



# Unearthing Wild at Heart foods

**Shirlee and Jane of Eat Surrey** seek and find the best small food producers, restaurants, cafés, pubs and shops, publishing weekly reviews on their website. Here Shirlee introduces essence readers to Ginny Knox and Caro Wilson of Wild at Heart, creative artisan producers of delicious and sustainable gourmet preserves from the Surrey/Kent border.

**E**lderflower jam, wild garlic pesto, crab apple jelly, fruit cheeses and chutneys are top lines in the world of award-winning food producers Ginny Knox and Caro Wilson. As school-friends who loved cooking their early hedgerow finds together, they then went their separate ways into the corporate world. .

After 20 years, with a wealth of experience between them, Ginny and Caro succumbed to the lure of the countryside and their passion for foraging. Swopping briefcases for wellington boots, they began a fruitful journey combining a love of wild food and kitchen alchemy. Starting in 2010, Wild at Heart now has an established customer base and Ginny and Caro's wonderful products are sold in many outlets such as farm shops, delicatessens, the gift shop at RHS Wisley and Cook.

Part of Wild at Heart's success has been recognition that although fierce competition existed from other jam and preserve makers in the artisan market, no one else was using wild or foraged food. With a clear niche market, Ginny and Caro developed their brand and launched a range of traditional preserves using natural ingredients whilst maintaining a modern edge. Timing was on their side with growing awareness of food wastage and the rise of campaigns to encourage sustainable thinking around food and farming. Food politics aside, Wild at Heart products are successful because they have a story and history that we can relate

to. Most importantly, the foods are delicious and intensely flavoured. Food experts must agree because Wild at Heart holds several gold stars from the Guild of Fine Foods. I regularly serve their damson cheese at dinner parties and it's always the centre of attention.

Living in Kent, Caro has found a wealth of farmers who either have wild food growing on their land (such as wild garlic) or traditional fruit such as crab apples which were not being utilised. Crab apples, for example, have traditionally been grown in orchards alongside other fruit trees as pollinators but, as the fruit bruises easily, the apples went unpicked and were left to rot. Some trees are so old the variety names have been lost or forgotten over the years. So Ginny and Caro give them new names such as 'big pinks' to identify them. This is essential as many of these fruits have a very short season so the pair prepare them while they are at their best and freeze the pulp for later use. Crab apple jelly was virtually impossible to find in shops, but like many Wild at Heart products belongs to our rich culinary history.

In addition to developing their business, these industrious entrepreneurs have also published a cookbook. Two years after starting their business, they were commissioned by a publisher and following a year of hard work the 'Hedgerow Cookbook' was on the shelves in 2013. Comprising a collection of one hundred recipes written by Ginny and Caro, the cookbook is testimony

to their vast knowledge of foraging. Just flicking through the pages is an education in itself and my copy is marked up with lots of recipes to try.

Unlike many other small food producers I meet, Caro worked for food brands in her city career which gives a clear professional edge to Wild at Heart's business approach. After two years of picking and processing all their own fruit, wild garlic and samphire, they realised this was not a realistic long-term option for meeting demand. They have now outsourced both the picking and production to local farmers who are happy to support this unique enterprise whilst also providing local employment. This leaves time for the enterprising duo to develop and grow their business.

The Wild at Heart product range benefits from being both eclectic and evocative. You are in springtime with their wild garlic pesto, summer with hedgerow jam; crab apples lend an autumnal vibe, while chutneys, jellies and wild berry mincemeat glide us into winter. From season to season they are subtle reminders of the wild food treasures that can still be found in the British countryside. ●

## essence info

Websites: [www.shirleeandjane eatsurrey.com](http://www.shirleeandjane eatsurrey.com), [www.wildatheartfoods.com](http://www.wildatheartfoods.com)  
The Hedgerow Cookbook is published by Pavilion Books 2013.



## Elderflower roulade

A delightful, gluten free dessert which adds a splash of summer to any meal.

### Ingredients

#### For the roulade:

- Four medium free-range eggs, separated
- 100g caster sugar
- 100g ground almonds

#### To finish:

- Half jar of Wild at Heart elderflower jam
- One 250g pot of mascarpone
- One 200ml pot of half fat crème fraîche
- One dessertspoon elderflower cordial
- 200g mixed soft berries, washed and thoroughly drained

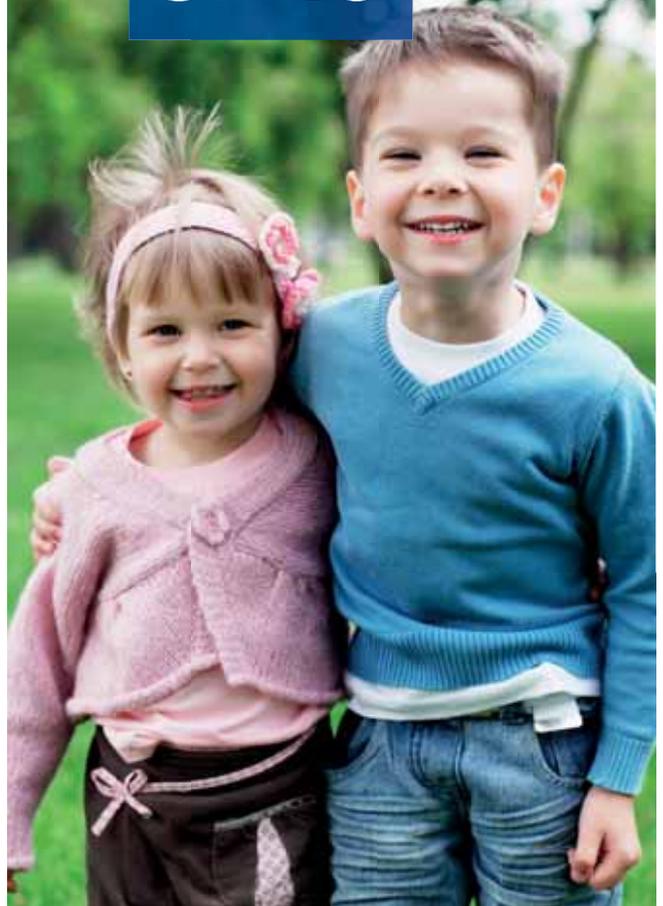
### Method

- Pre-heat oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas Mark 4 and line a swiss roll tin with non-stick baking paper.
- Whisk the egg whites with an electric beater and place on one side. Whisk the egg yolks and sugar together until pale and creamy, then fold in the ground almonds followed by the egg whites.
- Spread evenly onto the lined tray and cook in the oven for 12 minutes, or until golden and firm to touch.
- Turn the roulade out on to a sheet of baking paper that has been sprinkled with caster sugar. Peel the baking paper off the back of the sponge and allow to cool completely before filling. Meanwhile, combine the mascarpone and crème fraîche together and mix in the elderflower cordial. Add more sugar to taste if needed and keep chilled until required.
- When the sponge is cool, spread with elderflower jam and then top with half the mascarpone mixture. Top this with one third of the berries (slice those that are bigger) and then carefully roll up the roulade using the paper to help.
- Place the roulade on a serving dish and decorate with the remaining cream and berries.\*
- Serve in thick slices.

\* I also used some edible rose and safflower petals. You can buy these online from Uncle Roy's Commestible Concoctions ([www.uncleroys.co.uk](http://www.uncleroys.co.uk)).

Shirlee Posner

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