Are wild and cultivated flowers served in restaurants or sold by local producers in Denmark safe for the consumer?

New Nordic Food has within the last decade received much media coverage with chefs of top restaurants using wild plants for foods. As part of a control campaign, the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration visited 150 restaurants and local food producers from May-October 2016 and investigated their use of plants picked from the wild, cultivated in private gardens or market gardens. Among the species used were the flowers from 23 plants. Here we present a safety evaluation of these flowers based on published phytochemical investigations and toxicological data in humans, farm animals, pets, or experimental animals. Of the 23 flowers reviewed, nine contained compounds with toxic or potentially toxic effects if eaten, two contained unidentified toxic compound(s), and four were flowers from plants with potentially toxic compounds present in other plant parts or related species. Many of the flowers may be considered novel, since a use to a significant degree in Europe prior to 15 May 1997 before Regulation (EC) 258/97 on novel food and novel food ingredients came into force could not be established. In conclusion, this review illuminates a striking lack of chemical and toxicological data of many of the proposed wild or cultivated flowers for food use.

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