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Elderflower fritters and gooseberry sauce

When picking elderflower heads go for the flowers growing in the fields away from the main road to avoid harvesting those tainted by exhaust fumes. On getting them home, give them a vigorous shake to get rid of all the little insects that tend to accumulate in the heads.



Use as soon as possible as they don't keep fresh for long. They don't bloom for long either, so pick them now and make the most of their short but fragrant season.

To serve 4 people you will need:

- 4oz (125g) self raising flour
- 1oz (25g) icing sugar
- 1 free range egg
- 125 ml pale ale
- 8 freshly picked elderflower heads
- 2oz (50g) butter
- 3 tbsps sunflower oil.

Method:

- Mix the batter half an hour before you need it in order for the ingredients to fuse.
- Mix flour and icing sugar together. Beat the egg and beer in separate bowl, then pour into the flour mix. Cover and leave to rest for half an hour.
- Heat half the butter and oil in large frying pan.
- Dip the flour heads into the batter, shake to remove excess batter, then place into frying pan flower side down. Most pans can cope with four at a time.
- Once they begin to cook you can trim the stalks a little before turning the head and cooking on the other side.
- When the batter is crisp and golden remove the heads and keep warm while you use the rest of butter and oil to cook the rest.
- Serve with a gooseberry sauce made by simmering a couple of handfuls of gooseberries with sugar (amount will depend on how sharp the gooseberries are) a squeeze of orange juice and a little water. Simmer until really soft and the gooseberries have broken up. Strain if you wish, but it tastes just as good if rough and chunky.