



May 2014

May is National Herb Month - Healthy Cooking with Fresh Herbs

Whether you plant them or pick them up at the grocery store or farmers' market, adding fresh herbs is a quick way to transform **ordinary** meals into **extraordinary** meals. Besides helping flavor foods when cutting back on salt, fat and sugar, herbs may offer additional benefits of their own. Researchers are finding many culinary herbs (both fresh and dried) have antioxidants that may help protect against such diseases as cancer and heart disease.

If you've always thought you'd like to plant an herb garden, you'll find information on how to do that at the end of this article. Take some thyme (pun intended!) to cook with fresh herbs. Here are some tips to help you enjoy the flavor and health benefits of fresh herbs in your cooking.

When to Pick or Purchase Herbs

Purchase herbs close to the time you plan to use them. When growing herbs in your own garden the ideal time for picking is in the morning after the dew has dried, but before the sun gets hot. This helps ensure the best flavor and storage quality.

How to Store Fresh Herbs

Fresh herbs can be stored in an open or a perforated plastic bag in your refrigerator crisper drawer for a few days. If you don't have access to commercial perforated bags, use a sharp object to make several small holes in a regular plastic bag.

How to Wash Herbs

Wash herbs when you are ready to use them. Wash smaller amounts of herbs thoroughly under running water. Shake off moisture or spin dry in a salad spinner. Pat off any remaining moisture with clean paper towels.

If you're washing a larger amount of herbs at one time, treat them as you would salad greens. Place in a clean sink or deep bowl filled with cold water and swish around. Lift from the water and transfer to another bowl so dirt and grit remain in the water. Pour out the water and repeat the washing process in clean water until dirt and grit are gone and the water is clear.

Note: If you plan to harvest a large amount of herbs from a home garden, consider washing them down with a hose the day before to help remove any large particles of dirt or grit that might be on the leaves



Nutritional Information Provided By

Carmen Gorniak, RD, CD

USConnect Staff Dietitian

cgorniak@usconnect.biz

USConnect



The Right Choice...for a Healthier You!TM

Herb/Food Combinations

Here are some ideas to help you start combining fresh herbs with your foods.

- **BASIL** : a natural snipped in with tomatoes; terrific in fresh pesto; other possibilities include pasta sauce, peas, zucchini
- **CHIVES** : dips, potatoes, tomatoes
- **CILANTRO** : Mexican, Asian and Caribbean cooking; salsas, tomatoes
- **DILL** : carrots, cottage cheese, fish, green beans, potatoes, tomatoes
- **MINT** : carrots, fruit salads, parsley, peas, tea
- **OREGANO** : peppers, tomatoes
- **PARSLEY** : The curly leaf is the most common, but the flat-leaf or Italian parsley is more strongly flavored and often preferred for cooking. Natural for parsley include potato salad.
- **ROSEMARY** : chicken, fish, lamb, pork, roasted potatoes, soups, stews, tomatoes
- **SAGE** : poultry seasoning, stuffings
- **TARRAGON** : chicken, eggs, fish
- **THYME** : eggs, lima beans, potatoes, poultry, summer squash, tomatoes
- **WINTER SAVORY** : dried bean dishes, stews



Nutritional Information Provided By

Carmen Gorniak, RD, CD

USConnect Staff Dietitian

cgorniak@usconnect.biz

USConnect