



Ger-Nis Culinary & Herb Center...

A comprehensive guide to storing, handling & using fresh culinary herbs, plus fresh herb tips

...dare to be creative



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Herbs Storage & Handling

Storage

- Depending on where you purchase your herbs from determines your optimal storage methods.
- Herbs like those from the grocery store (such as sold in a clamshell case) will keep best in a Ziploc bag with wrapped in a lightly dampened paper towel.
- Wrap basil & oregano in paper and store in the door of the refrigerator where it is warmer.
- Herbs bought from the farmers market most likely have not been cooled, so putting them directly into the refrigerator will shock them. Instead, it is best to use the herbs quickly and store at room temperature.
- Freshly picked herbs will survive like cut flowers in a glass of water.



Handling

- Avoid handling herbs as much as possible. Basil, oregano, and marjoram are specially touch sensitive and will turn black from exposure from excessive handling.
- Do not wash herbs until just before consuming. Water and washing can severely affect the ability of the herb to remain in good quality. When washing use tepid water.
- Do not store herbs near products with ethylene such as bananas, tomatoes, avocados, or any other ripening fruits. Ethylene will cause the herbs to turn black.
- Always rip or tear herbs for usage. If possible, pick the leaves off with your hands.



Troubleshooting Quality

- Black spots indicate excessive handling, temperatures that are too hot or cold, or excessive exposure to ethylene.
- Decay, slime and/or yellowing indicate that the temperature is too hot and the herb is too old.
- Limpness indicates overexposure to air or heat, or temperature shock.
- Excessive condensation indicates that the herb was not pre-cooled properly or that it experienced a massive temperature flux after harvest. Bring to room temperature and use quickly.

Herb Preserving



Freezing

- Although herbs may lose their color when frozen, most herbs retain their flavor. These can be used in salad dressings, soups, sauces and stews.
- Herbs can be blended with water or oil, mixed with garlic salt and pepper, frozen and stored in ice cube trays or Ziploc bags.

Drying

- Drying is an excellent way to preserve the flavor of most herbs, especially the “woody” herbs like rosemary, thyme and bay leaves.
- To dry flat, remove all leaves from stem and place on a screen or cheese cloth. Dry for two weeks in a well ventilated dark room with no direct sunlight.
- To hang dry, tie the stems of a bunch of herbs and hang upside down. Store in dark and cool location for two weeks.
- To microwave dry, place herb leaves on a paper towel and set microwave on ten second intervals until brittle and dry.

Herb Tips & Ideas

- Dried herbs are more potent than fresh herbs. Don't be afraid to use large amounts of fresh herbs.
- Make a BBQ brush with fresh herbs. Bunch rosemary and thyme and dip in oil or sauce and brush meats, fish or vegetables while cooking.
- Use bouquet garnis and experiment with new combinations.
- Make a cheesecloth pouch filled with fresh herbs for added flavor.
- Make herbal butters.
- Add basil or mint leaves to plain water.
- Make your own oil, vinegar and alcohol infusions.
- Make fresh herb rubs.
- Add fresh herbs to salads.
- Use all part of the herb. Soft stems can be chopped up and added to a dish.
- Use chopped raw herbs for garnish.



Herb Techniques



Techniques

Stripping – Pull all the leaves off a stem by pinching and pulling down the stalk.

Plucking – Pull fronds off a tender stalk by pulling up and out.

Picking – Separate leaves and florets from stalks.

Slicing – Roughly slice up a fresh stalk with a kitchen knife.

Chopping – Chop up herbs with a large kitchen knife or mezzaluna for herbs that can quickly blend into many recipes.

Piling – Separate leaves and stack underside up. These can be sliced into ribbons with a kitchen knife.

Sniping—Snip small leaves in a bowl with kitchen scissors, or hold larger leaves and snip while holding.

Bruising – lightly smash herbs with the blade of your knife to release essential oils and aromas.

Pounding – Mash herbs to release flavors with a pestle and mortar.



Basil



Flavor:

Basil is sweet and mild yet extremely robust with a strong, pungent, sweet and clove-like scent and is similar to anise in flavor. Its flavor is much milder when cooked.

Usage:

Basil It is used prominently in Italian, Thai and Vietnamese cooking. The flavors of fresh basil mix well with tomatoes, salads, pastas, grains, eggs, seafood and most famously in pesto.

Bay Leaves



Flavor:

Bay leaves are sweet, spicy and sultry with a peppery taste and a woody, citrus scent.

Usage:

Bay Leaves are part of the traditional bouquet garni. Bay leaves are predominately used in soups and stews and to enhance the flavors of meats but are making a modern debut in desserts and sweets, pairing amazingly with milk and cream products.

Chervil



Flavor:

Chervil is light, gentle and feathery with an earthy flavor similar to anise and parsley. It has a subtle scent with hints of camphor.

Usage:

Chervil It is usually used to season foods like poultry, some seafood and vegetables. Both leaves and stems can be used in cooking. It should be added at the end of cooking because long cooking produces a bitter flavor. Excellent when married with lemony and acidic flavors.

Chives



Flavor:

Chives have a light garlic and onion flavor, while the leaves and blossoms are much more distinct in flavor and scent.

Usage:

Chives are used as a common household herb to flavor soups, fish and potatoes. The flowers can be added to salads. It has a much milder flavor than its other relatives in the onion family; therefore it is often used raw as a garnish. An excellent additive to cheese and dairy dishes as well as eggs, extremely versatile, loses flavor in the cooking process.

Cilantro



Flavor:

Cilantro (also known as Corriander) has a very strong grassy and camphor-like scent and flavor with undertones of anise and lemon.

Usage:

All parts of the plant are edible including the seeds. The fresh leaves are commonly used in Mexican, Vietnamese, Thai and Indian cooking. Coriander seeds are used in most Indian curries and in German and South African cooking. Mixes into salsas of all kinds as well as seafood and spicy curry dishes. Pairs well when mixed with acidic flavors.

Dill



Flavor:

Dill has a tangy citrus and parsley flavor with a very robust, strong scent of anise.

Usage:

Dill is often found in fish seasonings and is particularly good with salmon. It is also used in salads and its seeds are used as a spice for pickling. Excellent used raw in salads or on vegetables.

Lemon Thyme



Flavor:

Lemon thyme is a subtle mix of mint and bay with strong citrus overtones.

Usage:

The strong citrus flavors and scent of lemon thyme pair well with vegetables. Lemon thyme is an excellent flavoring in soups and stews with meat, especially poultry. Makes an amazing pesto. Works well with grains and with seafood as well.

Marjoram



Flavor:

Marjoram has a very soft and sultry texture with clove and mint flavors, lemony overtones and a strong, spicy scent.

Usage:

Marjoram is a pine-smelling culinary herb with a close resemblance to oregano. It is featured in the herb mixture "Herbes de Provence." Marjoram gets top billing in the foods of Portugal, France, Italy, and Greece. Excellent pairing with vegetables, particularly tomatoes and is extremely versatile in pasta and grain salads as well as with meats and fish.

Mint



Flavor:

Mint has cool and crisp menthol and camphor flavors and scents and has a subtle, crisp aftertaste.

Usage:

Mint is commonly used in beverages, ice cream, candies and syrups. It is a popular accompaniment to lamb, veal, lentils, eggplant and cracked wheat salads. Excellent partner for fruits and beverages of all sorts, especially hot teas. Used in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cuisine in abundance.

Oregano



Flavor:

Oregano has a pungent smell with subtle hints of pine and has a spicy, mint and citrus taste.

Usage:

This classic Italian herb is used to flavor sauces and breads and pizza. Oregano is also underused as it is an excellent partner to vegetables of all kinds and is a great "supporting" herb when accompanied with marjoram, parsley and basil combinations.

Parsley



Flavor:

Parsley is mild and grassy with subtle peppery overtones and has a bright lemony scent.

Usage:

With its fresh grassy notes, this herb is one of the most versatile and can help enhance the flavors of other parts of the dish. Excellent in just about any dish raw or cooked and pairs with just about anything can even be made into a sweet ice cream!

Red Basil



Flavor:

Red basil is sweet and mild as basil but with a slightly deeper flavor.

Usage:

Used as basil is used, however with its spicier flavor and often used as a color enhancer, (red basil pesto over fish or pasta) and is also used in desserts as its flavor is a bit more cinommony than green basil

Rocolla



Flavor:

Rocolla has a spicy, peppery, piquant taste and scent.

Usage:

Part of the mustard family, roccola is a fine addition to any salad. It can also be cooked with salads and meat. Excellent in pestos and with vegetables of any kind, very peppery taste makes a great substitution for lettuces. Also a great topping for pizza.

Rosemary



Flavor:

Rosemary has a robust, pine scent and its flavor has hints of mint and lemon undertones.

Usage:

Rosemary is a wonderful accompaniment to meats, fish, and fatty sauces that can handle its strong flavor. Excellent in breads and with teas and drinks as well. Perfect for using in grilling sauces or as a grilling apparatus (skewers). Rosemary combines with oils excellently and is one of the greatest partners to chicken.

Sage



Flavor:

Sage has a very intense mint, lemon and pine taste and scent.

Usage:

Sage leaves can be eaten fresh in salads. Sage is a fine accompaniment to meats, fish, and starchy root vegetables, and adds flavor to marinades and soups. Its incredible fried and blends with butter in the most exceptional way (brown butter sauce with sage) This herb is one of the best partners for all of falls offerings.

Savory



Flavor:

Savory has a salty, sweet and spicy taste and scent.

Usage:

Of all the cooking herbs, savory has one of the strongest flavors. As a tea, it has been known to alleviate coughing, sore throat, upset stomach, and diarrhea. As a kitchen herb, it is used in butters, beans, flavored vinegars, soups and winter vegetables.

Sorrel



Flavor:

Sorrel has a bitter, citrus taste and a pungent, bitter, lemony scent.

Usage:

Sorrel can be used in soups and stews and pureed concoctions. Its bitter grassy notes pair excellently with vegetables, is perfect in salads and makes one of the best sorbets along with other desserts and drinks.

Tarragon



Flavor:

Tarragon has a peppery, anise flavor surrounded by strong anise scents.

Usage:

Tarragon is one of the four "fines herbes" of French cooking. It is a delicious addition to meats, fish, shellfish, flavored vinegars, and classic sauces such as béarnaise, tartar, and remoulade. Today it's modern versatility is seen in all cuisines and cooking styles, blending beautifully with vegetables and in salads and marinades.

Thyme



Flavor:

Thyme has sweet, minty bay flavors with a strong, robust scent.

Usage:

Thyme is commonly used in French, Italian and Caribbean cuisine. It is a common addition to bouquet garni, basic soup stocks, and many fish and meat marinades. Thyme enhances the flavor of just about any vegetable, its versatility is seen in all types of cooking and used raw and cooked. Also an excellent partner for baking and sweet cobblers and tarts.