

# Food for free

To look or 'forage' for food growing in nature is nothing new. Humans have done it for many thousands of years. Even today some cultures survive on only the wild food they find. Among others, foraging has become more of a seasonal activity. In France and Spain, for example, many people look for mushrooms in the autumn. For the British, foraging was an important way to keep healthy in the past, especially during the Second World War when there was less food in the shops. Ingredients such as rosehips, rich in vitamin C, nettles and seaweed were all used to improve their diet.

In recent decades foraging has oft been something people do in developing countries, not developed ones. In developed countries, modern agricultural methods have led to changes in what people eat and where they get their food. With the growth of supermarkets, people can now buy seasonal foods any day of the year and they no longer need to forage. The pace of life these days is also faster. As a result, many people prefer to buy all their food from shops or supermarkets because it saves time and energy, both of which foraging requires.

However, things are changing once again and in the last few years, foraging has become fashionable in those countries with supermarkets. You might think this new interest in wild food is because of economic difficulties and people wanting to cut their spending but in fact, this new trend began in the top restaurants of the world. In some of these restaurants, they use fresh wild ingredients to create elegant dishes of the highest quality. Some of them even employ professional foragers to find the seasonal ingredients used each day.

This fashion for wild food is now spreading and more people are interested in going on courses or organised wild food walks to learn how to forage safely. These activities show people what plants, berries, fungi and nuts they can find and when and where they might grow. They teach people what plants or mushrooms to be careful of and also how to prepare different wild foods so they are safe to eat. Above all, these courses or walks make people more aware of the seasons, their natural surroundings and the free food on offer. They are social and encourage people to be outside with nature. This might be something that is good for us all.

**1** Which paragraph in the text (1–4) talks about each of the following?

- |                                    |                 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Differences in development       | paragraph _____ |
| 2 An old idea becomes a new trend  | paragraph _____ |
| 3 A very old way of finding food   | paragraph _____ |
| 4 Relearning how to find wild food | paragraph _____ |

**2** Match the meanings below to the following words from the text.

agricultural improve ingredient pace trend seasonal survive wild

- 1 make something better \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 how fast something happens \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 a change to something different \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 living or growing in nature not with people \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 happening in a particular time of year \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 continue to live after a difficult or dangerous time \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 one of the things you put in when you make something to eat \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 relating to farming and the keeping of animals and growing of plants for food \_\_\_\_\_

**3** Complete the gaps in the questions with the correct form of a word from exercise 3 above. Then ask your partner the questions.

- 1 Where can you find \_\_\_\_\_ food growing?
- 2 Is there a \_\_\_\_\_ for foraging in your country? If yes, do people go foraging every day or it is a \_\_\_\_\_ activity?
- 3 Have \_\_\_\_\_ methods changed a lot in your own country over the last 10 or so years? If yes, do you think these changes have \_\_\_\_\_ the quality and variety of food people can buy?
- 4 How does a faster \_\_\_\_\_ of life change our eating habits?
- 5 Imagine you are spending a week in the wild (in your country). What \_\_\_\_\_ would you eat to \_\_\_\_\_?

**4** Sometimes a word refers back to something earlier in the text. What do the following words in *italics* refer to in the text?

- 1 Ingredients such as rosehips, rich in vitamin C, nettles and seaweed were all used to improve *their* diet.
- 2 In recent decades foraging has often been something people do in developing countries, not developed *ones*.
- 3 As a result, many people prefer to buy all their food from shops or supermarkets because *it* saves time and energy.
- 4 Some of *them* even employ professional foragers to find the seasonal ingredients used each day
- 5 These activities show people what plants, berries, fungi and nuts they can find and when and where *they* might grow.

**5** Which word from each group has a different sound?

- 1 /aɪ:/ diet life find time rich
- 2 /u:/ improve food good supermarket use
- 3 /eɪ/ save day make many Spain
- 4 /s/ plants berries recent page shops

**6** Discuss these questions with your partner(s).

- Is there a culture of picking wild food in your country? If yes, what types of things do people tend to pick? (eg mushrooms, nuts, berries) And in which season / month do they usually do this?
- Do you think picking food from nature is always a good thing?
- Do you think picking wild food will become more or less popular in the future? Why / Why not?

## Glossary

- aware** (*adj*) - know about something  
**decade** (*noun*) - a period of ten years  
**elegant** (*adj*) - of a beautiful style or look  
**fungus** (*noun*) - a type of plant such as a mushroom (pl = *fungi*)  
**lead to** (*verb*) - make something happen  
**method** (*noun*) - a way of doing something  
**nettle** (*noun*) - a wild plant covered with hairs that can hurt you if you touch them  
**prepare** (*verb*) - make something ready  
**require** (*verb*) - need something  
**rosehip** (*noun*) - the berry-like fruit of a rose plant  
**seaweed** (*noun*) - a plants that grows in the sea  
**spread** (*verb*) - move to other places or people  
**surroundings** (*noun*) - everything around you or the place where you live