

50+ Survival Uses For Cattails

Before we had supermarkets and pharmacies, our ancestors looked to nature to provide for their needs.

Unfortunately, with the rise of industrialization, much of our knowledge of the natural world has been lost. Exploring traditional knowledge is a great way to prepare for when SHTF.

We often forget how many uses one plant can have. If you want a reminder of the versatility of plants, look no further than the common cattail.

When I was young my mother kept dried cattails in a vase by the door. I would love to stroke the soft seed pods as I walked through the door.

But I thought no more of the plant than its purely ornamental purpose. As I studied more about how to live off the land my respect for this humble grass grew.



Cattail is a true cornucopia, providing us with food in all four seasons, [medicine for numerous ailments](#), [materials to make clothing and shelter](#), and can provide abundant materials for crafts and construction.

The health benefits of Cattail are such that it provides natural antiseptic properties, helps in preventing Anaemia, provides skin care, helps in cancer prevention, provides steady increase in energy, has cardio tonic and lipid-lowering effects.

Cattail helps in reducing the risks of atherosclerosis, aids in controlling diabetes, controls Hypertension, helps to gain weight, improves digestion, acts as an Analgesic.

Cattails are wetland plants with a unique flowering spike, flat blade like leaves that reach heights from 3 to 10 feet. They are one of the most common plants which thrive in large marshes and on the edge of ponds. Two species of Cattail are most common and they are broad leaved cattail (*T. latifolia*) and narrow leaf cattail (*T. angustifolia*).

Cattails can grow and spread vigorously. The pollinated flowers develop into fluffy seed heads, blowing across a pond in autumn breezes. Cattails can also spread through their root system. The thick, white roots, called rhizomes, grow underground near the edge of ponds and in shallow swales.

Cattails prefer shallow, flooded conditions and easily get established along a pond shoreline or in waters one to 1.5 feet or less in depth. When unimpeded however, the cattail beds will expand and can extend their hefty rhizomes well out into pond surface, actually floating above much deeper waters. Cattails need to have “wet feet” during most of the growing season.

Survival Food

One of the amazing things about cattails is that all parts of the plant are edible and it provides food in all four seasons. It is clearly known that [carbohydrates](#) are a rich source of energy. Cattail consists of good amount of carbohydrate, which offers greater levels of energy and even replenish energy levels if deficient from time to time.

Since Cattail is made up of complex carbohydrates, the breakdown is rather slow and hence provides all the energy that is needed throughout the day.

Related: [Delicious Recipes Using Cattails – “The Supermarket of the Swamp”](#)

Here are some ways in which you can use cattails as a survival food:

The roots should be cooked before eating. This is the part of the plant that produces all the starch (carbohydrate) that almost made it famous.

The ‘tenders,’ which are the root portion of new growth can be eaten uncooked, however. Just pull them up from the mud, remove several of the outer layers and eat them directly off the stem.

Tenders should be soft and bland. If they have a strong odor, you shouldn’t eat them. Once you reach the tough part of the stalk, don’t eat any further.

The pollen spike at the top is packed with protein. It needs to be boiled for 10-12 minutes before eating.

1. Eat the corms in spring

Cattails grow from a rhizome, a root-like protrusion below the ground. In spring, these rhizomes grow corms, like small shoots. You can harvest the shoots when they are 4- 16 inches long. Enjoy them raw or cooked.

2. Cossack asparagus

As the cattails begin to mature the outer portion of the stalks will become tough and woody. Peel the woody outer layer to reveal the tender heart, an asparagus-like stalk.

This was once very popular in Russia earning it the name Cossack asparagus. Steam them and serve them as you would asparagus.

3. Eat the young seed pods like corn

As spring turns to summer the male and female flowers will appear. If you look closely towards the center of the plant you will find these cylindrical pods. About 8-12 inches they are enclosed in papery leaves.

These can be harvested, the leaves peeled back like corn to reveal both the male and female flowers. These can be boiled and eaten like corn.



4. Use the rhizome to make a sweet syrup

It's also possible to process the rhizome into a sweet syrup to flavor cakes and other treats.

5. Eat the rhizomes like potatoes

However, if you don't want to process them, the rhizomes can also be eaten like a potato, boiled, or roasted.

6. Use the rhizome to make flour

If you soak the rhizomes in water the starch will separate from the fibers. Remove the fibers from the floury slurry and leave the slurry someplace warm like near a fire to remove the water. [The remaining dry](#)



[starch can be used as flour.](#)

7. Make bread

Just like wheat cattail flour contains gluten. You can use cattail flour to make a risen, yeast bread.

8. Pollen as a flour

When the plants flower in late summer the male flowers produce lots of pollen. You can collect the pollen to use as flour to make pancakes.



9. Pollen as a thickener

[Collect the pollen from the male flowers](#) and use it to thicken sauces, like corn starch.

10. Add seeds to soup

Pick the seeds from the fluff in the fall. Roast them and add them to soup.

Because of its many uses cattail is a great survival food to know.

Medicinal Uses

But cattails are just as amazing medicinally as well. When you are harvesting them don't let any part of the plant go to waste. There are uses for every single part of this plant.

Cattail comprises of a certain composition of compounds, which help in decreasing the lipids in the body and even dilating the coronary artery. It is used in the treatment of heart diseases like [angina](#), hyperlipidemia. Moreover, it is even used to dissolve stasis. Cattail helps to reduce the deposition of lipids on the walls of the arteries. Hence, it prevents the incidence of heart diseases.

Antiseptic Properties

One of the most important health benefits of cattail is its natural antiseptic property, which has come in handy for various cultures for generations. The jelly-like substance that you can find between young leaves can be used on wounds and other areas of the body where foreign agents, pathogens, or microbes might do damage in order to protect our system. This same jelly from the cattail plant is known as a powerful analgesic and can be ingested or applied topically to relieve pain and inflammation. ^[3]

The ash of the burned cattail leaves can be used as an antiseptic or styptic for wounds.

Prevents Anemia

Various parts of the cattail have coagulant properties, meaning that they slow down the flow of blood and prevent anemia. This can be effective if you're wounded, but also if you suffer from heavy menstrual bleeding, as it can lessen the severity. This can potentially be dangerous for people who already have relatively slow circulation, as it effectively slows down the blood, while simultaneously stimulating coagulant response in the [skin](#). ^[4]

Skin Care

The wealth of nutrients and organic compounds found in cattails contributes to its effect on the skin, particularly its ability to heal boils, sores, and reduce the appearance of scars. For insect bites, cattail jelly can be applied topically, but the flour also has anti-inflammatory potential that can help to reduce the pain and severity of those affected areas. ¹

Cattail helps in reducing the risks of atherosclerosis

LDL is decreased by intake of Cattail on account of the composition of [Vitamin C](#), carotenoids and bioflavonoid. These elements present in cattail make certain that the risks of cardiovascular diseases are reduced and the LDL is washed out of the system. Apart from that cholesterol absorption is also reduced. This means a reduced risk of developing atherosclerosis.

Cattail helps in controlling diabetes

Phytochemicals are required to streamline and maintain the absorption of insulin. A regular intake of Cattail helps to control diabetes [mellitus](#), which is non-insulin dependent. So it is fruitful to consume cattail on a regular basis to combat diabetes.

Cattail controls hypertension

Adrenal glands provide the appropriate support to decrease levels of [stress](#) by the content of [protein](#) and carbohydrates present in Cattail. Cattail helps to improve the metabolism rate and thereby reduces stress.

Cattail helps to gain weight

In case a person is [underweight](#) and wants to gain some weight, a mixture of Cattails rich [diet](#) together with a wholesome meal is the best method.

Cattail being rich in carbohydrates and calories enables the weight gain process. Therefore it is one of the fruitful options for underweight people to gain required body weight.

Cattail helps in improving digestion

Cattail consists of a good amount of both soluble and insoluble fibre which is essential for improving the digestion process. Soluble fibres counter the absorption of cholesterol and insoluble fibres encourage the movement of waste out of the system. This leads to reduced chances of [constipation](#) or even haemorrhoids. So including cattail in a person's diet helps to reduce various digestion related problems.

Cattail acts as an Analgesic

Boiling of Cattail leaves along with [Sesame oil](#) and then massaging it over the painful areas of the body provides a lot of relief. It is due to the anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties of cattail.

Uses of Cattail

The dried leaves of Cattail plant are an excellent source of weaving material that can be used to make floats and rafts. The cottony seeds make good pillow stuffing and insulation. Dried cattails are effective insect repellents when burned. Cattail leaves are also usable for cordage for making a bow drill. The pithy stalks can be used to make a hand drill, useful for igniting a pile of tinder.

Side-Effects & Allergies of Cattail

Cattail's pollen is with low toxicity. Although there are no obvious side effects about this herb, pregnant women should stay away from it since it can cause the contraction of the uterus. In some individuals it may lead to stomach upset and loss of appetite too. Finally, clinical attention should be paid to its pro-coagulant and allergic reactions.

Moreover some researches have shown that cattail pollen shouldn't be used in the cases of all [fever](#) caused by over exertion, internal heat due to yin deficiency, but with no stasis.

11. Poultice

A poultice can be made by mashing the roots. It is great for healing wounds.

12. Make toothpaste

Dental health is always important. Using mashed-up cattail roots to brush will help protect your teeth.

13. Antiseptic

Burn the leaves but collect the ash. It can be used to clean cuts, scrapes, and wounds to prevent infection because of its antiseptic properties.

14. A skin wash

Skin irritations, insect bites, and rashes can be treated with a wash made from boiling the leaves.



15. Fever reducer

The roots and stems can be brewed into a tea to reduce fever

16. A diuretic

Use the roots and stems to make a tea to increase urination.



17. Treat dysentery

The roots and stems can be used as an effective treatment for dysentery, as well.

18. Coagulant

[The jelly found between the young leaves](#) works as a coagulant helping blood to clot. An important health benefit of cattail is its natural antiseptic property, which has been known for various cultures through generations. The jelly-like substance that is found between young leaves can be used on wounds and other areas of the body where foreign agents, pathogens, or microbes might do damage in order to protect our system.

This same jelly from the cattail plant is known as a powerful analgesic and can be ingested or applied topically to relieve pain and inflammation

19. Treatment for urinary problems

The pollen is particularly beneficial. It can be collected and used as a treatment for bladder and urinary complaints.

20. Stress reliever

The pollen can be also used to reduce stress and help treat heart-related problems.

21. Treatment for abdominal pain

You can use pollen to treat stomach aches. The plant in general is high in fiber so it helps to treat abdominal pain.

22. Aids digestions

Cattails are high in fiber. Eating them can help aid your digestion, as well.

23. Use the jelly for wounds

The cattail jelly, a mucilaginous slime found between the young leaves is great to treat wounds as it is



antiseptic.

Near the base of the stalk of cattails, when peeling the inner leaves off to reveal the tender edible shoot inside, there is a sticky layer of cattail jelly between each inner leaf, in a surprisingly copious volume per plant. This substance is well-known amongst survivalists and historically as an antiseptic, strong analgesic, and styptic; applied to wounds directly or ingested.

Mechanically, I'd say between 0-3 units of cattail jelly should be able to be harvested from cattails, with the chance of getting more increasing with survival skill. By volume it should use alcohol's units, such that 7 units are equivalent to 250ml, and it should be a byproduct of processing cattail stalks. It should be refinable into hemostatic powder, used in crafting bandages, as well as applicable raw as a painkiller; while there are plenty of sources of this clam, none actually note what the active ingredient is, so for game balance I'd err on the side of caution and leave it about the same strength as aspirin.

24. Good for toothaches

It also has numbing properties that make it [an effective treatment for toothaches](#).

25. Treat diaper rash

The fuzz from the flowers is good for soothing diaper rash.

26. Treat skin irritations

The fuzz from the flowers can be also rubbed to help treat rashes. The rich nutrients and organic compounds found in cattail contribute to its effect on the skin, particularly its ability to heal boils, sores, and reduce the appearance of scars. For insect bites, cattail jelly can be applied topically, but the flour also has anti-inflammatory potential that can help to reduce the pain and severity of those affected areas.

27. Relieve insect bites

Use the jelly to rub on insect bites to help relieve the itching.

Because of its numerous uses, cattail is an essential part of any survivalist's natural first aid kit.

Crafts and Construction

If that isn't enough, cattail can be used in arts and crafts, construction, and a myriad of other ways. The ways you can use it are only limited by imagination.

Here are some other traditional uses for cattails.

28. Chairs

One of the oldest and most common uses for cattails is making chairs. These are made from dry leaves.

[To dry your leaves](#), separate them and lay them on some kind of drying rack. The drying rack can be made of screening and should be elevated to allow for good airflow.



29. Dolls

In addition to chairs, there are many other things that can be made out of cattail leaves. The dry leaves can be used to create dolls and other toys.

30. Make a door

When it's cold you want to keep out the wind. You can weave a door out of dry leaves.

31. Duck decoys

The dry leaves can be shaped into ducks. These can be used as floating decoys for duck hunting.

32. Make floor mats

The dry leaves can be woven into floor mats to keep you dry and [keep out the cold weather](#).

33. Create wigwam structures

The dry leaves can be also woven to create walls for wigwams and lean-tos.

34. Baskets

By creating cordage from the cattails, you can easily make baskets. The dry leaves can be woven into baskets of all shapes and sizes, as well.



35. Hats

It's always good to keep the sun off your head in summer. You can weave a hat out of the dry leaves.

36. Woven bags

Who doesn't need an extra bag to carry things? You can weave one from cattails.

37. Cordage

A rope is something you should always have on hand. You can make rope from the cattail fibers.



38. Beds

Weave the dry cattail leaves into a bed so that you aren't sleeping on the floor.

39. Stuffing for pillows

Use the fuzz from the flowers to stuff into pillows.

40. Insulation for clothing

But it has more beneficial uses than just comfort. The fuzz from the flowers can be sandwiched between two layers to serve as an insulative layer, like down, for cold weather clothes.

41. In diapers

The fuzz from the flowers can be stuffed in diapers or it can be used to absorb liquids.

42. Blood pads

Use the absorbent fluff as an absorbent layer for blood.

43. Insulation in shoes

Keep your feet extra warm by adding cattail fuzz in your shoes as insulation.

44. Arrow shafts

The dry stalks [make great straight arrow shafts](#).



45. Hand drills

The dry stalks can be spun and act like a drill.

46. Tinder for fire starting

The fuzz from the flowers makes a great tinder to start fires.

47. Torches

Just dip the brown seed head in wax or oil to [use them as a torch](#).



48. Paper

You can use cattails to make primitive paper.

49. Bodypaint

The pollen can be used to make a bodypaint which you can use to perfectly camouflage in the wild.

50. Flotation device

Despite its ability to absorb liquid, it creates an excellent flotation device and can be used to create life jackets.

51. Purify water

There is one final benefit from cattails that stands alone. Cattail has the ability to clean contaminated water sources. While you wouldn't want to eat cattails from a contaminated area, they could be harvested for many other uses as demonstrated.

I hope that after reading this you will have a new appreciation for the uses that a single plant can have.

Imagine, you could live in a wigwam woven of cattail leaves, sleep on a cattail mattress made more comfortable by a pillow stuffed with cattail fuzz.

You eat cattail pancakes cooked over a fire, started with cattail fuzz while sitting in a cattail chair. Your clothes are warm with cattail insulation. Your home is bright from a cattail torch.

So many needs met. All from one common plant. So when SHTF, remember the cattail and everything you can do with it.

How to Eat

- Several parts of the plant are edible, including dormant sprouts on the roots and bases of the leaves, ripe pollen, the stem and the starchy roots.
- Roots are edible raw or cooked.

- They can be boiled and eaten like potatoes or macerated and then boiled to yield sweet syrup.
- Roots can also be dried, ground into a powder and then used as a thickener in soups, etc. or added to cereal flours and this protein rich powder is used to make biscuits, etc.
- Young shoots are consumed in spring raw or cooked.
- Base of the mature stem is also edible raw or cooked.
- Tender, young flowering stem is also edible raw, cooked or prepare into a soup.
- Pollen is edible raw, cooked or processed into a protein rich additive to flour used in making bread, porridge, etc.
- Small seed is edible roasted or cooked and edible oil can be obtained from the seed.

Other traditional uses and benefits of Cattail

- Species is used as a refrigerant, an aphrodisiac and a cure for dysuria in India.
- It is mainly used in folk remedies for the treatment of tumors, as anticoagulant, astringent, sedative and tonics.
- Whole inflorescence is used in the healing of wounds.
- Stamens (without the pollen) are used as an astringent for dysentery and for hemorrhage of the bowels in China.
- Stamens, with the pollen, are also used as an astringent and styptic.
- Pollen was used as substitute for powder of licopodio and that the hairs or seeds were used against burns.
- Pollen is diuretic, emenagogue and haemostatic.
- Dried pollen is supposed to be anticoagulant, but when roasted with charcoal it becomes haemostatic.
- It is used internally in the treatment of kidney stones, internal hemorrhage of nearly any kind, painful menstruation, abnormal uterine bleeding, postpartum pains, abscesses and cancer of the lymphatic system.
- Externally, it is used in the treatment of tapeworms, diarrhea and injuries.
- Malecite and Mimac tribes used the roots for treatment of kidney stones in North America.
- Zulus use a decoction of the root in the treatment of venereal diseases and the Xosas use it to aid in the expulsion of placenta.
- Plant was listed one of several traditional Chinese medicinal herbs used for the treatment of dysmenorrhea through the use of combination-herbal-formula therapeutics with minimal side effects.
- The pollen of cattail has been used traditionally for the treatment of metrorrhagia, dysmenorrhea and stranguria in China.

Other Facts

- Stem and leaves are used for thatching, making paper and woven into mats, chairs, hats, etc.
- Plant is a good source of biomass, making a superior addition to the compost heap or used as a source of fuel, etc.
- Hairs of the fruits are used for stuffing pillows.
- Female flowers make excellent tinder and can be lit from the spark of a flint.
- Pollen is extremely inflammable and is used in making fireworks.

Precautions

- It should not be prescribed for pregnant women.

Recipes Using Cattails – “The Supermarket of the Swamp”



by [Sarah Davis](#)

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Cattails (*Typha latifolia*) are one of the most versatile plants on Earth. It is called the “Supermarket of the Swamp” for good reason since it can be used throughout all four seasons. They even inspired the Boy Scouts’ motto: “You name it, and we’ll make it from cattails!”. The plants can be found virtually [anywhere in the wilderness](#) where there is a water source across the entire North American continent and almost everywhere in the Western hemisphere worldwide.

Alternative Practical Applications

It is said that [if a person lost in the wilderness](#) found cattails, they’d have four of the five things needed to ensure their survival: water, food, shelter, and fuel. The Native Americans used cattails for so many different reasons:

Crafts (using green or dried leaves or fluff):

- Shelters’ covers
- Making mats, blankets, and baskets
- Making cordage used for hunting or fishing, as ropes, for belts and straps, for defense equipment, as arrow shafts, and so on
- The fluff was used to insulate footwear and hats, for stuffing pillows, or for a baby’s cradleboard.

Medicine

- The *pollen* is hemostatic and astringent. It was used for controlling external and internal bleeding, chest pains, and other forms of blood stagnation. The pollen is also mildly diuretic.
- *Roots* were used to treat burns, insect bites, scrapes, and bruises. Fresh, ponded roots were used directly as a poultice for open blisters and infections but also as a toothpaste if mashed up.
- The *ash of burnt plants* was used for its antiseptic properties and is good for treating wounds and abrasions.

Fuel and illumination

- Boiled, filtered, and fermented cattail roots release ethanol, which is now used as a biofuel.
- The fluff inside the cattail’s head makes for an excellent tinder for starting fires.
- The brown flower heads could be used as torches or as an illumination source if dipped in wax. The smoke will also drive away any insects.

Related: [What the Pioneers Stockpiled To Survive Winter](#)

Eatable Parts of Cattail During Spring:



Cattail Shoots/Stalks

This part of the young plant can be eaten raw or cooked like corn on the cob or asparagus. They contain potassium, phosphorus, and vitamins A, B, and C, and they taste like a cross between a tender zucchini and a cucumber. In addition, the cattail shoot is one of the best natural resources of protein and unsaturated fat, and it provides nutrient-rich enzymes and minerals.

Late Spring:



Leaves

The cattail leaves are excellent for salads or sandwiches when they are young and tender.

Eatable Parts of Cattail During Summer:



Pollen

There is probably no other pollen on the planet as easy to harvest by the pound as cattail, and there are so many tasty things to do with this fine, flour-like staple. To collect it, you'll need to place a bag over the end of the cattail plant and shake to capture the pollen. It can be eaten raw—sprinkle it in yogurt, fruit smoothies, oatmeal, or salads—or use it as a flour supplement or thickener for gravy and soups.

Eatable Parts of Cattail During Autumn and Winter:



Roots/Rhizomes

The underground lateral stems are called rhizomes—although most of us would simply call them roots—and the best period to harvest them is from late autumn to early spring. These parts are edible any time of the year.

Cattails contain ten times the starch of an equal weight of potatoes.



In order to harvest the starch, which is very sweet and tasty, you'll need to thoroughly clean the roots and mince or crush them before you put them in clean water. Then you can either leave the pounded chunks in clean water and wait for the starch to settle to the bottom, you can filter it, or you can boil them down. The best time to collect the starch is in late fall and winter, when the starch is stored in the rhizome.

A single acre of cattails can produce approximately 6,474 pounds of flour during an average year.



First, you need to peel and chop the roots and then clean them very well. Next, you'll have to remove the long fiber strings, pound them into a powder after they have been allowed to dry completely, and then use that as flour.

Recipes



1. Scalloped Cattails

- 2 cups of chopped cattail tops
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup melted butter
- ½ tsp. sugar
- ½ tsp. nutmeg
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- 1 cup milk (scalded at 180°F)
- Mix the cattail tops, eggs, butter, sugar, nutmeg, and black pepper in a bowl while slowly adding the scalded milk, and blend well.
- Pour the mixture into a greased casserole dish, top with grated Swiss cheese (optional), and add a dab of butter. Bake at 275°F for 30 minutes.

2. Cattail Pollen Biscuits



- 3 Tbsp. baking powder

- 1 1/3 cup flour
- 1/4 cup cattail pollen
- 1 tsp salt
- 4 Tbsp. shortening
- 1/3 cup milk
- Preheat oven to 450°F.
- Mix all ingredients.
- Cut the dough into biscuit shapes, and bake them at 425 for 20 minutes.

3. Cattail Pollen Pancakes



- 1/2 cup cattail
- 1/2 cup flour
- 2 Tbsp. baking powder
- 1 Tbsp. salt
- 1 egg
- 1 cup milk
- 3 Tbsp. bacon drippings
- Mix all ingredients.
- Pour onto a hot skillet or griddle in four-inch pancake amounts.



4. Cattail Casserole

- 2 cups scraped cattail spikes
- 1 cup bread crumbs
- 1 egg (beaten)
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 diced onion
- Salt and pepper (according to taste)

- ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese
- Combine all ingredients in a casserole dish, and place in an oven set to 350°F for 25 minutes. Serve hot.



5. Cattail Acorn Bread

- 1 cup acorn flour
- 1 cup cattail flour (or another flour with gluten)
- 2 Tbsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. sea salt
- 3 Tbsp. honey, agave nectar, or pure maple syrup
- 2 omega-three eggs (or regular), beaten
- ¾ cup whole milk
- 3 Tbsp. olive, grape seed, or coconut oil
- Mix all of the ingredients together.
- Pour into a greased loaf pan.
- Bake at 400°F for 30 minutes.

6. Cattail Wild Rice Pilaf



This recipe can be made with brown rice, but the wild rice adds a special dimension to it.

- 1 cup dry wild rice (4 cups cooked)
- 2 Tbsp. sesame oil
- ½ cup chopped green onion
- 2 cups cattail shoots, sliced (about 30 cattails)
- 2 Tbsp. salt
- ½ cup slivered almonds
- Cook the wild rice until tender.
- Sauté the onion and cattail shoots in sesame oil until tender and translucent.
- Mix the rice and the sautéed cattail shoots and onion together.
- Add the salt and slivered almonds.
- Serve hot.

7. Cattail Wild Rice Soup



- 1 cup dry wild rice (4 cups cooked)
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- ½ cup chopped green onion
- 2 cups cattail shoots, sliced (about 30 cattails)
- 2 Tbsp. salt
- Cook the wild rice until tender.
- In a heavy-bottomed soup pot, sauté the onion and cattail shoots in sesame oil until tender and translucent.
- Add the cooked wild rice, salt, and 4 cups of chicken broth or other soup stock of your choice.
- Simmer together for 15–20 minutes, and serve.

8. Cat-on-the-Cob with Garlic Butter



- 30–40 cattail flowerheads, peeled
- Garlic butter:
- ½ cup unsalted butter

- ½ cup olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 12 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 cup freshly chopped wild greens (or parsley or other fresh garden herbs)

Make garlic butter in a food processor by whipping the butter, oil, salt, fresh garlic, and parsley together until smooth.

Note: If using salted butter, eliminate the salt from the recipe.

The olive oil makes the butter nice and creamy and spreadable, even after refrigerating. I like to make a batch of this to keep handy in the fridge. You can also make a larger batch ahead to freeze in small containers when the greens are in season.

- Boil cattail flowerheads in water for 10 minutes.
- Make garlic butter in a food processor by whipping the butter, salt, fresh garlic, and parsley together until smooth.
- Drain the cattail flowerheads, and slather them generously with the garlic butter.
- Eat them just like miniature corn on the cob.

9. Cattail Flower/Shoots Refrigerator Pickles



- Enough cattail flowerheads/shoots to tightly fill a quart jar, about 30 or 40
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled
- 1 tsp. whole black peppercorns
- 4 to 6 bay leaves
- ¾ cup apple cider vinegar (use some of your herbal vinegar!)
- 1½ cup olive oil
- 3 Tbsp. salt
- 1¼ cup water
- Boil the cattails in water for 5 to 10 minutes, and drain thoroughly.
- Stuff flowerheads/shoots, garlic, peppercorns, and bay leaves into a clean, sterile quart jar.
- Combine vinegar, oil, water, and salt in a saucepan.
- Bring to a boil, remove from heat, and pour over the cattail heads.
- Add a little more oil, vinegar, and water if the liquid does not reach to the top of the jar.
- Cover and let marinate in the refrigerator overnight.

If you are experienced at making pickles, you could experiment with some of your favorite pickle recipes and put them up as preserves.

10. Indian Cattail Spoon Bread



Preheat oven to 400°F.

- ½ cup butter
- 2 cups fresh flower buds or cattails on the cob
- ½ cup diced onions
- ½ cup diced green pepper
- salt
- 1 cup sharp cheese
- pinch of chili powder
- Melt butter in a skillet, and add cattail buds, onions, green pepper, and salt.
- Sauté for 5 minutes or until tender.
- Pour into greased baking dish.
- Sprinkle with cheese and chili powder.
- Bake until cheese melts.
- Spoon onto plate while hot.