

STALKING THE WILD ASPARAGUS

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

If you've ever picked dandelions in Pennsylvania; wild leeks and onions on the roadsides, then you're an amateur herbologist like I am--the sort of a fellow who wants the taste of the leek on top of his vichy or a good dandelion salad in the spring. You're just an ordinary person who likes a bit of wildness in the food; a bit of good banquet in the soup. Or perhaps you even grow mint in the back yard, or basil, if you're an Italian-Pennsylvanian or even a sprig or so of fennel for the sausage. However, the wildest of the wild foragers are those who go out in search of the funghi--the wild mushrooms whose taste is nectar in their foods, and whose knowledge is a rare one which takes a lifetime of work in the fields, underground and under the huge soggy bogs in the forests. Wild mushrooms--I knew two Northumberland County fellows who know the secret and who got it from their fathers, and will eventually pass it on to their children and no one else. The wildest of the wild, however, is that obscure author from Central Pennsylvania, Euell Gibbons, of Troxelville, in Snyder County who wrote the book "Stalking the Wild Asparagus" back in 1961 and has since contributed more works of this sort to the literary field, and became internationally famous as the authority on wild foods in the Pennsylvania woods. Gibbons has been foraging for wild foods for a half-century and until

he wrote "Stalking" was a nobody. He drinks pine needle tea and claims it is much better for a person than orange juice, but he is not a health food nut. He puts up with them! He is actually a wild foods gourmet and can get most of them in Pennsylvania. Such delights as blue gills, fried groundhog, raspberry soup, crayfish cocktails and persimmon hickory nut bread, spread with wild strawberry jam. The greatest food experts in the world say that the best eating is the best food at the cheapest price. And foods of the weeds cost nothing. Euell Gibbons can get a hearty meal from a river-bank. On a six-day trip down the Susquehanna, he enjoyed boiled Jerusalem artichokes, ground-cherry salad, pennyroyal tea, hickory nuts, winter cress and much more. At home, Gibbons' idea of a good time is to give a "wild party"--wild-food party, that is! He and his wife Freida will serve 32 different kinds of wild foods at one of their bashes. At 61, Euell Theophilus Gibbons is well-built, well-heeled as the result of the sales of his book and well-fed. He hit it at the age of 50. Take heart--eat hearty--and enjoy the wild foods. In Pennsylvania, God is your green-grocer... and  
**Euell Gibbons is His grocery clerk.**

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.