

Nettle-Walnut Spread

This recipe calls for six ounces of fresh stinging nettles, but if you've dealt with nettles before, you know that measuring them—well, touching them in any way, really—is inconvenient, because the fine hairs on the sunny side of each leaf really do sting. Six ounces is about half a paper bag's worth of unpacked nettles, if you're picking them yourself.

Use the spread on sandwiches, smear it on a plate and top it with cooked eggs and crunchy sea salt, or dilute it a bit with water and dress a bowl of spaghetti (with additional chopped walnuts, toasted breadcrumbs, and freshly grated Parmesan, if you're willing).

Makes about 2 cups

6 ounces fresh stinging nettles, stems and all
1 cup toasted walnuts
Stripped zest and juice of 1 medium lemon
1 teaspoon kosher salt (or to taste)
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Heat a large pot of water to a boil over high heat. Add the nettles without touching them, using tongs if necessary, and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until the nettles are all completely limp. Drain the nettles, spread on a baking sheet, and set aside until cool enough to touch.

Meanwhile add the walnuts, lemon zest and juice, and salt to the work bowl of a food processor. Using two hands, squeeze the nettles dry of any excess liquid a clump at a time, then loosen each clump before adding it to the food processor with the other ingredients. Pulse the nettle mixture until finely chopped, stopping to scrape down the sides of the work bowl every now and then. Add the olive oil, then whirl the mixture until smooth and thick. (It should look like green hummus.) Season to taste with additional salt, if necessary.

Transfer the spread to an airtight container and refrigerate until ready to use, up to 2 weeks.