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

Empowerment Through Education

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANNUALS</th>
<th>PERENNIALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Basil</td>
<td>✓ Rosemary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Dill</td>
<td>✓ Oregano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Parsley</td>
<td>✓ Mint</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Cilantro</td>
<td>✓ Tarragon</td>
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<td>✓ Thyme</td>
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<td>✓ Sage</td>
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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
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


- Ohio State University Extension, Selecting, Storing and Using Fresh Herbs, [ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/pdf/5520.pdf](http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/pdf/5520.pdf)

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- National Center for Home Food Preservation, Drying Herbs [nchfp.uga.edu/how/dry/herbs.html](http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/dry/herbs.html)

- Ohio State University Extension, Preserving Herbs – Freezing and Drying.