

PRESERVING HERBS

Harvesting & Storing

Keep snipping off leaves and stems throughout the season and use fresh or dry for later. Try not to let your herbs flower-flowering can sometimes alter the taste of the herb.

Drying Herbs

1. Use sharp scissors or knife to cut the herbs. If they are perennial and have woody stems, cut them back at the base. For the best flavor, cut herbs before they flower.
2. Wash. If you can get away without washing them, do so. But if you feel you must get off the dirt, spray gently. Make sure they are completely dry-pat dry first then allow to dry on a towel. If they are not dry, they can mildew!
3. Bunch the stems together and tie at the base. Hang to dry in a dark, warm, dry room. Attics are superb for this purpose!
4. Leave the herbs to dry to 1-3 weeks. Check them occasionally to see how they are drying. Thicker stemmed herbs will take longer. Check to see if their consistency has become dry by rubbing a leaf between two fingers. If they crumble, they are ready to be taken down.
5. Remove the leaves and bottle them in airtight glass jars. Pick out any fluff, woody pieces and other foreign material as you remove the leaves.
6. You may keep the leaves whole, crush them in your fingers to make a really fine ground mix for cooking (but use quickly to retain flavor) or leave them in leaf shape for tea, garnishes on soups, etc. Seeds should be left whole and crushed only when needed for cooking.

Freezing Herbs

1. Harvest the freshest, healthiest leaves.
2. Wash, if necessary; pat dry with paper towels.
3. Spread the individual leaves on a small tray or cookie sheet. Freezing the leaves flat and individually will prevent them from freezing together into a block.
4. Cover and place the tray of leaves into the freezer.
5. When frozen solid, place in airtight containers and return to the freezer. Once frozen individually, the leaves will not meld together.

Drying Herbs in the Microwave

1. Thoroughly wash and dry herbs.
2. Place herbs in a single layer on a double thickness of paper towel.
3. Microwave on high power 1-2 minutes.
4. Continue this 2-3 times until herbs are drier.
5. Finish drying at 30 second intervals until completely dry. Do not walk away, dry herbs catch fire!

Freezing Herbs in Ice

1. Put 2-3 individual leaves or a spoonful of chopped herbs in ice cube trays.
2. Fill the tray part way with water. Make sure the leaves are immersed in water. They will tend to float, but don't worry about that. Place tray in freezer.
3. Once the ice cubes are partially frozen, add more water until the trays are filled to the top. The leaves will be trapped in ice (no floating) and the tray should be put back in the freezer.
4. Once the ice cubes are frozen, remove from the tray and store in zip closure bags.
5. When ready to use, put the whole ice cube in your favorite recipes!



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