

For Immediate Release

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#### FIND DINING: GOING WILD IN NATURE'S SUPERMARKET

*Time* magazine calls it “the latest culinary sensation.” *The Travel Channel* has a new TV show about it. The restaurant voted best in the world this year has a whole crew devoted to it. It's called wild food foraging. And now you too can put the *loco* back in *local* at the nation's first three-season, forest-to-table dinner series, “No Taste Like Home.”



**WHAT:** seven wild food "forage and eat" retreats  
**WHERE:** acclaimed estate outside Asheville, NC  
**WHEN:** Saturdays, 2-10 pm, April 23<sup>rd</sup> - December 10<sup>th</sup>  
**HOW:** visit [NoTasteLikeHome.org](http://NoTasteLikeHome.org) or call 828-774-1922  
**WHY:** “there's no taste like home”

From haute health food nuts to bargain hunter-gatherers, go-getters across the country are out-sourcing wild mushrooms, wild greens, even wild game: whatever it takes to take in the landscape. In the past year, articles on wild food have appeared over a dozen major publications, including [Time](#), [The Wall Street Journal](#), [The New York Times](#), [The L.A. Times](#), and [USA Today](#). Why all the rage to forage?

“It's the return of the native,” says Zev Friedman, Director of Asheville's [Forest Cuisine Project](#). “Local food means native food, and native food means wild food.” For Friedman, a trained *permaculturalist*, a friend in weeds is a friend indeed. “The foods we need most,” says this volunteer plant coordinator, “are already growing right where we want them: in our own backwoods and backyard.”

And boy, do we need them. As ozone depletes and bank accounts dwindle, *outré gourmets* are going green — and *saving green* — by going out to eat. *Outside*, that is. From country clubs to city parks, it's a *pro bono* bonanza as “freegans” take to the woods — and from it. After all, you can't beat the prices. You get fresh air, exercise, and, straight from the source, the freshest food you can find. And what could be more organic?



“Native food is as beautiful as it is flavorful and as delicious as it is nutritious,” says Mark Rosenstein, President of [The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project](#). Most of these indigenous ingredients are not available in stores, but Rosenstein says

that’s changing. Natural foods retailers are eager to stock responsibly-harvested wild edibles. “It’s just a matter of public education.”

Consistency is one marketing hurdle. Since wild foods don’t come from factory farms, their flavors vary, making each harvest one of a kind. Now that Noma of Copenhagen, [the top restaurant in the world](#) for two years running, has three full-time foragers combing the woods, maybe a White Castle-weary world will follow their lead.

When you heed the call of the wild, it’s not just the food that’s free. Those who don’t live by the sweat of their day job say that going back to nature is going back to Eden. Consider Asheville’s preeminent *opportunist*, [Alan Muskat](#).



What does someone with a Princeton degree in Philosophy of Ecology do for a living? He leads foraging trips through the woods. Muskat regularly gathers and cooks up *anty* pasta, land-squid salad, and other not-so-familiar local fare for adventurous eaters. But why eat out on a limb? According to this *philosoforager*, to “eat here now” is his spiritual practice.

“Foraging keeps me grounded; it keeps me sane. Gandhi said that to forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves. But agriculture is relatively new and actually quite destructive. Foraging is far more sustainable and wild foods are what we evolved to eat. No tilling, no toiling; just fishing, hunting, and gathering. That’s the good life.”

Muskat really knows how to pick ’em. For the past fifteen years, he’s sold hundreds of pounds of wild mushrooms each season to restaurants and hotels including The Grove Park Inn and The Biltmore Estate. He’s taught thousands to wildcraft as well. He’s been featured in [The New Yorker](#) and [Country Living](#), on [PBS](#) and [Bizarre Foods](#), even preached on [Voice of America](#), ardently urging the masses to sample rather than trample the toadstools. A Hollywood production company is developing a series based around his life and work, and he’s putting together wild food trips to Cuba, where his family is from, starting next year.

“We’re taught that wild foods are dangerous,” says Muskat, “but they’re a staple in traditional cultures. BC — before Costco — *everyone* lived off the land. We learned from our parents, just as we learn how to ride a bike, except that foraging is instinctual. It’s not difficult to relearn, and it’s far safer than driving.”

Muskat has a school for natural living or “rewilding” that he calls [The REAL Center](#). He focuses on Nonviolent Communication, a way of forming a relationship with others, including plants and animals, that is mutually beneficial.

Starting April 23<sup>rd</sup>, Muskat, Friedman, and Rosenstein team up to put their culinary convictions to the test. They’re taking two dozen of the best chefs and foragers in the Blue Ridge and daring them to put their mushroom where their mouth is — or rather, ours. Call it *Iron Chef Appalachia* or *Julia Child vs. Wild*. They call it “[No Taste Like Home](#).”

Each month from April to December, one adventurous chef and one veteran wildcrafter will lead thirty-five intrepid initiates off the beaten path. Their mission: to gather, prepare, and consume a five-course feast incorporating all the wild food you can eat. “It’s about reconnection,” says Friedman, “with the land and our community. It’s about coming home.”

Events will take place at [Laughing Frog](#), a 215-acre estate that’s been featured in *Travel World International* (its sister estate in Mexico is the feature story of March’s *Vogue*). Participants will savor their catch of the day at the manor’s 7000-square-foot mansion. In between, there will be time to visit the pond and gardens, explore miles of hiking trails, listen to local musicians, or simply watch the sunset over the mountains. Weekend and weeklong accommodations with longer foraging expeditions are available.



The retreat price of \$125 includes a foraging workshop, a wild foods cooking demonstration, live music, and a five-course dinner with local wines. No experience necessary. There’ll be two photographers to shoot your “trophies” and a videographer in case anyone plans to try out for *Survivor*.

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