# Safe, Simple, Easy to Learn Freezing, Drying and Using Herbs

**Empowerment Through Education** 



COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN ECOLOGY

#### **Today's Topics**

- ✓ Basics of freezing herbs
- ✓ Basics of drying herbs
- ✓ Use of herbs in cooking



#### **Basics for Handling Food Safely**

- Prevent bacteria from spreading through your kitchen.
  - ✓ Wash hands!
    - ≥20 seconds before and after handling food
  - √ Sanitize!
    - Cutting boards, utensils, countertops
    - Solution of 1 T unscented, liquid chlorine bleach in 1 gallon water



Before preserving any food consider the types of foods your family enjoys and the usefulness of the preserved product in your lifestyle.

#### **Methods of Food Preservation**

- Canning
- Freezing
- Drying
- Fermentation









#### **Advantages of Food Preservation**

- Year round availability of foods
- Less spoilage
- Eliminate or reduce microbial hazards
- Increased convenience



#### Herbs

- Leaves of low-growing shrubs
- Examples:



#### **ANNUALS**

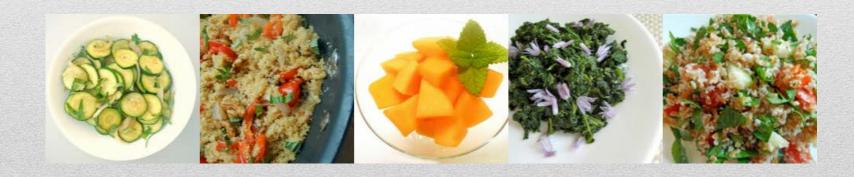
- √ Basil
- ✓ Dill
- ✓ Parsley
- ✓ Cilantro

#### **PERENNIALS**

- ✓ Rosemary
- ✓ Oregano
- ✓ Mint
- ✓ Tarragon
- √ Thyme
- √ Sage

### Cooking with Herbs

- Adds flavor without adding salt, fat or sugar
- Herbs contain antioxidants that may protect against cancer and heart disease
- Adds color and flavor to meals
- Can be used as garnishes



## **Using Fresh Herbs**

- Pick and use fresh
- Store in an open container in the refrigerator or in a perforated bag
- Wash right before using



#### **Using Fresh Herbs**

- Annuals
  - ✓ Can be harvested down to 4"
- Perennials
  - ✓ Leave at least ⅓ of the plant
- For most recipes
  - ✓ Mince herbs into tiny pieces
  - Can be cut with scissors or sharp knife
  - ✓ Add to food toward the end of cooking process



# **Advantages of Freezing**

- Simple, easy and quick method of preservation
- Adds convenience to food preparation
- Slows growth of microorganisms and chemical changes
- Preserves the greatest quantity of nutrients if done properly



## Disadvantages of Freezing

- Some herbs may have undesirable texture changes after being frozen
- Consider cost of purchasing and/or operating a freezer
- Available freezer space may limit the amount of product you can preserve

# **Preparing Herbs for Freezing**

- Herbs can be frozen whole in freezer-grade containers
- Another method place a small amount of chopped herb in an ice cube tray section and add water or olive oil
- Can be stored successfully for 3-6 months for best quality



# **Packaging**

- Use freezer bags or freezer-safe containers
  - ✓ Squeeze air from bags before sealing
  - ✓ Leave ½ -1 inch headspace for expansion
- Use only moisture-proof, vapor-proof packaging designed for freezing
- Do not reuse cardboard or plastic containers from commercially prepared food products
- Label and date product



### **Freezing Pointers**

- Check freezer temperature
   ✓ 0° F for best quality
- Freeze foods quickly
- Don't stack food packages until they are solidly frozen



# **How Drying Works**

- Removes moisture from food so that bacteria, yeasts, and molds cannot grow
- Drying slows the action of enzymes, but does not kill them



## 4 Methods of Drying Herbs

- Air Drying
- Microwave Drying
- Oven Drying
- Dehydrator Drying

## Microwave Drying

- Fast way to dry herbs when in small quantities
- Follow the instructions that come with your microwave oven



# **Air Drying**

- Cut before herb goes to seed
- Tie herbs into bundles and hang
- Indoor drying is recommended for best color and flavor retention



## **Oven Drying**

- Single layers of herbs separated by paper towels – up to 5
- Using oven light of an electric range or pilot light of a gas range.
- Dry for 8 hours or overnight



### **Using a Dehydrator**

- Use a dehydrator set at 95° F to 115° F.
- Drying time is from 1 to 4 hours
- Dry when they crumble and stem breaks when bent



# Storage

- When dry, store in a air-tight containers in a cool, dry dark area to protect color and fragrance
- Dried herbs are 3 to 4 times stronger than fresh herbs
- Best if used within 1 year



### **Using Dried Herbs**

#### Whole

✓ Ideal for dishes cooking an hour or more, usually removed before serving

#### Ground

✓ Best in shorter cooking time recipes or added toward the end



#### Crumbled

✓ Best when added towards the end of the cooking process

# Summary

- There are advantages and disadvantages to fresh, frozen or dried forms of herbs.
- Herbs are easy to use in cooking and easy to preserve
- Replaces salt, sugar and fat for flavor
- Freezing and drying allow for longer use and storage
- Be creative and enjoy using herbs!

#### Questions?

 Contact your local OSU Extension Office extension.osu.edu

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#### References

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