

# Floral Flavor

A garden of culinary delights awaits when you pick a posy to please the palate

By Elaine Gavalas

Flower power" was a familiar refrain of the '60s, but these days, the edible variety has blossomed into a culinary trend. You can still wear florals in your hair, but did you know you can sprinkle them on your salad, too? This spring and summer, look for colorful edible flowers such as pansies, violets, nasturtiums, and sunflowers tucked among the fresh herbs in your local produce section—or grow them in your own garden. Many vibrantly hued blossoms that we regularly enjoy for their scent and beauty can turn an ordinary meal into a memorable culinary event for your senses.

Edible flowers have been enjoyed in world cuisines for centuries. Bright-orange squash blossoms and nasturtiums, sweet yet mildly spicy, are a sunny

feature in Mediterranean cuisine. Lovely, fragrant lavender flowers have a lemony, perfumed flavor and are especially popular in French cuisine. Cucumber-flavored daylilies are commonly used in Asian dishes.

In many cultures, roses are the most revered flower for their beauty, fragrance, and flavor. Rose petals have a sweet, fragrant flavor with a hint of apple, cinnamon, or mint. According to Hindu mythology, the deities Brahma and Vishnu argued over which flower was the most beautiful. Brahma favored the sacred lotus flower. However, when Vishnu created the rose, even Brahma became mesmerized by its intoxicating beauty and fragrance.

Edible flowers not only look pretty on your plate, they're good for you, too. According to Ayurveda, rose petals and other savory blossoms are cooling foods that can help balance pitta's fire during summer's heat. These flowers are rich in vitamins

## YOGA BLOSSOMS SALAD

Enjoy the sensory pleasures of spring and summer with this flower-power salad.

### Ingredients:

**4 cups mixed salad greens (such as baby lettuce, mesclun, romaine, spinach, or arugula), rinsed and patted dry**

**1 cup of assorted pesticide-free edible flowers (such as rose petals, Johnny-jump-ups, mint blossoms, pansies, nasturtiums, or scented geranium flowers), with pistils and stamens removed, rinsed and patted dry. (Experiment with different flower blossoms and color combinations.)**

**¼ cup extra virgin olive oil**

**2 tablespoons balsamic or herb vinegar**

**Sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste**

### Directions:

1. Arrange the greens on a serving platter and top with the flowers.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper.
3. Add the dressing to the salad. Serve immediately.

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## Creative Forces

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around us.

Director and producer Stephen Simon (*Conversations with God*, *Somewhere in Time*, and the Academy Award-winning *What Dreams May Come*) comes from a family of successful filmmakers. His father, S. Sylvan Simon, was a popular producer and director. After his father's death, his mother married MGM film producer Armand Deutsch, who made films with stars including Robert Taylor and Grace Kelly. In 2004, along with Gay and Kathlyn Hendricks, Simon co-founded The Spiritual Cinema Circle ([www.spiritualcinemacircle.com](http://www.spiritualcinemacircle.com)), a monthly DVD subscription service that distributes spiritually themed films.

The Circle's animated logo shows a shaman telling a story near a campfire. Simon explains that the role of storyteller is one he's come to closely identify with. "That basic image of a shaman is how I see all filmmakers today who are trying to make a difference in the world," says Simon. "We are the 21st century version of shamans, standing around a campfire and passing down the myths of a culture from one generation to the next. That's what I believe I'm here to do—to tell stories, and to enable other people to tell stories, that look at our humanity in a different way."


In a time when so many media images illuminate the darkness that exists in the world, focusing on war and strife, Simon has chosen to concentrate on producing and distributing films that have positive, uplifting, non-religious messages.

"What we're doing with the Circle is making films that illuminate our humanity when we

operate at our very best," he says. "Hundreds of millions of people around the world have come to the decision that there has to be a better way to do things than the way we've been doing them. We've got to change course and try something different. The old paradigm is dying, and the new paradigm is just beginning to dawn. We're right in the middle of that paradox. I think that's why a lot of us were born today—to be on the planet at this time, and to be a part of that transition."

Simon finds creative inspiration on his daily meditation walks. He explains that, though he once engaged in classical sitting meditation practice, he's discovered that long morning hikes often spark creative ideas.

"Those of us who are being called to put our creativity out there into the world today need to answer that call," he says. "If there's someone in your life who's trying to tell you your dreams are not practical, you must listen instead to the inner voice telling you that you have a creative contribution to make to the planet. Time's a-wasting—get about it. We have got to change the way things are. We have to. And the only way we can do that is by expressing it ourselves. As Gandhi said, be the change you want to see. When we do, that energy generates outward, having a positive effect on all of us."

Simon believes we're capable of redefining the world with a better proportion of kindness and integrity. Perhaps, through written word and song, photography, cinema, and paintings; by way of our individual and collective dreams, we might even heal it. 

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## Yoga Pantry

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(such as A and C), minerals (like phosphorus and potassium), and disease-fighting antioxidants. Their pigments give them their brilliant colors as well as powerful, healing phytochemicals. This makes fresh edible flowers not only beautiful, flavorful additions to any meal, but outstanding disease-fighters.

It's easy to add bright, fragrant florals to your meals. Toss a multi-hued handful of your favorites into a big summer salad. Fill spicy nasturtiums or squash blossoms with goat cheese or egg salad that's been flavored with herb blossoms from basil, oregano, thyme, or mint, which maintain the same flavor. Gently fold delicate blossoms into tender basmati rice or sprinkle over pasta dishes. Freeze violets such as multi-colored Johnny-jump-ups or pansies (which taste of wintergreen) into ice cubes, and float them in chilled soup, sparkling water, or iced herbal tea.

Sweetly scented fruit-tree blossoms like apple, peach, plum, orange, and lemon can also be used and enjoyed in drinks or light side dishes. For a cool dessert, fill a sweet hibiscus blossom with a small scoop of your favorite gelato or sorbet. Or treat yourself to luscious rose petals dipped into melted dark chocolate—truly luxurious!

Be sure to eat only organically grown, unsprayed, undyed flowers that have been raised specifically for food use. You shouldn't eat florals purchased from a commercial florist, nursery, or garden center that were treated with pesticides or chemicals. Be aware that some edible flowers may cause allergic reactions, so use caution if you have asthma, allergies, or hay fever. 

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