

Voice of the Rocky Mountain Empire

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MOSTLY SUNNY AND WARMER ▲79° ▼51° »16A • © THE DENVER POST • \$2 PRICE MAY VARY OUTSIDE METRO DENVER

## A TASTE OF COLORADO



**A**spen restaurateur and chef Barclay Dodge cuts stinging nettles as he forages for items for his restaurant on trails Sunday near in Basalt. Dodge forages weekly for items to include on his menu at his Aspen restaurant Bosq. He looks for watercress, angelica root, stinging nettles, blue spruce and regular pine tips, rose hips, cattails and mushrooms such as chanterelles, which are an edible woodland mushroom with a yellow funnel-shaped cap and a faint smell of apricots. » STORY, 1C Helen H. Richardson, *The Denver Post*

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# FORAGE

◀FROM 1C

of edible plants and fungi.

We chatted with Dodge and other foraging experts to learn which wild foods are in season during the fall. As always, make sure you follow the rules about foraging wherever you're planning to hike, don't trespass, and never eat something unless you're totally confident you know what it is.

## Watercress

You can find watercress in Colorado all the way through September. Look for this spicy green plant near creeks, rivers and springs, then use it as part of a salad mix. It's a bit like arugula, but has a slightly spicier, more peppery flavor, according to Dodge.

"The number one thing we like to forage is watercress; freaking love it," he said. "It's so good, it's so plentiful, it grows back quickly."

## Juniper berries

You might think juniper berries are just for gin, but these little dandies can do so much more. You'll find juniper growing in a variety of settings in Colorado, so keep your eyes peeled wherever you go. Dodge said he often finds them in clearings or at the edges of the forest.

"When the woods open up into a small glade, that's the best place to find them," he said. "But I've also found a bunch of junipers in deep, dark woods. This is one of those bushes you can kinda find everywhere."

He uses juniper berries in all sorts of recipes at Bosq, such as part of a salt cure for meats like rabbit and venison, in various broths and stocks, and as a garnish after he lacto-ferments them. (Lacto-fermentation is a fun food preservation process involving salt, water and natural bacteria; it's responsible for foods like sauerkraut and kimchi.)

In your home kitchen, you can use juniper berries for everything from jams and cakes to pork chops.

## White ash berries

As the temperatures drop in Colorado, white ash berries transform from bitter and astringent to sweet and delicious. Look



Barclay Dodge tastes wild asparagus as he forages for items for his restaurant on local trails in Basalt on Sept. 6. Photos by Helen H. Richardson, The Denver Post



Wild watercress.



Edible wild stinging nettle grows near a small stream.

for these tasty berries on riverbanks among pine trees in thickly wooded areas.

Dodge loves to use the berries on their own or infuse their flavors into vinaigrettes and sauces. You can add them to a side of wild rice, to make jelly, or even turn them into wine.

## Rose hips

Rose hips get better as the temperatures get colder. After the first frost, they become sweeter and softer, so hold off on foraging for rose hips until then.

Dodge likes to use them to make different vinegars, which later become vinaigrettes, sauces or glazes. He finds them all over Aspen, including in his driveway, but they're easy to spot along dirt roads and streambeds at nearly any elevation.

Rose hips make a delicious tea, or you can turn them into jelly or use them to add flavor to smoothies, simple syrups and even barbecue sauce.

## Angelica root

It's a bit more obscure, but Dodge also loves to forage for angelica root, a fragrant member of the carrot family.

He looks for it in aspen groves, then dehydrates and pulverizes it into a flavored powder. He also likes to lacto-ferment the root, then add the leftover brine to vinaigrettes and sauces.

"It's more on the infusion side," he said.

You can follow in Dodge's footsteps, or use it to make angelica root soups, teas and even candies.

## Woodruff

Woodruff is a leafy green plant with white flowers that grows close to the ground in shady areas throughout Colorado.

Dodge turns wild woodruff into a powder, then mixes it with salt and uses it as a seasoning (think: potato chips). He also likes to use woodruff in cocktails, to make ice cream, and when he's cooking sous vide.

"When you dry it or cook it, the vanilla tobacco flavors come out more," he said.

At home, woodruff can be used to make tea, lemonade and various baked goods.

## Mushrooms

Mushrooms are a biggie — they're often the first wild foods that come to mind when you talk

about foraging. It hasn't been a particularly good year for wild mushrooms in Colorado, since it's been so hot and dry, but there's a chance you'll still find some this fall.

Keep an eye out for honey mushrooms, wild enoki and Matsutakes, which continue to fruit during the colder months, according to Orion Aon, who teaches foraging classes and runs the educational website Forage Colorado.

Each mushroom has its own preferred habitat, so you'll want to narrow down your search depending on what you hope to find. Aon often finds wild enoki in aspen groves, but has also found them in other habitats along the Front Range, for example.

And, as is the case with foraging any type of wild food, be absolutely sure about the identity of the mushroom before you eat it. There are lots of harmful and even potentially deadly look-alikes out there, so proceed with caution.

"I always teach people to be 100 percent confident in their identifications before consuming any wild foods," Aon said.

## Feral apples

If you feel like skipping the traditional apple-picking outing this year, consider foraging for wild apples instead. You can find these apples at lower elevations in the foothills or along the Front Range, Aon said.

They don't taste great raw, but wild apples make delicious apple butter, applesauce and applescrap vinegar. If you're craving baked goods, toss them into apple fritters or scones, Aon recommended.

## Wild plums

Wild plums should continue to ripen throughout September, Aon said. Similar to feral apples, wild plums are tasty after they've been cooked; consider turning them into jam or jelly.

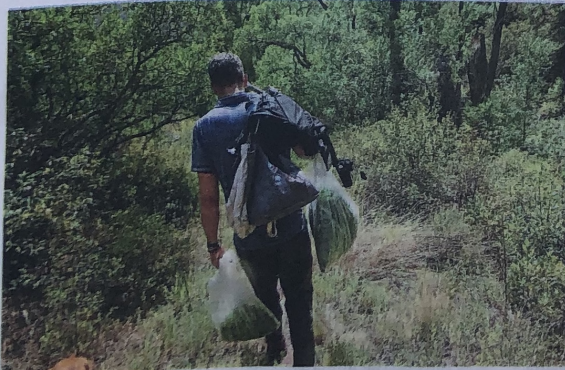
## Acorns

Parts of Colorado are home to lots of scrub oak trees, which drop delicious, edible acorns in the fall. For a wild snack, you can simply crack the shell and eat the acorn nut raw, according to Katrina Blair, founder of Durango's Turtle Lake Refuge, a nonprofit focused on wild foods, education, sustainability and organic land stewardship. Blair teaches classes and leads hikes focused on wild foods; the organization also runs a wild foods CSA during the summer months.

In addition to eating them as snacks, Blair also uses acorns to make nut milk, acorn ice cream and in various baking recipes that require nuts.

## Chokecherries

Keep an eye out for chokecherry bushes in the mountains and along streams at lower elevations as they ripen through September. Blair uses them to make delicious chokecherry macarons at Turtle Lake Refuge's wild food cafe, but you could also turn them into jam or jelly, or use them in tarts and pies.



Barclay Dodge looks for watercress, angelica root, stinging nettles, blue spruce and regular pine tips, rose hips, cattails, and mushrooms such as chanterelles.



Barclay Dodge forages weekly for items to include on his menu at his Aspen restaurant, Bosq.

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ss industry creates an advocacy group »4c

# Nature's treasures

## 11 wild foods you can forage in the fall in Colorado



Local Aspen restaurateur and chef Barclay Dodge and his dog head back after a successful foraging session on local trails in Basalt on Sept. 6. Photos by Helen H. Richardson, *The Denver Post*

By Sarah Kuta Special to *The Denver Post*

Barclay Dodge has worked in fine-dining kitchens all over the world, but there's just something special about Colorado. Maybe it's the wild, untamed forests that Dodge loves to explore on his days off from Bosq, the Aspen restaurant he owns with his wife, Molly.



Barclay Dodge cuts wild watercress from a small spring.

Bosq's menu is full of edible treasures that Dodge brings back from his foraging excursions, such as blue spruce pine tips, watercress, serviceberry branches, wild huckleberry, chanterelle mushrooms and wild roses.

"We really wanted a restaurant that came from our surroundings," said Dodge, 51. "Bosq comes from the word 'bosque,' which means 'the forest' in Spanish. We're inspired by our surroundings, so that's the drive of the place."

Dodge typically spends one to two days foraging in the forests around Aspen each week during the warmer months. But even as the weather gets colder and the leaves start to turn, Colorado continues to produce a bounty