

EDIBLE FLOWERS AND SEEDS

The blooms and seedheads in your gardens are not only pretty, many of them are also edible. Adding flowers to your food isn't such an outlandish idea as they not only look good on your plate, they often have interesting flavors. The petals of marigolds (*Calendula officinalis*) have a spicy flavor, and peppery nasturtium petals and leaves may be used in salads, and dry lavender flowers can be used in sugar. The flowers and foliage of other marigolds (*Tagetes*) are great with beets and carrots. For a garnish in lemonade, pick some blue flowers of borage (*Borago officinalis*). Other edible petals include those of *Echinacea purpurea*, *Monarda fistulosa*, *Centaurea cyanus* and *Bellis*. Dainty violets and pansies are kitchen classics.

If you want to start eating flowers and seeds, please remember that:

- . It is best to use them from your own garden or similar places where you can be sure they have not been sprayed.
- . Flowers should be picked as close to the time they will be used as possible.
- . Be sure to remove small insects that hide between the petals by placing the petals in a basin with cold water.
- . It is usually the flower petals, seeds, or in a few cases, the leaves that are edible.

Calendula Muffins

For 12 muffins:

butter or oil for the muffin tins or 12 paper liners

115g cornmeal

95g plain flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

2 large eggs

230ml milk

3 tablespoons grape seed oil or other neutral oil

200-250g shredded cheese (cheddar or Emmental)

150g fresh or frozen sweet corn kernels

flower petals from 6 to 8 calendulas

Butter the muffin tins or line them with paper cases. Combine cornmeal, flour, baking powder and salt in a large bowl. In another bowl, lightly stir together eggs, milk and oil, then add cheese and corn kernels. Pour into the flour mixture, add the flower petals and stir quickly to combine. Spoon mixture into the tins or cases and bake at 190C for 20 minutes or until muffins are golden and done. Leave to cool for five minutes before turning out on a baking rack.

Excerpts from an article in BBC *Gardens Illustrated*, Issue 176, by Jakobsen, Annemarie and Skaarup, Inger