

Safe, Simple, Easy to Learn

Freezing, Drying and Using Herbs

Empowerment Through Education



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Today's Topics

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



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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



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



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Methods of Food Preservation

- Canning
- Freezing
- Drying
- Fermentation



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Advantages of Food Preservation

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



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Herbs

- Leaves of low-growing shrubs
- Examples:



ANNUALS

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

PERENNIALS

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



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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



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Using Fresh Herbs

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



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Using Fresh Herbs

- Annuals
 - ✓ Can be harvested down to 4"
- Perennials
 - ✓ Leave at least $\frac{1}{3}$ 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



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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



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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



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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



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Freezing Pointers

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



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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



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4 Methods of Drying Herbs

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



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Microwave Drying

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



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Air Drying

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



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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



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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



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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



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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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