

# WILD PLANTS

Plant of the Month: Chicory

Family: Asteraceae AKA Aster, Daisy, Composite, or Sunflower Family

Chicory (*Cichorium intybus* L.) is native to Europe, but has been naturalized in much of the United States. Chicory is an herbaceous biennial (sometimes perennial) plant that grows in meadows, fields, and along roadsides. Chicory is a bitter herb like its close relative – Dandelion. Like Dandelion, Chicory is supportive during a parasite cleanse and is extremely nutritious. Cultivated chicory varieties includes endive, frisée, escarole, and radicchio.

Chicory begins as a rosette of basal leaves with leaves similar to Dandelions and grows to about 3 feet in height with a semi-woody stalk. I have eaten the leaves of this plant as a salad green, as well as ate them steamed and they are delicious. Roasted chicory root makes a healthy coffee substitute with respect to taste, but has no caffeine and is relaxing to the body to the point of having a laxative effect on the body. This is a delicious drink for the entire family!

## Chicory Root

- Roasted chicory root used as a natural caffeine-free alternative to coffee.
  - ❖ Historically mixed with coffee to serve as a coffee extender.
  - ❖ New Orleans Coffee is a blend of chicory root and coffee.
- When chicory root is roasted, high concentrations of the carbohydrate inulin (a type of fiber that acts as a prebiotic for our gut microbes) are caramelized and converted into d-fructose<sup>1</sup> (fruit sugar).
- Inulin that is used for medicine is most commonly obtained by soaking chicory roots in hot water.
- Chicory inulin is added to many energy bars and functional foods, as inulin is a plant-based carbohydrate whose bonds cannot be broken by human digestive enzymes and supports a healthy gut micro-biome.

<sup>1</sup><https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/compound/D-fructose#section=Top>

This information is intended for educational purposes only. Please do your own research and do not eat or use any wild plants based solely on this information or any one source.

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CHICORY (*CICHORIUM INTYBUS*)

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