

Edible Flowers

Many people ask about what flowers are edible. If you have never heard of such a thing, well, yes...it certainly is possible!!! Martha Stewart made edible flowers the "posh" thing to have on dinner tables at parties. Flowers can add beauty and interest to salads and other dishes. Before collecting flowers from your own garden to adorn a special meal, there are just a few things to know. Only eat flowers that are organically grown. Never use any chemicals around flowers that you ever think you would want to eat. Next, know what flowers are edible and what flavor they bestow.

Borage is a plant with clusters of blue flowers that hang on long petioles. The leaves and stems have tiny hairs. The beautiful blue flowers add a cucumber-like flavor to salads, drinks, and desserts. The flowers can be candied and used for cake decorations.

Calendula is a composite flower like a zinnia or a chrysanthemum. The bright yellow to orange color will add a golden hue to salads and dips. Calendula is also known as the "Poor Man's Saffron". With its spicy, peppery taste, it will provide flavor to Southwest and Asian dishes.

Marigolds, like calendulas, have a peppery, spicy flavor. They have a similar color range as the calendulas as well. Bright oranges, yellows and whites add color to many dishes.

Carnations and dianthus provide a complete range of color from red to pink to white. The peppery flavor can range from very bland to spicy. Carnations are used in salads and dips. Try floating them as garnish in soups.

The flowers of culinary herbs are edible. The flowers will usually taste like the leaves. The lilac colored flowers of chives are a great garnish for potatoes, soups and salads. Small amounts of lavender are used in candy and cakes. Lavender has a perfumed scent that carries over to the food. Try using it in jellies. Experiment with other herb flowers in dishes where you normally use the leaves.

Chrysanthemums add a slightly pungent and sometimes bitter flavor to foods. The wide range of colors would make any party a festive event. Add a rainbow of color to dips for a kick of flavor.

Daylilies are easy to grow and come in many colors. Daylilies have a nutty, slightly sweet flavor. The flowers have a crunchy texture and are good in salads, as well as desserts and drinks.

Hibiscus are popular flowers in our area. The beautiful flowers give a tropical feeling to any party. Try boiling the petals to make a tea, then strain off the tinted liquid. Hibiscus has a slightly acid flavor, so sweetener may be needed.

Impatiens are commonly found in Texas shade gardens. The candied flowers can be used to decorate the tops of cakes. For your next luncheon, add an Impatiens blossom to ice tea with a sprig of mint for decoration.

Nasturtiums have had a long history as an edible flower. They have a peppery flavor similar to radishes. The small buds can be used like capers. The flowers add color and beauty to salads and vegetable dishes.

Pansies are used as a candied flower to decorate cakes. The sweet flavor can be used in desserts and drinks. Pansies grow in a rainbow of colors. Freeze them in ice trays and float the ice cubes in your favorite drink.

Pineapple sage has a great pineapple flavor and can be used in teas and desserts. The red flowers of this plant are eye catching. This is a plant that hummingbirds like also.

Rose petals add a delicate, sweet flavor to many dishes. The petals can be used in sorbets, fruit salads, teas and desserts. The stronger the fragrance, the stronger the flavor will be.

Scented geraniums have a variety of smells. Each smell will carry that same flavor. There are fragrances of rose, lemon, chocolate, and apple, to name only a few. The flowers are usually small but are heavily scented.

There are other flowers that are edible, too. One book that can be used as a reference is Southern Herb Growing by Madalene Hill and Gwen Barclay. The book offers a great selection of recipes using flowers. Remember, NO CHEMICALS! Experiment with a few and find which ones you like. The addition of flowers to a summer meal can make a special occasion especially charming.