

THE HERBAL PANTRY

A pantry filled with seasoning blends, vinegars, herb buttes, and other goodies starts with the beginning of gardening season. Plant selection is the key to a great pantry. If you use a lot of a particular herb, purchase several plants so you will have plenty for use all summer and a good supply when the plant is at the peak of flavor and the time is right to harvest for use later.

INTERNATIONAL COMBINATIONS

	<i>Cook with...</i>	<i>Spice with...</i>	<i>Finish with...</i>
MIDDLE EASTER-	garlic, onion	cayenne pepper	mint, yogurt, lemon juice
FRENCH-	garlic, onion shallot (in butter)	thyme, rosemary tarragon	Dijon mustard, cream
HUNGARIAN-	onion, garlic green pepper	paprika, dill, caraway	vinegar slash, sour cream
MEXICAN-	garlic, onion fresh chilies	oregano, cumin allspice, cinnamon chili powder	lime juice, vinegar splash cilantro
INDIAN-	garlic, onion gingerroot	coriander & paprika cumin & turmeric red pepper	lemon juice, yogurt, mint
CHINESE-	garlic, scallions gingerroot	ground red pepper, oriental sesame oil, rice-wine vinegar	hoisin sauce, soy sauce

BASIC HERB SALAD DRESSING

One part acid (vinegar, lemon juice, etc)
Three parts oil (olive, vegetable or blend)
Crushed garlic
Dijon mustard (1 T. in ½ cup dressing)
Fresh herbs - parsley, chives, basil, thyme

Herbs with salty flavor - summer savory, lovage
Herbs with peppery flavor - nasturtium, watercress
Sweet Herbs - stevia, sweet cicely

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- Herb Salts- Alternate ¼" layer of chopped herbs with ¼" layers of kosher salt in an airtight jar. The salt will absorb the moisture and some of the essential oils from the herbs within about a week. The resulting seasoned salt will improve the flavor of a variety of foods.
- Herb Honey- Infuse a pint of honey with a cup of fresh herbs. Try lavender, mint, rosemary or lemon thyme. Warm the honey to about 140°, add the clean, dry herbs to the jar. Allow to set for about 10 days before using.
- Herb Jellies- The varieties and combinations are as endless as your imagination. There are two basic kinds of herb jellies, those made with a fruit juice base and those made with an infusion made with water. Fruit juice, especially apple juice, may contain sufficient pectin to gel without using commercial pectin. Water infusions will always require a commercial pectin.
- Popular combinations for herb jellies:
- Rosemary with orange juice
 - Marjoram or mint with apple juice
 - Lemon balm in red grape juice
 - Lemon thyme in white grape juice
 - summer savory in cranberry juice
 - Thyme in purple grape juice
 - Hot peppers in apple juice
 - Purple basil
- Infused oils- Not a good idea to make ahead. The oil provides a perfect environment for anaerobic bacteria (botulism). Make these a day or two in advance and keep them refrigerated.

Learn to use your herbs in new and interesting ways. Try tossing warm popcorn with either a frozen or dried herb blend. Cut a loaf of crusty bread in half and spread with herb butter and a sprinkle of cheese. Place under a broiler for a few minutes and serve with pasta. Make a roasted red pepper butter and spread it on warm corn bread. Use your herbs. They should all be gone by the following year to be sure you are enjoying the best flavor.

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ANISE HYSSOP BUTTER COOKIES

1 Cup of flour
6 Tbsp of confectioner's sugar
pinch of salt
7 oz. cold unsalted butter in small pieces
1 Tsp of vanilla
2 Tbsp of anise hyssop flowers

Pulse in food processor until blended.
Wrap in waxed paper and roll into a log.
Chill 1 hour, bake at 375° on an ungreased sheet for 7-10 minutes

BOUQUET GARNIS

Bouquet garnis are bunches of fresh aromatic herbs which are used to add flavor to stocks, stews, vegetables and soups. The classic combination is two parts parsley, one part thyme and one bay leaf. The bundle is tied with a long piece of string which can be attached to the handle of the saucepan so that it can be removed easily at the end of cooking.

Bouquet garnis can also be dried, chopped herbs enclosed in a small square of cheesecloth and tied with along string. These cheesecloth balls can contain additional flavoring such as citrus peel or cloves of garlic.

Your personal taste should be your guide, but you might start with some of these combinations:

Parsley, chives and thyme for poultry dishes
Parsley, rosemary, bay and juniper for game dishes
Parsley, bay and lemon thyme for lamb dishes
Parsley, bay, thyme, and citrus peel for pork
Parsley, bay, thyme, and cloves for beef