

Food for Thought

Cooking with herbs has taken on new importance with our awareness of reducing salt and fat in the diet. Herbs can add interesting flavors to foods when salt and fat are reduced in a recipe. Because herbs are so popular, they are being sold fresh in farmers' markets and grocery stores. More cooks are growing their own herbs, too. Once you have used fresh herbs in cooking you will be spoiled! Their special flavor and aroma contributes greatly to the enjoyment of food. If those who are unfamiliar with using herbs, here is a little basic information.

COOKING WITH FRESH HERBS

Take some thyme (pun intended!) to cook with fresh herbs. Here are some hints as you explore what's best for you. Here are some hints as you explore what's best for you.

WHEN SUBSTITUTING FRESH HERBS FOR DRIED HERBS

A general guideline when using fresh herbs in a recipe is to use 3 times as much as you would use of a dried herb. When substituting, you'll often be more successful substituting fresh herbs for dried herbs, rather than the other way around. For example, think potato salad with fresh vs. dried parsley!

WHEN TO PICK OR PURCHASE HERBS

Purchase herbs close to the time you plan to use them. When growing herbs in your own garden the ideal time for picking is in the morning after the dew has dried but before the sun gets hot. This helps ensure the best flavor and storage quality.

HOW TO STORE HERBS

Fresh herbs can be stored in an open or a perforated plastic bag in your refrigerator crisper drawer for a few days. If you don't have access to commercial perforated bags, use a sharp object to make several small holes in a regular plastic bag.

To extend the freshness of herbs, snip off the ends of the stems on the diagonal. Place herbs in a tall glass with an inch of water, like cut flowers. Cover them loosely with a plastic bag to allow for air circulation. Place them in the refrigerator and change the water daily. Herbs may last a week or more stored this way. The flavor of herbs may diminish the longer they're stored.

HOW TO WASH HERBS

Wash herbs when you are ready to use them. Wash small amounts of herbs thoroughly under running water. Shake off moisture or spin dry in a salad spinner, then pat off any remaining moisture with clean paper towels.

If you're washing a larger amount of herbs at one time, treat them as you would salad greens. Place in a clean sink or deep bowl filled with cold water and swish around. Lift from the water and transfer to another bowl so dirt and grit remain in the water. Pour out the water and repeat the washing process in clean water until dirt and grit are gone and the water is clear.

If you plan to harvest a large amount of herbs from a home garden, consider washing them down with a hose the day before to help remove any large particles of dirt or grit that might be on the leaves.

Annual herbs can be harvested down to about four inches tall and they still will regrow for use later in the season. For perennial herbs, don't take off more than a third of the plant at any given time.

HOW TO PREPARE HERBS FOR COOKING

For most recipes, unless otherwise directed, mince herbs into tiny pieces. Chop with a chef's knife on a cutting board or snip with a kitchen scissors. To speed cutting with a scissors, cut herbs coarsely into a small bowl or cup then snip back and forth with your scissors. Some recipes may direct you to cut large leaves, such as basil, "chiffonnade-style" or into thin strips. An easy way to do this is to stack several leaves (about 3 to 5), roll into a tight roll, then cut into thin (1/16 to 1/8") strips with a sharp knife.

While some recipes call for a sprig or sprigs of herbs, normally the part of the herb you harvest will be the leaves. For herbs with sturdier stems, such as marjoram, oregano, rosemary, sage and thyme, strip off the leaves by running your fingers down the stem from top to bottom. With small-leaved plants such as thyme, you can use both leaves and stems early in the season. Later in the season, as the stems become tougher, use just the leaves. When cutting herbs with tender stems, such as parsley and cilantro, it's okay to snip some of the stem along with the leaves.

Be careful using a food processor to cut herbs – it's easy to turn them to a paste rather than tiny pieces.

WHEN TO ADD HERBS DURING FOOD PREPARATION

Unlike dried herbs, fresh herbs are usually added toward the end in cooked dishes to preserve their flavor. Add the more delicate herbs – basil, chives, cilantro, dill leaves, parsley, marjoram and mint – a minute or two before the end of cooking or sprinkle them on the food before it's served. Less delicate herbs, such as dill seeds, oregano, rosemary, tarragon and thyme, can be added about the last 20 minutes of cooking. Obviously, for some foods, such as breads, batters, etc., herbs need to be added at the beginning of the cooking process.

Fresh herbs can be added to refrigerated cold foods several hours before serving. Allowing time (at least a couple of hours, if possible) for cold foods with herbs to chill helps the flavors to blend.

So...which herbs should be used with which foods? Try these combinations of basic culinary herb uses:

- Anise – Pork, chicken, fish, stews, beverages, stewed fruit. Seeds in baked goods.
- Basil – Tomatoes & tomato dishes, vinegars, rice, eggs, meats, duck, salads, vegetables.
- Chive – Salads, stews, appetizers, vegetables, butter, yogurt, & sour cream sauces.
- Dill – Fish & fish sauces, cottage cheese, breads, beets, cucumbers, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, salads.
- Fennel – Tomato dishes, eggs, fish, marinades for meats, carrots, pickles, breads & baked goods.
- Marjoram – Stews, soups, meats, tomato dishes, vegetables, eggs, breads, French dressing.
- Mint – Salads, lemonade, tea, potatoes, scallops, sauces & jelly, sherbet, lamb, fruit.
- Oregano – Italian tomato sauces, barbecue sauce, soups, eggs, cheese, pork, vegetables, salad dressings.
- Parsley – Tomato sauces, fish, meats & poultry, soups, stews, vegetables.
- Rosemary – Lamb, pork, vegetables, chowders, cheese.
- Sage – Fish, meat, poultry stuffing, chowders, soups, tomatoes.
- Savory – Pork, chowders, stews, fish, eggs, salads, beans, biscuits.
- Tarragon (French) – Eggs, yogurt & sour cream dishes, meat asparagus, beans, cucumbers.
- Thyme (Lemon or English) – Stews, clam chowder, fish, meat, poultry, eggs, stuffings, bread, biscuits, lima beans, broccoli, onions.

Start with small amounts of herbs to become familiar with them. Bon appetit!

Church Directory

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS

Jeff Cheney, Branch President
1350 E. Knott Street, Vernonia
503 429-7151
Sacrament Meeting, Sunday 10 a.m.
Sunday School & Primary 11:20 a.m.
Relief Society, Priesthood and
Young Women, Sunday 12:10 p.m.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

John Aitken II, Pastor, 396-1856
2nd Ave. and Nehalem St., Vernonia
503 429-8301
Morning Worship, 9:15 a.m.
Bible Study 10:30 a.m.

VERNONIA COMMUNITY CHURCH

Grant Williams, Pastor
957 State Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-6790
Sunday Breakfast 9:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 9:45 a.m.
*B.L.A.S.T. w/Nursery 10:00 a.m.
*Bible Learning and Scripture Training
Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00 p.m.

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Luan Tran, Administrator
960 Missouri Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-8841
Mass Schedule
Sunday 12:00 Noon
Religious Education
Sunday 10:30 a.m.

VERNONIA FOURSQUARE CHURCH

Carl Pense, Pastor
850 Madison Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-1103
Sunday Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.
Children's Sunday School

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

359 "A" Street, Vernonia
503 429-5190
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00 p.m.

ST. AUGUSTINE (CANTERBURY) EPISCOPAL CHURCH

375 North St. (Vernonia Grange Hall)
Vernonia, 503 705-2173
Please call for service schedule.

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Wayne and Maureen Marr
662 Jefferson Ave., Vernonia,
503 429-0373
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

NEHALEM VALLEY BIBLE CHURCH

Gary Taylor, Pastor
Grant & North Streets, Vernonia
503 429-5378
Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
Nursery available
Wednesday Service 7:00 p.m.

VERNONIA CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Sam Hough, Evangelist
410 North Street, Vernonia
503 429-6522
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
Every Wednesday:
Ladies' Bible Study 9:30 a.m.
Ladies' Worship 10:00 a.m.
Children's Choir 3:00 p.m.
Family Bible Study 7:00 p.m.