By Nancy Whitaker

PICKIN' DANDELIONS

A lot of people who know me are familiar with my love of food. I love to shop, look at, take pictures of, cook, and eat food.

I would not call myself a gourmet by any means, but I do like to think of myself as "adventurous" in the kitchen. I certainly have had my share of "kitchen horror" stories, but all in all, through the years, I have learned how to whip up a good meal.

While shopping for food this week in a large retail store, I was enthralled with their produce department. I noticed the different kinds of tomatoes. There was a type I had never tried before called a mandarin tomato.

They were orange in color and were shaped like a cherry tomato. Then there were tomatoes that were called a kumato which were part red and a dark purple color. I wanted to try them, but I still watch the prices that I pay for things so I passed those up.

As I walked around gandering at the various types of fruits and vegetables, I saw something which resembled rhubarb. However, this rhubarb was yellow, red and green in color.

Thinking about what a pretty pie it would make, I took a closer look and saw a tag on it that said, "Rainbow Swiss Chard." Like I said I am somewhat adventurous in the food area, but have never tried a rainbow swiss chard or any swiss chard for that matter.

The section of lettuce and greens was very interesting. It is fun for me to try and identify the various types of greens. I saw watercress, parsleys, bibb lettuce, leaf lettuce, head lettuce, cilantro, red lettuce and butter lettuce.

Close to the end of the lettuce was a familiar looking green. I thought, “Oh, no. It can’t be. We don’t want them in our yards, but also here they are for sale in a store.”

By now, you may know I am talking about dandelions. Now, I remember my grandma picking dandelions in our yard when I was little. She would clean them real good and after cutting them up, would cook them using bacon, bacon grease and vinegar. I can almost taste them.

These dandelions were huge. I have never ever seen any this size before, so I bought two bunches. The cost was $1.89 a bunch, so I splurged and got them.

At the checkout lane, a nice young man was running the cash register. He was looking at some of the produce I had bought to look for the bar code. He would ask what various items were and when the dandelions appeared, he could not believe when I told him they were dandelions. (I assume they are not a big seller.)

I am so proud of those dandelions, but what am I going to do with them? Well, I just so happen to have an old family recipe in which you can use endive or dandelions if available. The recipe calls for potatoes, bacon, boiled eggs, onion and vinegar. I can’t wait to cook them! Plus, eat them!

Have you ever eaten dandelions? Do you think they are a nuisance? Have you ever made dandelion wine? Let me know and I’ll give you a Penny for Your Thoughts.