

# DANDELION

*May dandelions support joyful living embodied in primal optimal health.*

“The whole of the dandelion is a wonderful food  
A little bitter little sweet puts you in the mood  
Play the stems into singing flute  
Make your coffee from the roasted root”



## Dandelion

**Family:** Asteraceae

**Latin Name:** *Taraxacum officinale* (from the Greeks, meaning “the official remedy for all disorders”; in Latin, *taraxos* means “disorders” and *akos* means “remedy” while *officinale* means “official” and “from the pharmacy”)

**Related Useful Species:** White-flowering Japanese dandelion (*Taraxacum albidum*), California endangered dandelion (*T. californicum*), Asian dandelion (*T. japonicum*), Russian rubber dandelion (*T. kok-saghyz*)

**Global Common Names:** English (dandelion); Spanish (diente de leon); French (dent-de-lion); Japanese (tampopo); Welsh (dant y llew); Catalan (dent de leo); German (lowezahn); Danish (lovetand); Portuguese (dente de leao); Italian (diente di leone); Norwegian (lovetann)

## Description

Every part of the dandelion is a reason to celebrate. Its whole being is incredibly beautiful, useful, edible, and medicinal! Its bright yellow flower opens and closes with the sun and is often the first flower of spring attracting the pollinators to venture out of their winter hibernation. The honeybee loves the dandelion flower. I understand why because when you eat it fresh off the stem, it is sweet and tastes like pollen and honey!

Dandelion has dark green leaves that are distinctively jagged like a lion’s teeth. One of its early names in French is *dent de lion*, the tooth of the lion. They are thinner at the base and significantly broaden as they reach outward. They all grow from the basal root; you will not find dandelion leaves growing up a flowering stalk. The leaves radiate outward from the central taproot, and the jagged toothy nature of its leaf edge is very irregular and whimsical (or haphazard). They grow in lengths from about 6 inches to a full hand long. When the monsoon rains in our region begin, the leaves can be found in special lush places growing as big as two or even three hands high.



Dandelion

## A Dandelion Ditty

Dandelion you're so pretty, let me tell you  
about it in this Dandelion Ditty

Today the magic of the dandelion flower  
Offers its grace for personal power  
Power in the sense of freedom  
Freedom from the practice of weeding  
them  
Weed them why when they are so pretty  
Let me tell you about it in the Dandelion  
Ditty

When you pick them  
You've got to play them or eat them  
But promise me that you'll never ever  
spray them  
When you harvest these spring greens  
There are so many things to do that are  
so keen

You can make that yellow petal wine  
And that's a surefire way to have a  
good time  
Put their dark green leaves in your  
dinner salad

That's how I came to write this dandelion  
ballad

Their roots dried and ground make a  
mighty fine drink  
A good morning bitter chai, don't  
you think?  
And the best thing about our local  
dandelion  
Is you don't have to go to the store to  
buy them

So remember to love your dandelion  
friends  
It's a perfect way to help our world  
to mend  
By honoring their yellow beauty  
We'll have clean air, healthy kids, and  
honeybees in our community  
Yes, clean air, healthy kids, and honeybees  
in our community

Dandelion you're so pretty, let me tell you  
about it in this Dandelion Ditty



The dandelion greens increase our body's mineral supply due to the root's deep underground taproot. The main root is brown with white flesh just inside the skin and branches into smaller fingers spreading underground. The smaller rootlets penetrate new ground while absorbing a rainbow of trace minerals from the soil's resources into the whole plant. With age both the stems and the roots secrete a sticky white sap that has many uses for beauty and health. The plants often exude this milky white sap when broken.

The flowers are bright yellow and emerge from the center of basal leaves. They grow at the end of stems and first emerge as small tight buds, the plant attaining 6–24 inches in height. The flower stalks are hollow and the longer ones can be sculptured into a great flute and straw! Many flowers can emerge from one root but each flower grows on its own stem.



Enamored by the dandelions

One bright yellow dandelion flower is actually composed of hundreds of individual flowers all maturing to seed to create the white magical puffball so common in fairy tales, making wishes come true.

These white puffball heads fly in the air when blown by the wind and the seeds are readily carried across lands and oceans. There are fluffy umbrella-like ends attached to the heavier thin and pointy seeds, which not only help lodge them in the soil but which are also useful for hitchhiking on animal fur or human clothes.

The reason wishes come true is because the wind carries your wish on each seed to every shore of every ocean, sharing your desire with the whole world. And rightly so, as dandelions are found prolifically on every continent, except Antarctica because it is still over 98 percent ice. However, the islands just off the coast of Antarctica have dandelions flowering each spring! The dandelion knows how to survive because it can easily reproduce from both its seed and its root. It is a perennial plant that returns each year from the same root. If you try to dig up dandelions, they can regrow from even a small part of the root left in the ground. This is a marvelous example of nature working in the currency of abundance.

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This golden plant shares so much generosity in beauty, health, and happiness year after year for the good of all.

### Current Uses

We make great use of this hardy wild plant at Turtle Lake Refuge. We use dandelions year-round by utilizing the greens, roots, and flowers for a myriad of recipes that are served at our café and sold in local stores. In the spring, summer, and fall, we use it fresh from the gardens for making juice, pesto, and even ice cream. In the late fall, we gather the big leaves in quantity and dry them. Once dried, we grind them into a green powder for use in recipes throughout the winter months.

As a way to promote weed appreciation within our community in early May, Turtle Lake Refuge hosts a fun celebration called the Dandelion Festival. It has now become an annual event. In the day-long festival there are dandelion wine-making workshops; a May pole dance; dandelion medicinal workshops; dandelion ice cream; dandelion lemonade; dandelion pesto with zucchini linguini; and great local music, dances, and games throughout the day of festivities. For the school kids in town we host a dandelion drawing contest and the chosen winners get a prize of either a dandelion ice cream cone or blending their own dandelion lemonade on the bicycle blender. Our mascot is a



Dandelion Festival

## The Wild Wisdom of Weeds



Leo's getting a facelift



Mr. Dande Lion

big papier-mâché lion, named Mr. Dande Lion, that receives bundles of love from all the kids who paint and decorate him with fresh dandelion flowers each year.

One of the highlights for the adults is Dandelion Saison, or dandelion beer. Four local breweries collectively called the Bootleggers Society collaborate on making this special springtime batch of local brew. Turtle Lake Refuge harvests the dandelion roots, leaves, stems, and flowers to be used in the process and the Bootleggers make the beer for the festival. This year we harvested 20 pounds of dandelion roots after a spring snowstorm from one of the city's organic parks. The greens and roots pulled out easily once the snow melted by midday. The bitterness gives the beer a special kick. Although drinking alcohol can be hard on the liver, the dandelion in the beer may offer some healing properties to the liver at the same time, perhaps helping balance it all out.

The hollow stems of the taller dandelions make amazing musical flutes! To choose a dandelion stem that works, pick the stem carefully and pop off the flower head. Blow into the stem to make sure it makes a noise like a kazoo. Then cut small holes in the stem just big enough for each finger to cover. I use my Swiss army knife scissors or my fingernails to create holes for each finger. It will play as many different notes as holes. Place your fingers on the holes and play the notes of the scale and make exquisite music. It is an art that takes some skill, but once you get the gist of it, the music that flows out brings smiles to every face. Our spontaneous band, Dandelion Octet, consists of eight people—all with dandelion flutes, performing as the opening act of the annual event.

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Dandelion Flute Octet

Dandelions are celebrated in the spring throughout the world. In addition to our local Dandelion Festival in Durango, Colorado, there are dandelion festivals in Boulder and Denver, and a myriad of other festivals happening around the world in honor of the springtime yellow flower such as in Zeeland and Borculo, the Netherlands; North Greenwall, Ontario; Wallace, Nova Scotia; and Japan (called the Tampopo Festival). In Canada there are a plethora of dandelion celebrations in cities such as Halifax, Stratford, Waterloo, and Ottawa. Across the United States dandelion festivals are happening in the Napa Valley, California; White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia; Dover, Ohio; Burlington, Vermont; Mount Calvary, Wisconsin; Waukegan, Illinois; and Vineland, New Jersey—just to mention a few.

The numerous annual festivals celebrate and highlight the dandelion by creating all varieties of foods and beverages made from the whole plant. A common theme that runs throughout most of these events worldwide is the support of organic land stewardship practices and the desire to change the toxic herbicide spraying practices in parks and wildland maintenance programs.

The dandelion is recognized as a worldwide symbol of organic lawns. A quote from West Virginia's Dandelion Festival speaks of this resiliency to overcome: "In celebration and appreciation for the determination of the dandelion, the gutsy little flower fights its way through velvety lawns, dodges mowers and weed killers. And against all odds, dandelion reigns supreme as it blankets our village each spring. We salute you, our West Virginia Dandelion!"

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Another reason to celebrate dandelions is that they are in partnership with gardens and fruit trees. Year after year these perennials build an ongoing root networking system, increasing soil integrity. Dandelions ensure that the soil beneath the gardens and fruit trees is aerated and mineralized. The deep dandelion taproots maintain a loose and spacious soil structure that enables earthworms to compost leaf debris. The dandelion absorbs minerals such as calcium, iron, and potassium from the Earth into its leaves and ultimately into the topsoil when they are composted each year. The produce and fruits all benefit from this natural fertilizer and the added natural mulch, which over time creates a rich humus layer of easily accessible nutrients.

Another studied phenomena of the dandelion and garden/fruit tree collaboration is that dandelions are known to produce ethylene gas. This is beneficial in assisting the ripening of the fruit. Dandelions also make great chicken food, and if there are dandelions at the base of fruit trees free-roaming chickens will forage for the dandelion greens while scratching and pooping around the trees. This extra nitrogen is highly beneficial for fruit production.

The spring dandelion flowers often bloom before the fruit trees and draw beneficial insects, such as ladybugs and honeybees, to begin pollinating the early blooms in the gardens and orchards. The apricots and cherries are usually the first to risk exposing their flowers to the early fluctuating temperatures, with peaches, pears, and apples following. After the dandelions mature beyond the flowering stage, the bees naturally shift all their focus to the flowering nectar of the gardens and orchards.

## History

Dandelions have been used as a spring tonic since before the written word. Some of the first dandelion-related written text comes from Roman times. Anglo-Saxon tribes of Britain and the Normans of France described the healing properties of dandelion before the time of Christ. Pliny the Elder published his last and possibly greatest work, *Naturalis Historia*, in 77 AD—a thirty-seven-book masterpiece on subjects including the remarkable healing properties of the dandelion. In Chinese medical literature, dandelion is a strong force utilized for its health benefits—for possibly over five thousand years, but recorded in writing in 659 AD. In the tenth and eleventh centuries the dandelion was mentioned by Arabian physicians in their medicinal practices. In 1932 in Kazakhstan a dandelion species, *Taraxacum kok-saghyz*, was found to create enough sap to produce rubber. The Russians, during World War II, perfected the process and made rubber latex from the white milky sap of this species. The United States later requested that this Russian species be sent for experiments in making

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a domestic rubber. Unfortunately the seeds from another species were sent and planted en masse; ultimately they never produced any quantity of latex and the project ceased. In 1957, the United States imported more than 100,000 pounds of dandelion root for use in pharmaceuticals.

In Japan, the dandelion has been used for medicine as well as food since early recorded history. More recently, in 1979, after extensive research with the dandelion, a patent was filed in Japan for a freeze-dried extract of dandelion roots for antitumor use. The roots are gathered, roasted, and boiled at low temperatures to make a root syrup. Even today this syrup is still available in a form called *yansen*. Roasted dandelion root coffee is popular in Japan, as well as in other parts of the world, and it is still made and sold regularly. Although it is most common to find yellow dandelion flowers, in 1909 a white dandelion, *Taraxacum albidum*, was found near Nagasaki, Japan, and sent to a scientist named Gustav Dahlstedt in Sweden—who cultivated it successfully and then published a famous article about dandelion healing and aesthetic benefits.

According to a number of texts, dandelion was brought to the North American continent as seeds in the pockets of the wise pioneers who knew that, in order to survive in unknown territory, this plant would be a provider of sustenance, offering all the basic nutrition they needed to live. Although I trust in the written history of these accounts, I also think about how the dandelion happens to grow on every other continent as well, and the simple fact that dandelion seeds are made to fly! They sail in the wind across large distances, they travel in the intestines of animals, on fur and wings, on driftwood—as well as in the pockets, shoes, and clothes of humans. It is the brilliant nature within the dandelion itself that brings these seeds to all continents. Our wise ancestors of the past—in addition to some of the modern people of today—know the potent value that the dandelion offers our species for survival. When the first beehives were imported to the Americas, dandelions were planted purposely to make sure the honeybee had good forage for pollen and nectar. Dandelions have long been known across the globe for their nutritional superiority and for their ability to support human health and resiliency while adapting to challenging conditions.

Indigenous cultures around the globe have integrated dandelions into many of their health practices in the past and continue today. According to *American Indian Medicine* by Virgil J. Vogel, “Dandelions are referred as indigenous [plants] to most parts of the world.” He writes how the Mohegan steeped dandelion leaves for a strong physic and muscle tone. The Pillager Chippewa made tea of the roots for treating heartburn, while the Potawatomis prepared the roots into a bitter tonic. The Meskwakis utilized the dandelion root for a strong medicine and took it for pain in the chest when other remedies failed.

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The Yoruba of Africa use dandelions as herbal medicine in their holistic perspective of healing that originated over four thousand years ago. The *osainista* of the Yoruba are expert herbalists and still integrate dandelions into their practices. The *osainista* traditionally and presently use dandelions to assist with the health of the womb, liver, and breast issues. The North American Papago tribe use dandelions in their heritage and still today integrate the local wild foods and medicines into their lifestyle.

### Edible Uses

Dandelion is a storehouse of abundant nutritional value. This amazing common weed has everything that we need! The entire plant including the roots, stems, flowers, and leaves is all edible; if it was the only plant available, dandelion has everything required for humans to survive—especially if all the parts are eaten. Each part is composed of different amino acids, making the whole plant a complete protein. The flowers contain plentiful amounts of pollen for the bees to gather in the spring. Pollen is a highly nutrient-rich food for humans as well. It contains a vast array of B vitamins, proteins, amino acids, and trace minerals. Pollen is the sexual dust of the plant world and is known to promote fertility for all who partake in the magic yellow powder. The pollen of dandelion is



Dandelion gold

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included in the flower and can be added to recipes to thicken and increase the nutrient content of the meal.

As our palates adjust to the wild flavors of the Earth, our bodies begin to crave the stronger tastes present in the dandelion. Our taste buds over time begin to recognize the richness of trace minerals and vitamins found in wild plants. Although some may experience the leaves becoming too bitter later in the season, I have found dandelions to be delicious during all seasons and stages of growth. The flowers are lightly sweet and have a subtle taste like honey, while most of the rest of the plant is slightly bitter. The roots, while slightly bitter during the summer, become quite sweet in the winter months. The bitter taste of the dandelion can grow on your palate, especially when you know its value in creating healthy muscle tone in the body. Bitters, in general, tone our internal organs into a greater strength and stamina of function. Dandelions build beautiful and noble physics. This increased integrity of body structure is better apt to handle stresses, respond more quickly to challenges, and move with a more graceful flexibility. I remember my mother's advice when I was a child trying a new food with an unfamiliar flavor; she encouraged me to "teach my tongue a lesson" and be open to a new adventure of taste.

The seed of the dandelion is another rich food source. The seeds are packed with proteins, carbohydrates, and fats. The seeds make a good seed milk if you gather many stalks full of the white puffballs. When gathering the seeds for milk, I gently separate the seeds from the fluff with my fingers by clasp the white fluff in a pinch. The seeds break off easily. A simple dandelion seed milk recipe is to take a handful of the dandelion seeds and blend them in water with vanilla and dates. This makes a very nutritious morning meal. I sometimes add a banana or another seed or nut to thicken it.

By eating the whole dandelion flower, root, and leaves you receive a complete protein meal with more nutrition than you might otherwise ingest in a week of the typical store-bought diet. The beauty of this type of meal is that it is free, available anywhere, and creates no trash in the process! The available vitamin and mineral content from the whole plant is exceptionally high. Dandelion greens are extremely rich in chlorophyll and high in calcium, iron, vitamin A, and vitamin C in addition to a host of other substances. The flower heads are sweet and taste like a honey-flavored candy. The roots are a storehouse of an easily digestible sugar, insulin. Particularly in the off-season when the plant is not blooming, this sugar becomes a concentrated delicacy, especially in climates with cold winters. Dandelion is truly a survival food of royalty! It offers more than just survival to our bodies by supporting optimal health and planetary abundance.

Dandelions are classified as a "nutritive," which helps replenish the blood with vital minerals and vitamins needed for the body's long-term

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integrity. They balance the electrolytes in the system due to their natural sodium content. A serving size, 1 cup of fresh greens, has the daily requirements of beta-carotene, calcium, iron, and potassium. It contains more vitamin A than any other green. It contains approximately 7,000 units per ounce as compared to 1,200 for lettuce and 1,275 for carrots. Dandelions are great sources of magnesium, phosphorus, copper, sodium, choline, lecithin, biotin, and inositol. In addition to being a very good source of dietary fiber, it is rich in vitamin C, vitamin D, vitamin E (alpha tocopherol), zinc, and manganese. As a complete protein, dandelions contain all eight essential amino acids in addition to many of the B vitamins including B1 (thiamine), B2 (riboflavin), B5, B6, B9 (folate), and B12.

The green leaves contain significant amounts of pectin, a soluble fiber that prevents constipation. Dandelions accomplish this in part by their ability to encourage beneficial flora to thrive in the colon and inhibit unfriendly bacteria. The greens also act as a digestive tonic assisting the breakdown of undigested proteins and fats. The bitter quality supports the secretion of bile and the digestive enzymes in the stomach. The green leaves can be blended as a daily springtime ritual with water to make a green juice that is best consumed twenty minutes before a meal to aid digestion.

The roots make a fabulous staple food that far surpasses the flavor and nutrition of a potato. They become particularly sweet with the onset of cold frosts. From late fall through the early spring season, dandelions move all the sugars of the plant downward and concentrate them in the roots for storage. At these times of year, the dandelion roots are especially delicious and are perfect for simply digging up and nibbling on right on the spot, as well as harvesting them for winter food storage. In addition to using them fresh, they can be frozen for later use, as well as dried and then rehydrated into soups. They also make a wonderful pickle relish. My friend Doug Simons, a wise and beautiful medicine man from the Gila Wilderness in Arizona, inspired me to make a dandelion relish simply by grinding my dandelion roots with apple cider vinegar, honey, and salt. It is ready to eat after a few days and will last almost indefinitely.

The roots are a good source of B12 when cultured into fermented sauerkraut. When you wash off the roots, it is impossible to get every speck of dirt off, but this is actually a good thing because of the microbial life present in the soil. The dirt left on the roots contains millions of wild regional microbial life-forms that get cultured into the kraut. This wild kraut gives the body a force of healthy microorganisms to support the immune system and natural flora of the colon. These wild microorganisms increase the efficiency of our body's metabolic and elimination processes. The microorganisms found in the soil near your home are particularly beneficial because they are already adapted to your particular bioregion of Earth.

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When dandelions are present, you can trust that there is plenty of nourishment to thrive! Luckily, wherever there are humans living, there are dandelions growing. This is one great solution to any form of malnutrition we may encounter globally. When we understand the amazing benefits of ingesting dandelions in our meals, it is easy to find ways to make them delicious to share with our friends and families. By making our food rich with the wisdom of the dandelion, the intrinsic medicinal values are integrated into our lifestyles as a bonus. This practice allows us to follow the wise motto of Hippocrates—“Let food be thy medicine!” With the abundant dandelion as our storehouse of nutrition, we avoid additional medicine to fight any sicknesses because we rarely get sick!

### Medical Actions

- Aperient: acts as a mild laxative
- Cholagogue: increases flow of bile from gallbladder into the duodenum
- Depurative: reduces impurities or heterogenous matter
- Diuretic: increases the flow of urine and secretions
- Galactagogue: stimulates the flow of mothers' milk
- Hepatic: reduces congestion and drains the liver
- Stomachic: strengthens and tones the stomach
- Sedative: reduces anxiety, stress, irritability, or excitement
- Anti-inflammatory: reduces swelling and inflammation of the tissues

### Medicinal Uses

Dandelion holds the title as the royalty of weeds. Its medicinal values are vast and extensive! In traditional Chinese medicine, dandelions, also known as *pu gong ying*, are an herb that cools the blood and dispels liver wind. It helps clear heat and toxicity that arises from excess fire in the body. It helps dissipate nodules, reduce abscesses, and impede lumps in the body. Dandelions are utilized as a blood cleanser, tonic, and digestive aid.

Dandelion root tea is one of my favorite morning beverages. I love to drink it dried and ground into a fine powder in a gourd with a maté straw. Eastern medicine encourages drinking dandelion root tea to assist circulation and to discharge stagnant energy blockages in the body.

In ayurvedic medicine, originating from the Hindu religion in India around 1500 BC, dandelions (known as *kanphool*) are regarded as a bitter herb with sweet, pungent, and cooling energetics. They are used to



Dandelion root “maté”

detoxify *pitta* conditions, a body type described in the ayurvedic healing science as being an overheated imbalance. I am primarily of a *pitta* nature myself and notice the exceptional benefits from my morning ritual of sipping dried and ground dandelion root in hot water through my bombilla (metal straw) in a maté gourd each morning. Ayurveda also uses dandelions for eliminating cysts, swelling of the lymph nodes, and removing cholesterol from the body.

Dandelions are also beneficial for the condition of diabetes. They contain a source of levulin, which has the same composition as insulin and allows the liver to convert fructose into glycogen without requiring the body’s secretion of insulin. This creates less stress on the pancreas and maintains an even blood sugar level for optimal energy. In addition to improving the function of the pancreas, dandelions also support efficient functioning of the spleen, kidney, liver, and stomach through promoting blood circulation.

Dandelion is a rich source of chlorophyll. The body efficiently utilizes the chlorophyll content in the leaves for rebuilding the blood. The chemical structure of hemoglobin and chlorophyll are almost identical, with the main difference being that hemoglobin contains iron whereas chlorophyll has magnesium. This gives the body the necessary nutrients to be able to prevent anemia. Dandelion leaves are a rich source of vitamin K, which helps eliminate the excessive buildup of acidic crystals that

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Pat Blair, one of the elder turtles

create the symptoms of gout. The high mineral content of the leaves also gives strength to the teeth and increases bone density in the body. Dental research conducted at Indiana University demonstrated how dandelions inhibit plaque buildup on the teeth, while the chlorophyll they contain helps eliminate bad breath at the same time.

Dandelions have an exceptionally high calcium and potassium content, which together build structural integrity in the body. The addition of these vital minerals makes the dandelion a savior in lessening muscle and menstrual cramps. The flowers and stems are rich in coumestrol, a plant

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estrogen that provides a balance to hormone fluctuation in women while also stimulating milk flow in nursing mothers.

My mom used dandelion as one of the greens in her process of eliminating the pain and congestion from rheumatoid arthritis. She was diagnosed with arthritis when she was seventeen, and followed a Western standard practice of medicine for twelve years. This included multiple surgeries and over ninety-five thousand medically prescribed pills with all their side effects. She did not see improvement in her arthritic condition during this time and, in fact, her mobility continued to degrade to the point where she could no longer walk. When I was two years old, she was inspired to juice fast. After about four days of drinking raw liquids, her joint pain and congestion disappeared almost totally. This experience was a huge epiphany for her and this led her on a whole new path of life. She was inspired to continue her education and earned a master's degree in holistic nutrition. As a result of her experience, our family began the tradition of drinking green juices approximately twice a day. Dandelions and comfrey were two of the main greens we harvested from our backyard. At seventy-one my mom no longer has arthritis and her mobility has returned to active walking and even biking, rafting, playing the piano, and sledding!

Dandelions make a fantastic spring cleanse. I like to occasionally juice fast with the greens generously blended with a few other ingredients like apples or lemons for a length of about three days to a week to clear out any stagnation from the winter season. I begin this juice fast just after the spring rains, which brings the dormant dandelions back to life. The perfect time to bring the cleaning spirit of the dandelion into the body is when the leaves are vividly green and the flowers have yet to bloom. Although the dandelion juice can be combined with other ingredients, sometimes I like to feel the pure essence of the dandelion during this time of purification and recharge. It is a powerful way to welcome dandelions into the body as a healer and rejuvenator. If I experience a cooling sensation during this time of cleansing, I may integrate fresh ginger into my dandelion root tea as part of the cleanse to act as a heating influence and balance my internal temperature. Anytime I begin a fast, I always experience my internal body temperature as cooler. I have come to understand that it is a normal part of cleansing. The heat energy that comes from digesting food is not present and the energy within the body is being directed internally for deeper cleansing and detoxifying. During longer cleanses or lifestyle shifts in diets, the cooling sensation will cease and become regulated as the body adjusts to a new efficiency of digestion and elimination.

Dandelions are an especially powerful healing force for the liver. According to the American Nutraceutical Association, dandelions stimu-

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late the secretion of bile and treat liver disorders. The root, in particular, stimulates the release of congestion in the liver leading to its improved functioning. Due to the beneficial support of the liver, dandelions are a well-documented remedy for hepatitis. Other conditions caused from congestion of the liver can be addressed through integrating dandelions in the diet. With the dandelion's help in purification of the liver, skin conditions improve and age spots dissipate. The milky sap from the stems and roots, when applied directly to the skin, helps to remove facial blemishes, warts, sun spots, moles, pimples, canker sores, and skin irritations. I have had several warts and sun blemishes successfully disappear after using this milky sap and plant poultices. When I am on solo walkabouts it is a perfect time to experiment because no one notices that I have strange plant matter attached to my body.

The whole plant is a healing diuretic, which aids the removal of toxins from the body into the urine. The dandelion is known as a sparing diuretic, which is one of the safest diuretics available to use because it contains such high levels of potassium. Many pharmaceutical diuretics deplete the body of potassium in the process of their diuretic function; dandelion actually increases the potassium levels in the body. Dandelions gently stimulate the mucous membranes, which helps draw out toxins from the bowel and soothe the digestive tract. Dandelions are particularly powerful because they oxygenate and purify the blood while alkalizing the body. By reducing excess acidity, the body is able to regenerate cellular integrity more rapidly. My friend Seven Song, an herbalist from Ithaca, New York, speaks a poetic truth with his comment, "Dandelion would be a rare plant if people knew its health potential."

## Recipes

### DANDELION PESTO

2 cups fresh dandelion greens (optional—also add the pulp strained out from the dandelion juice recipe)	½ cup organic sunflower oil
1 cup raw cashews	1 cup basil or mixed garden herbs like French sorrel, mint, parsley, and oregano
3 tablespoons lemon juice	1 cup water
3 cloves garlic	1 teaspoon salt

Mix all the ingredients in the blender until it forms a creamy texture. This recipe can be used as a dip or a salad dressing and is delicious served over vegetable pastas made with raw zucchini, beets, or pumpkins. Enjoy the wild taste of your global spring dandelions!

## DANDELION QUICHE

### CRUST

1 cup raw buckwheat groats	1 tablespoon thyme
1 cup sunflower seeds	½ cup water
1 teaspoon salt	

### FILLING

3 cups dandelion greens	1 lemon, juiced
1 cup tahini	1 teaspoon salt

### TOPPINGS

Avocado	Veggies (optional)
Mixed herbs	

Make your crust by grinding the dry ingredients in the blender until it becomes fine flour. Place this flour in a bowl and add approximately ½ cup water until it gains a doughy consistency. Form the crust into a pie pan. Dehydrate for an hour or two if too wet.

Add the filling ingredients to the food processor and mix until creamy. Place filling in pie pan and decorate with avocados, fresh herbs, and veggies (if desired). Serve with a fresh mixed dandelion salad.

## DANDY CANDY

2 cups Turkish figs, soaked in water for one hour and destemmed	1 cup dandelion greens ½ cup cacao nibs dandelion flower petals
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Place all ingredients except petals into the food processor. With tablespoons of the mixture, form into cookie shapes, sprinkle with dandelion flower petals, and place on a plate in the freezer. They are ready to serve when firm. This simple and delicious candy is a great road trip treat. The raw cacao, the active enzymes, and liquid oxygen from the dandelion greens help keep you awake on journeys.

## DANDELION ROOT STEW

1 cup fresh dandelion roots, shredded	1 cup fresh yellow squash, shredded
2 tablespoons sweet white miso	6 cups water
1 avocado, diced	1 tablespoon fresh garden herbs
½ cup scallions, diced	

Add all ingredients to a pan. Warm lightly on the stove while stirring. Serve immediately for a wholesome, warm, local culinary specialty soup.

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### CULTURED ROOT SAUERKRAUT

1 cup dandelion roots	1 tablespoon caraway seeds
1 medium cabbage	1 teaspoon juniper berries
1 tablespoon salt	1 tablespoon dulse seaweed

Grind the cabbage and dandelion roots in a food processor until lightly shredded. Place in a bowl and add the other ingredients. Mix well and pound mixture with a wooden dowel to bring out the juices. One simple way to make sauerkraut (that came from my culinary friend, farmer, and bread baker, Scott) is to pack the sauerkraut into a glass jar. Choose a jar that can be filled to the top and pack it tightly so that no air is present in the lower levels. Make sure that the juices come to the top of the jar when packing it in. Place a lid on the jar loosely so that juices can escape if they need to, but air is prevented from oxidizing the kraut. Put a plate under the jar and store the jar at room temperature. Another method to make cultured vegetables is to use the old, big leaves from the cabbage. Place them on top of the shredded vegetable mixture that is pressed tightly in a ceramic crock and place a weight on top to keep the oxygen out. A rock or a gallon jar of water works well. Cover the whole thing with a cloth and leave at room temperature for about one week. The smell of sauerkraut will let you know when it is ready. Enjoy the kraut on crackers with an avocado and store the remainder in the refrigerator. Culturing wild roots enhances the enzymatic activity of the food and encourages beneficial microorganisms from the soil to assist your body in greater digestion and colon health.

### DANDELION ICE CREAM

3 avocados	2 lemons, juiced
1 cup fresh dandelion greens or 1 tablespoon dried dandelion greens	3 cups water 1 cup honey

Blend all ingredients very thoroughly until creamy. The longer you blend the creamier it gets. Place the mixture in a metal bowl in the freezer and stir every hour until it becomes ice cream! We serve our ice cream in homemade fruit leather cones made of bananas, figs, and cinnamon blended with water and dried overnight in circles.

### DANDELION JUICE

This can become a daily ritual of honoring your body and the planet.

2 cups fresh dandelions	1 apple (optional)
4 cups water	

## The Wild Wisdom of Weeds

Blend all ingredients in the blender until well mixed. You can choose to either keep the pulp in the juice or, depending on your preference, strain out the pulp for a clear juice. If you strain the pulp, it can be added as a variation to other recipes like salad dressings or pesto. Drink the juice (as fresh as possible) twenty minutes before eating a meal for improved digestion.

### DANDELION LEMONADE

2 cups dandelion greens	2 tablespoons honey
2 lemons, juiced	4 cups water

Place all the ingredients into the blender and blend well. Strain out the pulp if desired and serve fresh over ice on a hot day!

### SIMPLE DANDELION ROOT TEA

To make tea, simply dig the roots, wash, chop into ½-inch pieces, and let dry for several days on a screen in the open air. Grind the roots in a coffee grinder into a fine powder and add hot water. This tea can become a morning ritual. I like to use a maté gourd for my cup with a straw that has a strainer at the end. This bitter morning brew is a divine organ tonic for the morning, offering a rainbow of minerals for the body's integrity and health.

### DANDELION SPICY CHAI TEA

1 cup almonds, soaked	1 teaspoon black pepper
½ cup dandelion root	(optional—for extra spice
1 teaspoon cloves	also add ¼ teaspoon cayenne
1 teaspoon coriander	pepper)
1 teaspoon cardamom	1 tablespoon ginger root
1 teaspoon cinnamon stick	Honey to taste

Blend all ingredients in the blender until well mixed. Strain out the pulp with cheesecloth, a strainer, or a nut bag. I use a knee-high panty hose until it gets a run in it; then I replace it. You can heat up this chai tea, but I recommend stirring often so as not to let it boil. It is best with all the enzymes intact!

### THE FOUR-ROOT GROUNDING TEA

1 teaspoon turmeric root	1 teaspoon licorice root
1 teaspoon ginger root	1 teaspoon dandelion root

Steep together and infuse the day with a rooted grounded strength.