

Growing and Using Herbs
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Here are some helpful hints to explore using herbs in the kitchen.

REMEMBER in using herbs, one (1) teaspoon of dried equals three (3) teaspoons fresh.

MAKE HERBAL OIL CONCENTRATE to store in the refrigerator for several weeks or in the freezer for long term. Use this as a substitute for fresh herbs in sauces, soups, salad dressings, basting mixtures, vegetables or in sour cream or yogurt for quick sauces. One teaspoon of this concentrate is equal to 3 teaspoons fresh herbs.

Use two cups (hardpacked) herb leaves and tender stems. You can use a single herb or a combination. Experiment. If you don't have enough of a particular herb, use parsley to make the measurement. Add ½ cup good vegetable oil (not olive oil) and combine in the blender or processor, using pulse. You may have to stop and push down the material. The processor creates a mixture with more texture while the blender will puree. Store in airtight container. Glass mason jar is great. If you are going to freeze it, use plastic ice cube trays. When frozen, pop loose and store in zipper freezer bag.

MAKE HERBAL VINEGARS: In clean jars, cover fresh herbs and/or spices with room temperature vinegar. Let cure in cool dark place for several weeks, then strain through coffee filter into clean decorative jar. Here are a few examples:

Onion: 1 cup chopped onion to 1 quart vinegar

Garlic: 2 oz garlic cloves (approximately ¼ to 1/3 cup), peeled and minced. 1 tsp. salt and 1 tsp. peppercorns to 1 quart vinegar.

Mint: Enough clean mint leaves and tender stems to loosely fill a quart jar to 1 quart vinegar.

Lemon: Fill quart jar 2/3 full with combination of: lemon balm, lemon basil, lemon thyme, lemon verbena or root stalks of lemon grass (sliced and slightly crushed). Add peeled zest of 2 or 3 lemons. Fill jar with vinegar and let cure. When you strain into decorative jar, add a fresh spiral of lemon peel to each bottle. Excellent for marinades for chicken or fish and on cooked or raw vegetables or salad dressings.

Chile: Use a jar with a shaker top and fill about 2/3 full with small dried red hot chile (like pequin or super chile). Fill with white vinegar. You may add a clove of peeled garlic and a few peppercorns. This is ready in a week or so, and is essential in the South with greens or beans. As you use it up, you may add more vinegar.

MAKE HERBAL OILS:

Lemon oil: Combine 2 cups vegetable oil and the zest of 4 lemons (about ¼ cup). Use a potato peeler to peel the zest and do not use any of the white part as it is bitter. Cover tightly and store in cool dark place for 1 week. To use, toss a little with pasta or use to baste grilled foods or to saute. You could also experiment with orange, grapefruit or tangerines.

Chile oil; Heat 2 cups vegetable oil and add 1/3 to ½ cup crushed chile with seeds. Use cayenne, tabasco, or for REALLY HOT oil, use habanero. Heat slowly until oil is hot, but not smoking. Let cool completely and then store in jar with tight lid. After 2 weeks, strain through coffee filter into clean jar. Add 1 whole dried chile for identification. Use to saute meats and fish, or for spicy dressings or marinades. Use in stir fry.

Pesto oil: This is a four star recipe. Better than what they serve at restaurants to dip bread in. ½ cup packed fresh basil leaves (can even use tender stems)

1 clove garlic, minced

½ cup vegetable or olive oil.

Preheat oven to 300. Combine ingredients in small metal measure or metal bowl. (anything that is oven proof) Set on baking sheet and cook in lower third of oven for 1 hour. Cool. Strain into a glass jar. Refrigerate to keep.

Excellent on pastas or vinaigrettes, but unbelievable on mashed potatoes. This is a good way to use up basil at the end of the season. When I do it, I usually use my roaster and multiply the recipe to use 6 cups oil. You can store it back in the oil containers.

Regal Rosemary Butter

1 stick softened butter or oleo
3 cloves garlic pressed
3 tsp fresh rosemary leaves, removed from stem, minced
½ tsp orange or lemon zest, minced
1 Tblsp orange juice, or lemon juice or white wine
¼ tsp cayenne
salt and pepper to taste
Good on steak, lamb, fish, chicken, potatoes and other vegetables

Basil Butter

½ cup softened butter
2 Tblsp chopped fresh basil
1 Tblsp grated fresh parmesan
¼ tsp garlic powder
dash salt and pepper
Beat together until well blended. Excellent on grilled chicken.

Ancho-Oregano Pecan Butter

2 sticks softened butter or oleo
3 cloves garlic, pressed
4 tsp ancho powder (or other good pure chile powder)
2 Tblsp chopped fresh oregano (or 1 tsp dried)
1 Tblsp fresh lime juice
3 Tblsp chopped pecans
salt and pepper to taste
Good on squash, corn, soups, pasta, grilled fish, chicken or steaks.

Basic Pesto

½ cup vegetable oil or good olive oil
2 or more cloves garlic, minced
2 cups (hard packed) fresh basil leaves
1 cup (hard packed) fresh parsley (preferably flat leaf Italian parsley instead of curly)
¼ cup pine nuts or almonds
½ cup freshly grated parmesan (NOT out of a can)
Combine well in processor, adding cheese last. Freeze if keeping more than 2 weeks or so. A perfect size is to freeze in cup cake tin using paper liners. When frozen, take out and store in zipper freezer bag. This amount is just perfect for a lot of dishes. When storing in refrigerator, put into glass jar and smooth top. Then pour a very thin layer of oil over the top. This prevents discoloration.

Spinach Pesto Spread

3 cups (packed) fresh spinach leaves (about 5 oz)	1 cup (packed) fresh basil leaves
4 ½ Tblsp fresh lemon juice	3 Tblsp capers with juices
1 cup shelled unsalted pumpkin seeds (or almonds)	1 Tblsp chopped garlic
2 Tblsp chopped shallots	1 Tblsp dijon mustard
1 ½ cups vegetable oil.	

Process leaves, juice & capers coarsely. Add remaining ingredients except oil. Process finely. Gradually add oil while processor is running. Add salt and pepper to taste. Allow to flavor several hours before serving. Serve with thinly sliced baguettes. This is always a big hit at a party. Also good on grilled chicken on baked potatoes or as sauce on a pizza with left over chicken and mozzarella. It also freezes well like the basic pesto.