



The New Staples | Cherry Blossoms

FOOD | By MERRILL STUBBS | MAY 21, 2010, 12:40 PM

*In The New Staples, Merrill Stubbs of **Food52** highlights ingredients making their way into restaurants and refrigerators, plus recipes from top chefs to help you put them to use.*

CHERRY BLOSSOMS Along with some other fleeting spring treasures — ramps, fiddleheads, morels — cherry blossoms only make an appearance for a couple of weeks each year. Like pansies, roses and nasturtiums, cherry blossoms are edible, and impart a light, fruity fragrance to whatever they meet. Ken Oringer of **Clio Restaurant and Uni Sashimi Bar** in Boston has devised a clever way of preserving the essence of cherry blossoms long after the blooms themselves have wilted and fallen from the trees: he pickles the flowers and then uses them to adorn sashimi, the same way one would use pickled ginger. The recipe below can be used to preserve any similar fruit blossom. Rose petals would also work nicely.

Ask your local florist for unsprayed cherry blossoms, or order edible flowers online: \$19.50 for approximately 4 ounces of rose petals at **Culinary Gardens**.

Salted Cherry Blossoms

Adapted From Uni Sashimi Bar

2 cups rice vinegar
¼ cup sugar
½ teaspoon kosher salt
1-inch piece fresh ginger, smashed
1 umeboshi plum (available at Japanese markets or health-food stores)
½ teaspoon grenadine syrup
8 ounces cherry blossoms, or other edible blossoms.

1. Combine all ingredients except the cherry blossoms in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar.

2. Put the cherry blossoms in a heat-resistant container and pour the just-boiled liquid over them; stir gently to submerge the flowers completely in the liquid. Cool, cover tightly and keep in the refrigerator for at least three days before serving. The pickled blossoms will keep several weeks in the refrigerator. *Makes about 1 cup.*



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VIETNAMESE CINNAMON Also called Saigon cinnamon, this kicky spice is basically cinnamon on speed. Pastry chef Emily Wallendjack at **Cookshop** in New York was introduced to Vietnamese cinnamon by Johnny Iuzzini at Jean Georges. Once she started cooking with the spice's assertive sweetness and heat, she was hooked. These days, she eschews more timid varieties and buys whole chips of Vietnamese cinnamon, grinding them as needed. At the restaurant, Wallendjack serves a brown-sugar cake with cinnamon-spiced port butter. The recipe for the butter is below.

4 ounces of whole chips are \$6 at **Savory Spice Shop**.

CHILEAN OLIVE OIL These days, it seems like everyone's looking to get into the olive-oil business. But Chilean olive oil, which is just starting to become widely available in the United States, may actually give the Old World a run for its money. (A Chilean oil won the gold medal at the prestigious L'Orciole d'Oro in Italy two years in a row.) The microclimate in Chile's Colchagua Valley, the main wine-producing region near Santiago, is perfect for growing olives: there's plenty of sun and rain, and olives, like grapes, require both to flourish. Because the olives are cold-pressed within a few hours of picking, the resulting oil is grassy and fresh-tasting. Jim Lahey of **Sullivan Street Bakery and Co.** pizzeria in New York admires the Chilean approach so much that he now uses only Chilean oil in both of his establishments and is also selling it under his own label.

\$9.95 for 8.5 ounces at **Amazon.com**.



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