


QUICK & HEALTHY

GOURMET GARLANDS

PRETTY BLOOMS ARE ALWAYS WELCOMED AT THE DINING TABLE. NOW, THEY ARE ALSO DELICIOUS IN YOUR FOOD.

BY ESTELLE LOW PHOTOGRAPHY BY WINSTON CHUANG



The orchids in this dish of red pesto pasta may help you breathe better.

IT HAS BEEN SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN that admiring flowers can reduce stress, lower blood pressure and alleviate muscle tension. But eating them for health benefits? As it turns out, certain blooms such as elderberry can help provide relief for asthma, cold and constipation. Rose petals, too, can rejuvenate your skin and keep your

hormones in check. However, not every flower is edible and you should only use those that are free from pesticides. "To be safe, use dried flowers sold in Chinese medical halls," says Clement Ng, owner and chef of Eden Sanctuary, who specialises in using flowers in his dishes. Here are three of his simple, quick and tantalising recipes.

RED PESTO PASTA WITH ORCHIDS, ROCKETS AND BASIL (serves 2)

Crunchy and slightly tangy, orchids are good for the lungs and can alleviate respiratory problems.

Prep time: 10 minutes
Cooking time: 20 minutes

For the sauce

You'll need:

3 ripe tomatoes
1 red capsicum
10g Parmesan cheese
25ml olive oil
Small amount of sundried tomatoes
Salt and pepper to taste

To prepare:

- Cross-score the tomatoes and capsicum, then bake at 250 deg C for 20 minutes. Remove from oven and cover them with aluminium foil for 5 minutes. Peel off the skin and remove seeds.
- Place tomatoes and capsicum in a blender. Drizzle in olive oil and sprinkle salt, pepper, Parmesan cheese and sundried tomatoes. Blend well until you get a puree.

You'll need:

360g pasta, cooked and drained
A handful of rockets and basil
Orchids to garnish (from Mandai Orchid Gardens)
Parmesan cheese to taste

To prepare:

- Transfer sauce into a heated pan and stir in cooked pasta. Remove from heat once it's evenly mixed. Toss the pasta with rockets and transfer to a serving plate. Garnish with orchids and Parmesan cheese.



Osmanthus can help fight cancer and "cool" the body.

OSMANTHUS EGG FLORENTINE (serves 2)

Osmanthus are tiny and sweet-smelling golden flowers that taste like apricots when you eat them fresh. They are rich in cancer-fighting beta-carotene and have a "cooling" effect on the body.

Prep time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 3 minutes

For the sauce

You can prepare it in advance. It keeps well in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.

You'll need:

150g milk
1 tsp osmanthus (from Chinese medical halls)
50g Parmesan cheese or other grated hard cheese
Corn starch (to thicken)

To prepare:

- Heat milk in a pot and stir in the cheese until bubbles form. Over low heat, add osmanthus and corn starch to the mixture until it thickens. Leave it to cool.

You'll need:

2 eggs
200g spinach
1 tbsp olive oil
28g white button mushrooms
20g chopped candlenut or almond
30g mozzarella cheese
Salt, ground pepper and basil to taste
Chopped chives to garnish

To prepare:

- Wilt the spinach in a hot pan with olive oil and salt. Remove spinach once it softens. Spread it on a plate. Do the same for the mushrooms and mix in chopped nuts. Spread it evenly on top of the spinach layer.
- Boil water (twice the height of

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the egg) in a small pot. Add a teaspoon of vinegar to water to help the eggs coagulate faster and form a neater shape. Then, immerse a big soup ladle into water and crack an egg into it. Cook in gentle bubbling water for about 3 minutes, or until egg white is set. Carefully remove egg from pot and drain using a kitchen towel. Gently place the egg over the mushroom layer. Repeat with the other egg.

- Drizzle with the osmanthus cheese sauce and sprinkle with mozzarella. Bake at 250 deg C for 3 minutes or until cheese melts. Garnish it with osmanthus, pepper, basil and chopped spring onions.



HIBISCUS LIME TEA (serves 2)

Hibiscus is chock full of vitamins and antioxidants. It can reduce blood pressure, improve metabolism and act as a mild laxative.

Prep time: 5 minutes

You'll need:

- 10g dried hibiscus (from Chinese medical halls)
- Lime juice from 2 limes
- Rock honey to taste

To prepare:

- Add dried hibiscus to hot water at 80-90 deg C for 90 seconds; any hotter and the flowers will taste bitter. Add lime juice and ice cubes into cups, pour in the hot tea and serve.



Lavender and rosemary:
The instant cure for
headaches.

LAVENDER ROSEMARY CHICKEN (serves 2)

Lavender and rosemary can soothe headaches and provide relief faster than synthetic painkillers.

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

You'll need:

- 2 boneless chicken legs
- 15g fresh rosemary (from supermarkets)
- 2 tbsp dried lavender (from supermarkets)
- Lemon juice from 1 lemon
- Salt and pepper to taste

To prepare:

- Bruise the rosemary and sprinkle it over the chicken, together with dried lavender. Drizzle lemon juice over the chicken to tenderise it; for a zestier flavour, substitute with lime juice. Sprinkle salt and pepper over the chicken and gently massage it to let the flavours infuse. Let it stand for at least two hours in the fridge.
- Bake at 250 deg C for 20 minutes. Garnish with pepper and serve with fresh vegetables of your choice.