

## Cooking with Herbs can be Adventure

Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme . . . if you think they're only the stuff that songs are made of, you're wrong. Try some of these fragrant herbs in your favorite dishes and drinks and you'll be surprised at the wonderfully subtle flavor they add.

After you try these, you might want to go on to other herbs like basil, dill, marjoram, mint, oregano, savory, or tarragon.

Popular usage has lumped all these ingredients under the category of spices, but many cooks still differentiate herbs from other food accents by defining herbs as leafy aromatic plants grown primarily in the temperate zone.

Cooking with herbs can be great fun, and you should feel free to experiment with them to create your own unique combinations. However, a few basic guidelines may help you avoid common pitfalls.

Generally, you should start with about 1/4 teaspoon of a dried herb to your favorite six-portion recipe. Stir in the herb, taste your dish, add more to suit your taste. Don't

overdo it; adding too much of one kind of herb or combining too many herbs can kill a dish. A little usually goes a long way.

Most herbs, except bay leaves, should be added during the last 10 minutes of cooking to obtain the freshest flavor. Too much cooking dissipates them.

Generally speaking, it's not good practice to repeat a herb you're already using in a dish when you choose herbs for the rest of the menu, like soups or salads.

Most herbs have a lifespan of a year. Old herbs are useless; often they add a bitter taste to a dish. Go through your spice shelves and get rid of any herbs that have lost their color and aroma. It's a good idea to date herbs so you know their age exactly.

Store your herbs in tightly sealed containers and keep them away from stoves, ovens, radiators and windows. Heat and light will destroy your herbs over a period of time.

A good cookbook will tell you in detail, but here are a few combinations you might want to try:



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