



# Sunflowers as food

Tipp von Esther Kern



According to historical sources, sunflowers were once served as vegetables. And now they're being rediscovered as an ingredient by a culinary connoisseur from the Binn Valley in Valais.

When you taste sunflower buds and receptacles, they have a slight hint of artichoke. This shouldn't be surprising as the two plants are botanically related. In times gone by, sunflowers were even recommended as an aphrodisiac.

Apart from sunflower oil, which is made by compressing ripened seeds, the plant has disappeared from our menus. At best, you will occasionally find their leaves in teas or adding a pop of colour to a salad (which I also highly recommend).

But now that local plants are coming back into fashion, you'll once again find a few chefs using sunflowers as a vegetable. I recently discovered a wonderful product: preserved sunflower buds by Klaus Leuenberger Speisewerk, a producer based in the Binn Valley in Valais. He used to grow sunflowers to use their leaves



for tea, but then he came up with the idea of using the buds as well. He preserves them in verjuice syrup – and they taste exquisite. When I had a chat with Klaus Leuenberger, he told me he always harvests the buds from the side shoots. He reckons they taste better than the main shoots.

I'm excited to see the ways in which sunflower buds and blossoms will appear on our plates in the future.