

Bower Recipes

A selection of recipes that us particular Bowerlings find special at this time of year - some are roughly traditional, some aren't; all are delicious.

Bower Flower Power Tea

- 3 rosebuds, or a heaped teaspoon of rose petals
- 12 jasmine buds
- A pinch of peach blossom
- And a pinch of lavender flowers

Put into a tea thingit, cover with boili- it's tea. Make tea.

N.B.: Don't overdo the lavender, it's a lot more potent than any of the other flowers!

Bannocks, with few-flowered leek butter

Legend has it that if you eat a bannock on Beltane morning, your crops will be something, something. Probably better. Everything's better with bannock.

Additional legends have it that if you eat some bannock at about 1am in Bower on Beltane morning, you might just feel a little bit less rough when trying to take down the Fire Arch without dropping it on someone else's head ten hours later.

Few-flowered leek is an invasive plant that drastically out-competes its relative, our native wild garlic. The bulb, stems, flowers and bulbils all taste very good and garlic-oniony, making it the perfect thing to gratuitously rip up out of the ground, helping mitigate the damage to the environment it causes, and make a pretty great garlic butter at the same time

Ingredients:

- 100g self-raising flour
- A half teaspoon of salt
- A heaped teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda
- 25g rolled oats
- 25g oatmeal (or some rolled oats you whizzed through the food processor)
- A 300ml carton of buttermilk (or you could use yoghurt I guess)

- A knob of good butter or vegan spread
- A big teaspoon of finely chopped few-flowered leek (or wild garlic, or regular garlic)

Method:

- 1.) Sift the flour, salt, and bicarb together.
- 2.) Stir in your oatmeal and rolled oats
- 3.) Very gradually add the buttermilk until you've got a soft (but not sticky) dough - you might not need to add all 300ml of it.
- 4.) Don't knead it. No DON'T KNEAD IT. STOP.
- 5.) Gently pat it out into a neat circle on a floured surface, and cut into quarters with a floury knife.
- 6.) Gently cook in a pan on a medium heat until browned on one side, flip over, and then brown the other.
- 7.) Meanwhile, gently fry the few-flowered leek in the butter, maybe with a couple of cracks of black pepper.
- 8.) Spread delicious garlicky butter onto delicious soft bannocks; devour.

Caudle

An old drink/custard/something you can find in assorted medieval cookbooks - it's usually made with eggs and ale, some suggest milk, one suggests using "a gode mylke of Almaundys", and other more modern recipes we've come across suggest cream.

Thomas Pennant talks about caudle and its associations with Beltane in the Highlands in his 18th-century diary, "Travels in Scotland":

"May 1st, 1769:

On the first day of May, the herdsmen of every village hold their Bel-tein, a rural sacrifice. They cut a square trench on the ground, leaving the turf in the middle; on that they make a fire of wood, on which they dress a large caudle of eggs, butter oatmeal and milk; and bring, besides the ingredients of the caudle, plenty of beer and whisky; for each of the company must contribute something. The rites begin by spilling some of the caudle upon the ground by way of libation; on that, everyone takes a cake of outmeal, on which are raised some nine square knobs, each dedicated to some particular being, the supposed preserver of their flocks and herds; and to some particular animal the supposed destroyer of them; each person then turns his face to the fire, breaks off a knob and flinging it over his shoulder says, 'This I give to thee, preserve thou my horses; this to thee preserve thou

my sheep' and so on. After that they use the same ceremony to the noxious animals; 'This I give to thee o fox, spare thou my lambs; this to thee o hooded crow; to thee o eagle.'

When the ceremony is over, they dine on the caudle; and after the feast is finished, what is left is hid by two persons deputed for that purpose; but on the next Sunday they re-assemble and finish the reliques of the first entertainment."

Ingredients:

- 250ml milk, almond milk, or light cream
- 1 tbsp oatmeal
- 2 eggs, beaten
- Honey or brown sugar, to taste
- Salt, to taste
- Grated fresh nutmeg, ground ginger, allspice, or saffron, to taste (or all of the above, why not)
- Some good brown ale (most recipes call for ale; one recipe calls for "wyne of Red, whyte is beterre", but maybe you'd prefer a nip of rum or whisky instead.)

Instructions:

- 1.) Heat the milk and oatmeal in a non-stick saucepan. Simmer gently until it starts to thicken.
- 2.) Quickly beat in the eggs, add honey and spices to taste, and simmer for about five minutes, stirring constantly.
- 3.) Take off the heat, then stir in your chosen booze.
- 4.) Serve warm in a mug, or pour onto your bannock, if you haven't put garlic butter on it already. One recipe suggests pouring it over pumpkin pye (pumpkin pie), which sounds delightful but not exactly Beltane-themed.

Fire Faerie Milk for Beltane

In a similar vein to caudle, but with a proper kick and no eggs.

Ingredients

- 2.5 cups milk of choice (i.e. almond)
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tsp dried lavender
- 1/8 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 stick cinnamon broken

Instructions

1. Heat the milk in a saucepan on medium heat, until the milk starts to steam.
2. Add in the honey, cinnamon, pepper, and lavender.
3. Lower heat and let simmer for about 10 minutes while you prepare your glasses. Pour honey on one plate and the sugar, cayenne pepper, and lavender on another plate. Press rim of glass into the honey, followed by the sugar and spice mixture.
4. Remove the milk from heat and let cool for a couple of minutes. Then pour, serve, and enjoy!

Lavender Syrup

Particularly good for bottling Summer for later use.

Ingredients

- 250ml water
- 250ml sugar
- 1-2 tbsp of lavender buds

Combine water, sugar, and lavender blossoms in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Simmer for 1 minute. Remove from heat and let syrup steep, about 30 minutes.

Pour syrup into a sterilised glass jar through a mesh strainer to remove blossoms; let cool.

Spring Vegetable and Sheep's Cheese Tart

Not a traditional one, but fresh spring greens and things made from ewes' milk seem like as good a combination of springtime foods as any.

Ingredients:

- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- Juice and zest of 1 lemon
- 1 block tofu
- 1 red onion
- ½ a butternut squash
- Rosemary, sage, thyme, to taste
- Black pepper
- Salt
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 250g spring greens
(e.g. asparagus, broccoli, peas and kale, wild garlic, few-flowered leek, nettles, spring onions.)
- Mint, to taste
- 2 tsp butter
- 250g Sheep or goat's cheese (such as Feta, Parlick Fell, Chavroux; any kind will do as long as it's strong and tangy.)
- 2 eggs
- 100ml double cream
- 8 sheets filo pastry
- Salad leaves (and maybe some fresh dandelion flowers)

Method:

- 1.) Mix the tofu, lemon juice, garlic, and a good pinch of salt in a bowl. Stir to coat the tofu well, cover, and let it marinate in the fridge for a couple of hours.
- 2.) Preheat oven to 190C, or 180C for fan ovens.
- 3.) Dice your squash and onion. Mix together in a large roasting tin, with the rosemary, sage, thyme, pepper, olive oil, and lemon zest.
- 4.) Put your marinated tofu into the roasting pan along with all the garlic; toss all together with the squash and onion. Put into the oven for 20 minutes.
- 5.) Remove your filo pastry from the fridge.

- 6.) Dice your green vegetables, then lightly fry in the mint and butter, adding a little extra oil if needed.
- 7.) Dice the cheese.
- 8.) When the squash is tender, mix all of your vegetables and tofu together with the cheese into a bowl and leave on the side to cool for ten minutes.
- 9.) Beat the eggs together with the cream, and season well with salt and black pepper.
- 10.) Layer your filo pastry into a tart tin or baking tray in a way that pleases you.
- 11.) Pour your egg mixture into your bowl of vegetables, and fold everything together well.
- 12.) Pour your mixture out into the tart tin, then bake in the oven for about 15-20 minutes, or until the egg is set. If your pastry starts browning too much before the egg is set, put some tinfoil over the top.
- 13.) Serve with some fresh salad leaves and decorate with tangy spring flowers like dandelion, if you like.

Flowery Young Mead

Not quite MEAD-mead, not quite a flower wine, and it gets more alcoholic the longer you leave it.

Don't use flowers from the supermarket florist section, they'll be covered in pesticides and other nasties. This recipe is best done with fresh flowers you've foraged for. If you're not confident in identifying flowers, you can also get packs of dried edible flowers such as elderflower, rose, and heather at your local homebrew shop, as well as packs of things like rose buds and jasmine in the tea section of your local East Asian grocer.

You will need:

- 6 handfuls of edible flowers: elderflowers, gorse flowers, roses, hawthorn, meadowsweet, magnolia, jasmine, dandelions, violets, flowering currant...
- 1 jar of reasonably good honey ("good" doesn't mean "expensive", but the basic rule is: if you wouldn't eat it on toast, don't bother).
- Juice and zest of one lemon
- 1 tsp yeast (you don't need this if you're using fresh foraged flowers, which will have wild yeasts on them already, but I usually put it in anyway just in case.)
- 3 litres of water

- 2tbsp white vinegar or half a teaspoon of citric acid (you can often find citric acid in the spice section of your local Middle-Eastern grocer, or in the homebrew shop)
- A large (3.5 litre) saucepan
- A couple of clean 2-litre plastic soda bottles. Don't use glass bottles unless you're willing to keep a very close eye on them. You could also use a demi-john and airlock if you want to be fancy.

Method:

- 1.) Scrub all your containers and tools REALLY well before you start, using hot, soapy water.
- 2.) Knock or lightly rinse your flowers to get any bugs off them. Don't wash them too vigorously.
- 3.) Heat up about 300ml of your water in the saucepan and pour in the honey, then stir well - this is just to help the honey dissolve. Take it off the heat and let it cool down completely.
- 4.) Trim the stalks/green bits off your flowers (especially important for elderflowers and dandelions), and put the flowers into your saucepan.
- 5.) Pour in all your other ingredients, mix well.
- 6.) Pour the mixture into your clean bottles, and put the caps on, but don't screw them on just yet: your... drink... will produce lots of gas over the next few days, so you want to keep the flies out but let the gas escape.
- 7.) Leave in a cool place, out of the sun, for 3-4 days.
- 8.) Strain it through a sieve, and then pour back into your bottles. Screw the caps on.
- 9.) You can drink it now, or you can leave it to ferment for another week or so in a cool place. It'll get stronger the longer you leave it, but you do run the risk of it getting a bit nasty as it gets older. Check on the bottles daily, and unscrew the lids at least once every day to "burp" the bottles.
- 10.) Put the bottles in the fridge when you want to drink them, but keep checking and burping them daily even when they're chilled.

Spinach Strawberry Salad

Salty, sweet, fresh and tangy.

Ingredients

- Cup of baby spinach leaves
- 2 cups of strawberries
- ¼ red onion, finely chopped
- ¼ cup feta cheese
- ½ cup of pecan or any other nuts of your choice
- Poppy seed dressing or any dressing of your choice

Mix all ingredients together. Add dressing. Enjoy!

Sweet Potato, Cauliflower and Peanut Stew

(Peanuts are optional, replace them or not with your choice and make this stew a personal one :))

Ingredients

- 6 shallots roughly chopped
- 6 tomatoes chopped
- 1 can light coconut milk
- 1 cup water
- 1 sweet potato peeled and cubed
- 1 small cauliflower chopped
- 4 cloves garlic sliced
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 3 tbsp crunchy peanut butter
- Juice 1/2 lime
- 1 tsp tamari

- Chilli flakes
- Toasted peanuts
- Coriander

Add the oil to a large pan with a lid and heat to a medium heat then add in the shallots. Fry for approx 8-10 minutes until soft and browning.

Add in the garlic, cumin seeds & turmeric. Stir for 30 seconds or so.

Next add in the chopped tomatoes and cook for a further 5-6 minutes then add in the water, coconut milk, sweet potatoes and cauliflower.

Simmer for 20 minutes with the lid on until the sweet potatoes and cauliflower are tender.

Stir in the peanut butter, lime juice, tamari, chilli flakes, salt and pepper. Simmer for a couple of minutes.

Top with toasted peanuts and fresh coriander.

Spicy bean and vegetable stew

For doing refuelling *right*.

Ingredients

- 1 small aubergine (about 250g), cut into 3cm dice
- 2 medium onions, halved and finely sliced
- 1 yellow pepper, deseeded and cut into 3cm dice
- 1 red pepper, deseeded and cut into 3cm dice
- 1 medium sweet potato (300g), peeled and cut into 2cm dice
- 400g can of chopped tomatoes
- 400g can of cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 large courgette, halved lengthways and cut into 1.5cm slices
- 600ml cold water
- tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- ½-1 tsp hot chilli powder

- ½ tsp smoked paprika (hot)
- 2 tsp cornflour
- 2 tsp cold water
- freshly squeezed juice of ½ lime
- 4 tbsp half-fat crème fraiche
- flaked sea salt
- fresh coriander leaves, to garnish (optional)
- lime wedges, for squeezing

1. Heat the oil in a large, deep non-stick frying pan, saucepan or sauté pan. Stir-fry the aubergine over a high heat for 3 minutes until nicely browned. Add the onions to the pan and cook for 2 minutes, stirring often. Scatter the peppers and sweet potato into the pan and stir-fry with the aubergine and onions for another 4 minutes. Sprinkle over the spices and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly.
2. Add the chopped tomatoes and beans and stir in the 600ml of water. Season with a good pinch of salt, bring to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the courgette, return to a simmer and cook for a further 10 minutes, stirring regularly.
3. Mix the cornflour with the 2 teaspoons of water to make a thin paste and stir this into the bean mixture. Cook for 5 minutes or until the sweet potato is just tender and the sauce is thick. Stir regularly, especially towards the end of the cooking time to prevent the sauce sticking. If it does start to stick, add a splash of water.
4. Remove the pan from the heat, stir in the lime juice and serve the stew topped with half-fat crème fraiche and scattered with fresh coriander leaves if you like. Add lime wedges for squeezing.

Happy Feasting!