



## The Edible Garden with Alison Alexander

The lower temperatures and sunny days have been the perfect recipe for attaining good growth in the garden. This is particularly so in the vegetable and herb gardens and I am enjoying using some of this produce in the kitchen. I rely on my herb garden all year round and am always on the lookout for something different to plant along with all the well-known herb varieties.



I like using celery as a flavour in savoury cooking and am presently growing it in the vegetable patch but also some other plants with a celery flavour including lovage, celery leaf and parcel. I obtain these from Renaissance Herbs which are stocked in many nurseries. Also, in their range is Oregano Zatar which I only found two years ago. This herb has become a firm favourite in my kitchen and I use it in place of thyme or other Mediterranean herbs on a regular basis. The leaves are small, and I rarely chop them but rather strip them off the stem and add to the dish. Although this plant has the family name of oregano it does not look anything like oregano but quite similar to Winter Savory.



L to R: Oregano Zatar, Winter Savory, Bay Leaf, Marjoram, Italian Parsley, Rosemary, Westmoreland Thyme, Sage, Parcel

Incidentally, Z'Atar is a spice mix used on bread in Lebanon and other Middle Eastern countries comprising dried thyme, sesame seeds, sumac and salt and is easy to make at home. It is good sprinkled over vegetables prior to roasting, added to mashed potatoes, stirred through guacamole and rubbed over meats before roasting.

I like to make a bouquet garni to add to slow cooked dishes and making this is so easy when you have a productive herb garden. The flavour can vary depending on the dish it is to be used in but most common is a basis of bay leaf, thyme, parsley, marjoram and a piece of celery. I often make two and keep the spare in the fridge where it will keep for five days and I now always include some Oregano Zatar.



To make a bouquet garni, take a piece of celery about 6-8cm in length and add a sprig each of the above herbs bending them to fit the celery and finish with a bay leaf. Tie up this bundle with a piece of string and your bouquet garni is ready to use in soups, slow cooked braises and casseroles, pasta sauces, corned beef and many other dishes. Change the selection of herbs according to what you have growing and what you are cooking.

What are you harvesting from your garden and using in the kitchen?

I'm sure some of you will have been making rosella jam and citrus marmalade or maybe using some passionfruit. What vegetables have you been picking and using? Please share your ideas with us all. You may like to submit a recipe for sharing as well. If so, please include the recipe source e.g.

published work such as Women's Weekly, Gourmet Traveller, Jamie Oliver, hand-me-down from family or friend etc.

Recipe following:

### Slow-cooked Pork Shoulder with Pappardelle (Pulled Pork)

1 pork shoulder	2 X 400g tins tomatoes
1 tablespoon oil	½ cup dry red wine or water
2 large onions, chopped	salt to taste
4 cloves garlic, peeled and roughly chopped	freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano leaves	400g pappardelle
2 tablespoons tomato paste (1 sachet)	freshly grated parmesan cheese
1 ½ teaspoon smoked paprika	

1. Trim any excess fat if necessary, from the pork shoulder.
2. Heat a large frypan and brown the pork on both sides then place in the slow-cooker.
3. Add the oil if necessary, to the frypan and sauté the onions until transparent. Add the garlic, oregano, tomato paste and paprika and cook, stirring frequently, for 2 minutes then pour the mixture over the pork.
4. Add the tomatoes, wine and seasoning. Turn the pork over in the tomato mixture then put on the lid and leave to cook on HIGH heat setting. (The liquid should just cover the pork. If it does not, then top up with some water.)
5. Cook for 6 hours – turn the pork twice more during the cooking - then gently remove the pork from the cooker into a large mixing bowl.
6. Using two forks shred the meat into pieces and set aside. The sauce can be used as it is or puréed with a hand blender.
7. Pour the sauce over the meat and stir to combine. The pork is now ready to use but you will only need about one third for serving with the pasta. See below for other uses.
8. Cook the pappardelle in a large pot of salted water and when al dente, drain and return to the pot. Meanwhile reheat the portion of pork for this dish and stir into the pasta. Serve the pappardelle into four bowls and serve with parmesan and Gremolata.

### Gremolata

½ cup finely chopped parsley  
1-2 cloves garlic, very finely chopped  
finely grated zest of 1 lemon

Combine all ingredients in a small bowl and set aside.

#### Notes:

- The pork can have the bone in or bone out, whichever you prefer.
- This recipe can be used for lamb shoulder.
- If oregano is not available then use thyme, marjoram or rosemary.
- The tinned tomatoes can be whole which you then chop or already diced or chopped.
- The amount of pasta is for 4. The remaining pork can be used in a variety of ways – in lasagne, stirred through risotto, stored in the freezer, as a pie filling or as a dumpling filling.
- If a slow-cooker is not available, then cook the pork in a large oven-proof dish and cover tightly with a heavy lid or double layer of foil.
- The recipe for Gremolata is the classic version and is good for sprinkling over many other meat dishes. Try changing the herbs to match with the flavours of the dish being cooked.