



THE LAB

Eight pages of things to make and do

Cook nettle soup

Go hunting for some of nature's prickliest ingredients and make this delicious soup.

What you need

- 400g nettles
- 1 tsp oil
- 1 onion (chopped)
- 1 clove of garlic (crushed)
- 1 stick of celery (chopped)
- 200g potatoes (chopped)
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 cube vegetable stock
- 2 litres of water
- 200g spinach
- 100g mint
- Gloves
- A bag
- Large saucepan
- Wooden spoon
- Metal tongs
- Hand blender

Instructions

- 1** Find some wild stinging nettles. Head for a favourite green or wild spot with a grown-up. You are sure to find nettles. Making sure you are wearing gloves, carefully pick five or six handfuls and take them home.
- 2** Still wearing your gloves, wash the nettles under hot water and pick the leaves off the stalks. Set the leaves aside for now – you won't be needing the stalks.
- 3** Ask a grown-up to help you heat the oil in a saucepan and gently fry the onions and garlic together for about five minutes until golden. Then add the celery and fry for another five minutes.
- 4** Add the potatoes and bay leaves to the saucepan and cook for a further five minutes before adding the vegetable stock cube and water. After about an hour of cooking, remove the bay leaves carefully with some tongs.
- 5** Next, add the nettles, spinach and mint and cook for a few minutes. Use a hand blender to blend your soup until smooth. Season to taste and serve with some crusty bread.

WARNING!
Don't pick nettles from polluted sites and avoid leaves tinged with purple. Always wear gloves when handling nettles.



Nettles contain lots of essential vitamins.

How does it work?

A nettle's sting helps the plant protect itself from predators. The stingers look like tiny hairs on the stems and underside of the leaves. They are cells reinforced with a hard mineral. This makes them sharp and able to pierce skin, injecting a poison that causes a stinging sensation. Washing nettles in hot water makes the stingers go soft. Nettles are best when young, so pick small leaves and avoid plants that are flowering. Nettles contain vitamins A, C and K, which are part of a healthy diet.

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