

Uses for Edible Flowers

Borage

For drinks, float borage flowers in punch bowls or freeze them in ice cubes to serve in lemonade. The large leaves have a mild cucumber flavor and can be steeped in hot water for a refreshing summer tea.

Calendula

The daisy-like petals are easy to separate from the flower head and can be scattered over salads. The petals can also be used to color and flavor butter, cheese and rice dishes, acting like saffron but with a lighter impact. Dried petals, used as a garnish for winter soups, make for an especially colorful addition to leek and potato or butternut squash soups.

Gem Marigolds

The petite flowers can be used whole, or separate the petals to scatter over a dish for an aromatic lift. Freeze into popsicles!

Nasturtiums

The pungent-flavored blossoms and green lily pad-shaped leaves can be used in salads and are said to have exceptional antioxidant qualities. Excellent served in a salad, or mixed with softened butter to melt over steamed vegetables or fish.

Bee Balm

Blooms are strongly flavored and best used sparingly. Separate the petals from the main head to scatter over fruit salad, or steep the flower heads in liquid, then strain for a refreshing sorbet or jam. Substitute bee balm in recipes that call for Earl Grey tea.

Scarlet Runner Beans

Harvest the plump buds and fully opened flowers before the beans develop and enjoy them as a garnish with deviled eggs, on a cheese plate or tucked into a platter of antipasto.

Chive Blossoms

The purple flower heads are made up of individual florets that can be broken off and added to salads, dips, butters and infused in vinegar. They are also easy to dry: Cover the blossoms and part of the stems with a paper bag and hang the bunch upside down in a dry, airy place. Like dried herbs, dried flowers impart a more concentrated flavor.

Lavender

Aromatic lavender has long been used as an ingredient in perfumes and potpourri, but the perennial also has magical effects as a culinary herb. Remove the buds from the stem and use sparingly in desserts such as cookies or in a fruit preserve.

Violets/Pansies

Bright garnish in salads, soups, or cakes (the tiny purple and yellow flowers look fantastic on a chocolate cake). To pick them, pinch off the flower heads and use them whole. If the pansies are large, break off into individual petals. A well-known method for preserving them is to paint them with sugar water for a candied effect. Drying flowers in a press is yet another way to preserve the blossoms, and a great way to save for winter when edible flowers are scarce.

Daylilies

Daylily buds and flowers taste a bit like asparagus and zucchini. They can be used as a garnish, or can be stuffed or made into fritters. Also good in stir-fries.