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Welcome to another **foraging TIMES™**

As we come into the main summer season two very useful and nutritious edible wild greens are around at this time... Good Kind Henry [*Chenopodium bonus-Henricus*] and Fat-Hen [*Chenopodium album*]. There's also a third plant which I'll add to these two – Orache [*Atriplex patula*]. All quite similar plants in terms of their appearance and physical characteristics in the kitchen.



ABOVE: Fat-Hen.

Fat-hen is a common annual weed of waste-land and found from temperate Asia to northern Europe. In Britain it's found virtually everywhere there is cultivated ground - where the seeds can fall on disturbed ground and propagate. An 'annual', it commonly is a weed of allotments, gardens, manure heaps and cultivated fields.

The plant grows from about 2 to 4ft. high, is wind pollinated, flowers between July and September (probably earlier these days given climate change), and when mature has a much branched, erect stem. Leaves of the upper stems tend to be rather more pointed than



Young Fat-Hen leaves are a quite bright green but darken with age. These whole small leaves with the upper stalk are excellent.



Older Fat-Hen leaves develop a sort of mealy white covering.



Older Good King Henry leaves develop a notch on the lower part of their leaf structure.

SAFE FORAGING

THE GOLDEN RULE...

If you cannot identify a wild plant with 100% certainty as being one of the edible species NEVER use it as food. If you have the slightest hesitation over a plant's identity be safe and MOVE ON. Similarly, if you cannot remember which part of the plant is used leave it alone.

MOST IMPORTANT...

Check your personal tolerance to ANY new edible wild plant before consuming in quantity. If you have a medical condition or are taking medication then you should seek professional medical advice before consuming edible wild plants as they may contain constituents that impair or amplify that medication.

AND DO...

Be 'aware' of the environment that you are gathering from. Is there possible contamination from effluent, car exhaust emissions, sprays, dogs and so on?

LASTLY...

NEVER consume foliage which is dead or dying, or that which is yellowed discoloured (that COULD be just from bad soil nutrients it could also be an indicator of weed-killers at work!).

the lower leaves which are more rhomboidal in shape. The flowers / seeds are borne on racemes.

Like many of the *atriplex* and *chenopods* Fat-Hen can be difficult for beginners to identify, not least because the plant can appear in different intermediate forms.

It makes a great kitchen vegetable albeit rather low-yielding and contains around twice as much vitamin C and A as spinach.



ABOVE: Good King Henry will frequently be found alongside nettles on muck heaps and such like.

Good King Henry has a long history as a cultivated vegetable but has been out of fashion for more than a century. Today it is regarded as a weed, but is likely to be found near areas of human habitation in rural areas.

GKH leaves are generally larger and more succulent than those of Fat-Hen or Orache, and make an excellent vegetable green. It is frequently found around farmyards and on muck heaps (as seen below & above).



There's all sorts of information on foraging for edible wild greens via the main website:

www.wildfoodschool.co.uk

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A very variable plant in terms of leaf shape, common orache [*Atriplex patula*] is found in coastal regions as well as in cultivated areas.



You will frequently find masses of orache growing together.



ABOVE: Fat-Hen frittata.



ABOVE: Fat-Hen with rice & venison (from frozen stock).

NOTE that 'uprooting' ANY wild plant in the UK is illegal under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 unless you have 'authorisation' Similar laws may exist in other countries.

FAT-HEN FRITTATA

1-2 handfuls fat-hen leaves
Cooked potato - cubed
Butter / oil
Egg - beaten
Salt and pepper

This is a straightforward recipe and you can use a leftover roast potato rescued from the embers of your fire, or perhaps bake an extra one for the next day. If using very young fat-hen leaves then these could be used straight from the plant, older ones you might want to give a quick sweat in a pan to help tenderise, then chop and use.

- In a heavy-bottomed pan [or even do this on a griddle] gently fry the potato pieces so they take on a nice colour.
- Add the fat-hen leaves and push down among the potato pieces.
- Season the beaten egg with salt and pepper and pour over the other ingredients.
- Cook until the egg has set.

Young Orache and GKH leaves can similarly be used to make this recipe.

OTHER WFS SNIPPETS

The forthcoming web TV series called **Wild Food Mentor** is likely to be launched in September. So watch this space.

Also WFS is posting short foraging and wild food videos on YouTube. Best do a text 'search' of Wild Food School on YT to find the relevant videos.