



Deveron Projects artist Kawther Luay finds mustard garlic.



Reporter Sarah Roger getting stuck in.



Rosebay willowherb leaves, which can be made into tea.



A beetroot burger with foraged seasoning.



The ketchup mix includes rosehips, nasturtium seeds, crab apples and dried hogweed seeds.

Free feast from the forest

THE Huntly Express has recently published articles about The Gathering Table with Deveron Projects artist in residence Kawther Luay. We decided it was time we had a go at foraging for our own feast. HE reporter **SARAH ROGER** joined Kawther on a sunny afternoon and was amazed at the delights to be found.

The sun filtered through the leafy canopy overhead as Kawther and I strolled into the woods behind Huntly's secondary school. It was a perfect day for exploring – as demonstrated by a cheeky red squirrel who was scampering up and down close by.

Before long, Kawther stopped at a luscious carpet of mustard garlic. She plucked a healthy sprig from its bed and "agitated it" to release its scent. I was hit by a delicious garlic smell and we bagged up a few more sprigs. This would form part of a recipe the artist and chef had planned for us for later.

The walk was very relaxing. Kawther's style is to make you feel like you're out for a walk with a friend who happens to know the names of various weeds and plants and what to do with them.

She spotted a slope covered in ground elder, another plant which would be perfect in our meal. We each gathered clumps of the beautiful green specimen...moments before I slipped and came to a thud on my bottom. Laughter rebounded around the trees and our little red squirrel friend probably ran for cover until my giggling subsided.

"The hazards of a forager," said Kawther, reassuring me.

As we walked we nibbled on nettle seeds and I learned how to identify male and female nettle plants based on the seed clusters. They were nutty and apparently loaded with caffeine. If you ever spot me out for

an early morning stroll in the woods, you'll know I've run out of coffee!

Next we were met by a gorgeous wall of pinky purple rosebay willowherb. We nibbled some petals. It didn't have a strong flavour, but Kawther explained its flavour blossoms when the leaves are dried and used for tea.

We found a few large bushes of rosehips. I remember these shiny, red spheres being used as target practise weapons in my childhood. Little did I know that a few decades later I'd be picking them to make ketchup.

Our second "foragers hazard" arose in the form of maggot dodging. The little wrigglers were quite comfortable in the rosehip buds so we had to give each one a check over before it made it into our bag.

With a bag laden with fresh pickings, we headed back to the kitchen at Square Deal where I helped Kawther make a delicious beetroot burger with freshly picked lettuce and home made roasted chips. The beetroot was also local and had been given to the Barter Shop, which is open on a Wednesday and Thursday in The Square from 3-7pm. Wild teas and spice blends made by Kawther are also on the shelves for customers looking to exchange goods.

Our ketchup made from rosehips, crab apples, nasturtium seeds from the garden and ground black pepper was absolutely delicious.

Kawther is offering these free foraging walks until around October.

The artist is also taking her exploration of wild produce into health remedies with an upcoming workshop on Wednesday, August 31, as part of Hairst week. The free event will team up with a yoga therapist and take place from 6pm in Square Deal.

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