❖ Spring meadow salad</li> <li>❖ Chickweed salad</li> </ul>
<p><b>DESSERTS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Fried elderflowers</li> <li>❖ Fried elderberry or acacia</li> <li>❖ Violet biscuits</li> <li>❖ Elderberry wine chaudeau</li> <li>❖ Elderberry pie</li> <li>❖ Vanilla charlotte with elderberry, dried apricots and elderberry syrup</li> <li>❖ Strawberry-cream sorbet with sugar acacia</li> </ul>

<b>OTHER DISHES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Dandelion or daisy buds in vinegar</li> <li>❖ Dandelion pesto</li> <li>❖ Violet punch</li> <li>❖ Violet vinegar</li> <li>❖ Candied violets</li> <li>❖ Violet syrup</li> <li>❖ Honey with violets</li> <li>❖ Violet liqueur</li> <li>❖ Spice sauce with ground elder</li> <li>❖ Elderberry vinegar</li> </ul>
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## CONCLUSION

In the gastronomic sense, wild plants are a specialty in Slovenia, they are sufficiently varied and diverse, and rich and interesting in taste. There are sources that indicate that wild plants have always been used on Slovenian soil as an addition to other food. Based on the obtained data, we found that wild plants can be included in the gastronomic choices offered in Slovenia.

There are many advantages to Slovenian gastronomic choices: the diversity of choices in a small space, a selection of high-quality wines, a rich natural and culinary heritage, smallness, top chefs (e.g. media recognisable Ana Roš), protected species of bees, protected foods, various wines and spirits, high hygiene and safety standards, and diverse tastes of the same food in different parts of Slovenia.

As Slovenia wants to present itself as a unique boutique destination with sustainable tourism, the possibility of using wild plants from unspoiled nature is currently an overlooked opportunity in sustainable gastronomy.

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