

# Dandelion

## Love

Spring is on the way, and one of the first blooms I always look forward to is that of the Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*). Also known as bitterwort, blow-ball, lion's tooth, wet-the-bed, priest's crown, puffball, swine's snout, tell time and yellow gowan, the humble Dandelion is one of the most useful and delicious "weeds" you can find.



Dandelion is native to Europe and Asia. It was used by ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, and has been used in Chinese traditional medicine for over a thousand years. It was brought to North America by European settlers as an important edible and medicinal. It is now naturalized throughout most of the world. It is a truly tenacious plant and can be found growing almost everywhere, under almost any conditions.

Dandelion is a dynamic accumulator, attracts pollinators and other beneficial insects (it is an important early season source of nectar for honeybees), is medicinal and edible and can even aid in fruit ripening. (As dandelions release ethylene gas, placing a few dandelion flowers in a paper bag with unripe fruit will speed up the ripening process).

All parts of the dandelion are edible. Leaves are best harvested in early spring, especially for fresh eating. They contain a multitude of vitamins and minerals (including carotenoids, vitamin A, potassium, calcium, magnesium, folic acid, iron, and vitamin C) that our bodies are craving after a long winter. They also support and stimulate kidney function.

Flowers can be used as salad garnish, or used to make dandelion wine.

Roots can be used fresh or dried to make a bitter, but delicious tea that supports liver and function and is often used as part of a detox regimen. Roots are best dug in very early spring or late fall when plant energy is descending.

*My mom always marks the beginning of dandelion season by serving some for dinner. It is always a combination of bacon, eggs and dandelions. Sometimes the dandelion leaves are fresh, sometimes wilted, the eggs are either hard boiled or sunny-side up but it is always delicious!*

## ***Dandelion, Bacon and Egg Salad***

### ***Ingredients***

*4 slices bacon, cut crosswise into thin strips*

*1 shallot or small onion, minced*

*1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar*

*Salt and freshly ground black pepper*

*4 large eggs*

*1 large bunch dandelion greens*

*Chives, snipped*

### ***Preparation:***

- 1. In a medium skillet over low heat, cook bacon until brown and just crisp, transfer bacon to a paper towel, reserving fat in the skillet.*
- 2. Combine the shallot or onion, vinegar, and 3 tablespoons of bacon fat in a bowl. Mix well, and season with salt and pepper to taste.*
- 3. Return skillet to stove over low heat. Break eggs into skillet and fry sunny side up or over easy, until whites are set but yolks are still runny.*
- 4. Toss greens with dressing and arrange on four plates. Sprinkle bacon evenly over greens. Add one egg to each plate and sprinkle with chives. Serve immediately.*