

Cooking With HERBS



BASIL (also called sweet basil)

Growing: An annual; grow in full sun; vulnerable to frost

Flavor Profile: Spicy, sweet, anise (licorice) and clove-like; flavor change when dried. Purple basil (opal, ruffled) has a more delicate flavor that is clove-like. Other varieties include cinnamon basil, lemon basil, Thai basil and globe basil.

Uses: Salads, soups, dips and sauces, stews, rice dishes; as part of fines herbs mixture; frequent addition to Italian tomato dishes; excellent in red lentil soup, gazpacho, ratatouille. Good in omelets, egg salad, cottage cheese; main ingredient of pesto; great with tomatoes, eggplant, zucchini. Purple basil makes beautiful red vinegar.

Note: Leaves are very delicate; handle gently; wash and chop just before using.



BAY LEAVES (also called laurel leaves)

Growing: A perennial evergreen tree; grow in full sun to partial shade

Flavor Profile: Slightly bitter, savory.

Uses: Soups and chowders; add to water for cooking vegetables. (i.e.) potatoes or pasta; spaghetti sauce, casseroles, stews; meat, especially beef dishes, chicken and turkey; fish (when poaching shrimp or cooking shellfish); in marinades; part of bouquet garni; in milk to flavor rice pudding. Almost indispensable when cooking.

Note: Seldom used fresh, as dried bay leaves have a better, sweeter flavor than fresh; flavor intensifies the longer it cooks. Remove at end of cooking.

Know how. Know now.



CHERVIL

Growing: An annual; grow in partial shade; sow from seeds; goes to seed easily, especially of dry; plant every two weeks for steady supply

Flavor Profile: Mild anise-pepper, parsley; delicate fern-like leaves. Two main types: plain and curly

Uses: Poultry and fish dishes (oysters); egg dishes; soups (vichyssoise); with tomatoes, in tartar sauce, as a garnish; part of [fines herbs](#) mixture. Goes well with any new vegetables, such as new peas, potatoes, baby carrots, asparagus.

Note: This herb is a staple of French cooking, so often is called French parsley. Add at end of cooking to preserve its delicate flavor.



CHIVES

Growing: A perennial; grow in full sun to partial shade; flowers in June; remove flower stalks as soon as they appear to prevent loss of flavor

Flavor Profile: Onion chives - thin, hollow leaves, mild onion flavor; garlic chives - flat leaves like blades of grass, mild onion/garlic flavor

Uses: Omelets, quiche, cheese spreads and dips, tuna salad; sprinkled over broiled tomatoes, green salad, potato salad, potato soup, baked potatoes and other vegetables; to garnish soups. The purple flowers of onion chives are edible (soups, salads), have an oniony flavor and make beautiful pink-purple vinegar.

Note: Use kitchen scissors to snip chives, rather than cutting or chopping them.



CILANTRO (also called fresh coriander or Chinese parsley)

Growing: An annual; grow in full sun to partial shade; goes to seed easily; plant every two weeks for steady supply

Flavor Profile: Citrus and sage

Uses: Chicken, fish, lamb and rice, pasta or vegetable dishes. Also good in salsa, taco fillings, black bean and corn salad, lentil or black bean soups; in butters for vegetables or fish. Distinctive flavor found in Caribbean, Indian, Thai, Chinese, Mexican or Latin American dishes. Seems to go well with most "hot" cuisines. Seeds (coriander) also used, can be collected and ground.

Note: Leaves do not retain flavor well when dried.

**DILL** (also called fresh dill or dill weed)

Growing: An annual; grow in full sun, look for Fern Leaf dill; goes to seed easily

Flavor Profile: Parsley, anise and celery, subtle lemon. Feathery leaves are used.

Uses: Lentil, pea or bean soups; in all egg dishes, with cheese and most fish; lamb, chicken. Add to dressings for sliced cucumbers or with beets. Delicious in potato, tuna, egg or pasta salads, with cabbage, seafood cocktail, salad dressings; dips, sauces for fish. Seeds, which have a stronger flavor, used in breads, salads, pickling.

Note: Name derives from Norse dilla, meaning to "lull", as it was used to induce sleep.

**LAVENDER**

Growing: An evergreen shrub, perennial in some climates, especially if protected from winter elements; grow in full sun

Flavor Profile: Sweet, sharp, pungent; look for English lavender

Uses: In desserts, sugars, syrups, preserves, vinegars, with fruit such as peaches, raspberries, strawberries, apples

Note: Use only organically grown (without herbicides and pesticides) flowers.

**LEMON BALM** (also called sweet Melissa)

Growing: A perennial; grow in full sun to partial shade

Flavor Profile: Lemon with a hint of mint

Uses: Poultry dishes (or stuffing) and with pork chops; with shrimp, lobster and mussels; with vegetables; in green or fruit salads; to make vinegars. Dried leaves make a pleasant tea or addition to black tea. Add leaves to white wine.

Know how. Know now.



MARJORAM (also called sweet marjoram)

Growing: A perennial, but treat like an annual where winter temperatures go below freezing; grow in full sun; distinctive knot-like flower buds

Flavor Profile: Perfumy, subtle lemon with hint of balsam, more delicate than oregano

Uses: Pasta sauces; with veal and pork roasts; with ground beef (meatloaf, shepherd's pie); in scrambled eggs and omelets; with bread cubes for stuffing; in chicken liver pâté; with green beans, mushrooms, carrots; in lentil, pea, bean potato soups; when grilling or baking fish. Ideal for lamb; in stews, marinades, herb butters. Common in French, Italian and Portuguese cooking.



MINT

Growing: A perennial; grow in full sun to partial shade; will overtake (plant in pots to contain)

Flavor Profile: Sweet-flavored, cool and refreshing; flavor varies from heat of peppermint and coolness of spearmint to the fruitiness of apple mint, pineapple mint and orange mint; even chocolate mint

Uses: New potatoes, green beans, tabbouleh salad or with tomatoes as a change from basil; mint sauce or jelly for lamb. Sprinkle chopped fresh mint on top of green pea soup. Put a sprig in the water when boiling green peas or potatoes. Adds a refreshing taste to fruit salads, iced tea and lemonade. Stir into cream cheese spreads; garnish for desserts.



OREGANO (also called wild marjoram)

Growing: A perennial; grow in full sun; look for Greek oregano for best flavor

Flavor Profile: Earthy and intense with hints of clove and balsam

Uses: In almost any tomato dish; pasta sauces, pizza, chili con carne, barbecue sauce. Excellent in egg and cheese dishes; meat or poultry stuffing; on pork, lamb, chicken and fish. Essential ingredient of chili powder. Common in Italian, Greek and Mexican dishes.

Note: The herb is best used dried.



PARSLEY

Growing: A biennial; grow in full sun to partial shade

Flavor Profile: Mild, savory flavor, slightly peppery; curly or Italian (flat leaf) parsley most common types - Italian has a stronger flavor

Uses: In pasta dishes, sauces, scrambled eggs, soups, mashed or boiled potatoes, vegetable dishes (carrots, cabbage, tomatoes, turnip, beets); with poultry or fish. When making soup or stew, add the whole frond and remove before serving. Blends well with other herbs. Part of bouquet garni and fines herbs. Great deep-fried or in tempura batter. Use for garnish, especially sprinkled chopped over stews, pasta dishes and casseroles that need a bit of color.

Note: Dried parsley is a poor substitute for fresh. A quick way to chop parsley leaves is in a glass measuring cup using kitchen scissors. For large quantities, chop in a food processor.



ROSEMARY

Growing: A perennial in some areas; grow in full sun to partial shade

Flavor Profile: Piney, resinous with a hint of lemon; works well with basil or thyme.

Uses: Beef, lamb, veal, pork, rabbit, goose, duck and poultry; for roasts, make slits with a knife and insert garlic slivers and rosemary leaves. Rosemary is particularly good with lamb. Use when cooking eggplant, squash and in sauce for lasagna; in vinegars, oils and marinades; with thyme for frying or roasting potatoes, focaccia, marinated olives. In baking cookies, breads, cornbread, biscuits, etc.

Note: When using individual fresh leaves (vs. sprigs), always chop finely, as leaves are tough. Dries well.



SAGE

Growing: A perennial; grow in full sun

Flavor Profile: Earthy, musty mint, camphor-like with a hint of lemon. English, pineapple sage, purple sage and variegated sage are most popular varieties. Combines well with rosemary, thyme or marjoram.

Uses: Stuffing for poultry, fish, game and other meats; in sauces, soups, chowders, meat pies; in marinades; in barbecue sauces with rosemary and thyme. Use sparingly. For roast pork: with sharp knife make slits in the skin 1/4 inch (5 mm) apart; brush with olive oil to which a handful of fresh crushed leaves has been added. Excellent deep-fried as an appetizer or garnish, in Saltimbocca (see page 110 in book); in herbal oil to brush over meats, yeast breads. Good with onions, cabbage, carrots, corn, eggplant, squash, tomatoes and other vegetables.

Note: Used in commercial sausage (so-sage!).

Know how. Know now.



SAVORY

Growing: An annual (summer savory) or perennial (winter savory); grow in full sun

Flavor Profile: Summer savory - aromatic, peppery, more readily found and more subtle than winter savory; resembles thyme and marjoram. Winter savory - stronger with a more piney flavor.

Uses: With any kind of beans or legumes; with Brussels sprouts, cabbage, corn. Add a sprig to the water when cooking green or wax beans, lima beans or green peas; flavor dressings for bean or potato salad; add a pinch to split-pea soup, lentils. Sprinkle chopped on grilled tomatoes, on sliced cucumbers. Include in stuffing for chicken, turkey or pork. Good with ground lamb; in meatloaf, chicken or beef soups. Mix chopped savory and grated lemon rind with breadcrumbs for a coating for veal or fish. Winter savory is especially good in pâtés and with game meats.

Note: Leaves dry very well and retain flavor, which is less lemony and more musty than fresh.



TARRAGON

Growing: A perennial, but may not overwinter in cold areas; grow in full sun to partial shade; difficult to grow from seed, but available as small plants from nurseries in early spring

Flavor Profile: Sweet, anise-like (licorice); look for French tarragon for best flavor

Uses: In soups, fish/shellfish and egg dishes; green salads, French salad dressing. Add tarragon vinegar to tartar sauces served with poached salmon, or to make mayonnaise. Mix with butter and lemon to serve with most grilled fish. Also good with chicken, pork, beef, lamb, game; distinctive flavor in Béarnaise sauce. Good with green beans, asparagus, peas or carrots. Used widely in French cooking, part of [fines herbs](#) mixture.



THYME

Growing: A perennial; grow in full sun to partial shade

Flavor Profile: Slightly pungent, spicy, savory, clove-like. Lemon thyme - a bit milder, with a lemony flavor. Blends well with other herbs especially rosemary.

Uses: All meats, vegetables, casseroles, soups, stuffing, meatloaf, marinades and pâtés. Excellent for herb bread and flavored butters. Good with mushrooms, fried potatoes, carrots (and other vegetables) and in omelets. Commonly used in clam chowder and gumbo; used in French, Creole and Cajun cooking. Lemon thyme is excellent with fish and chicken.

Note: Has a strong flavor, so only a little is needed. Dries well.

Resources:

North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Craven County Center, April 2003, Cooking with Herbs and Spice, <http://www4.ncsu.edu/~aibrantl/cookingwithherbs.html>

Tremblay, Y., *Thyme in the Kitchen*, (.2002 Prentice Hall), Directory of Herb Usage. <http://www.yvonnnetremblay.com/Herbs/Directory.html#thyme>