

Lambsquarters (*Chenopodium album*) is a relative of spinach and is found in many gardens growing as a weed. It is widely known to be edible but few people take advantage of it. We have a really vigorous patch growing next to our vegetable garden so instead of trying to pull it out we decided to eat it; a biological control of sorts! My wife Zeynep makes lots of vegetable-rich Turkish dishes where lambsquarters can be added, especially as a spinach substitute. She and my mother-in-law Cansever, who is here this spring from Istanbul, wrote down some recipes. This one uses Colorado lamb and lambsquarters that our daughters gathered in our backyard. If you decide to use lambsquarters, or any wild plant, as food please make certain you know what you're harvesting.

Lambsquarters with Colorado Ground Lamb

by Zeynep Bean and Cansever Özsoy

This recipe originally uses spinach instead of lambsquarters. However, after discovering a large patch of lambsquarters in our backyard, I decided to make use of it. In all recipes where I have substituted lambsquarters for spinach, it has worked quite well. We found that lambsquarters flavor is even better than spinach. In Turkey this dish is served on a bed of rice with yogurt on top, but it can be eaten just by itself also. It tastes good, is nutritious, and is very easy and quick to make. Afiyet olsun!



Ingredients:

1 large onion – diced
3 Tbsp olive oil
1 lb ground lamb (we use Colorado lamb which we buy from a local rancher)
2 carrots - sliced thin
1 tomato – skin peeled, diced (or a can of diced tomatoes)
2 tsp pepper paste (or tomato paste)
½ cup rice – rinsed
1 lb lambsquarters – stems removed, washed
Optional: 2 Tbls butter
Salt, pepper to taste

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet, cook the onion until tender. Add the ground lamb and brown, making sure to break the lumps with a spoon, add salt to taste. Add the carrots, tomato, pepper paste, and a little water to cover all, and let them cook until the carrots have softened.

Add the rice, stir the mixture. Now start putting in the lambsquarters in batches, stirring them in between each batch. As the leaves cook they soften quite fast and leave room for more in the pot.

After all of the lambsquarters are stirred in, pour some hot water (or broth) to cover the mixture, add the butter if you choose to, close the lid and simmer until the rice has cooked.