

# Herb gardeners can preserve harvest surplus

You have carefully planned and planted, weeded and waited, and can now sit back and enjoy the rewards of your labors—the fragrance and taste of fresh herbs. There is really no substitute for either that flavor or smell. What is available dried in stores can only faintly suggest what fresh herbs have to offer.

I have a friend who claims that fresh herbs are one of the greatest creature comforts in life. If that is the case, it only serves to make more frustrating the relatively short time each year that we can enjoy this treat.

Herbs grow best with full sunlight; even a grow light does not produce the same results. The gardener's yield may be plentiful but the frost comes too soon. To further complicate matters, the plentiful yield may be more than you can comfortably use in a short space of time.

## HERBS SHOULD be used sparingly.

They are meant to enhance, not overpower foods, as was pointed out by Yvonne Gill Davis in her herb class at Hudson's Oakland. She recalled that one of the worst vinaigrettes she ever tasted was prepared by a young chef who had been overly generous in adding the fresh herbs with which he was unfamiliar. What should have been a delicate suggestion became an overpowering, unpleasant statement.

This restrained use of fresh herbs, even in a great variety of dishes, is

likely to leave the gardener with a surplus. Ms. Gill devoted a great deal of attention to methods of preserving this surplus so that summer's bounty can be enjoyed well beyond the first frost.

Perennial herbs with woody stems are usually dried. Herbs to be dried should be harvested early in the day, the best time to pick herbs since most of the oils develop during the night.

They should be washed in cold water and left to drip dry in a colander until afternoon, by which time they should be quite dry. Any excess of water will cause mold to grow.

They are then tied together in small bunches and hung from a beam or an eave until the leaves are crisp and brittle. They should then be kept well-sealed in low light in a dry place. Properly handled, they should retain their flavor for up to a year.

Before being used, they should be soaked in a hot liquid.

## ANOTHER METHOD of preserving the flavor of fresh herbs is in a vinegar.

Yvonne Gill's method is to fill a quart mason jar half full with fresh herb leaves. Fill the jar with white distilled cider or wine vinegar and let sit for three to four weeks. Strain through a cheesecloth into sterilized bottles or jars, inserting fresh herb branches for eye appeal and identification.

This herb vinegar is excellent for deglazing pans and for making dressings, marinades and sauces.



## A Question of Taste

By Hilary Keating Callaghan

The following recipe by Yvonne Gill is for a vinaigrette which she has used since she was chef at the Money Tree and which she uses now on the majority of the salads served at Tweeny's Cafe in Birmingham.

### HERBED VINAIGRETTE

1/2 cup olive oil  
1/2 cup tarragon vinegar  
2 tsp. Dijon mustard  
Place above ingredients in blender and blend at high speed until well mixed.

Now add:

2 cups olive oil  
Drizzle slowly into base at high speed  
Lastly add: 1/2 cup tarragon vinegar  
3 cups olive oil

Alternately feed in the last oil and vinegar until dressing is thick and homogenized. Flavor with a mixture of fresh, soft herbs such as:

1 tsp. parsley  
1/2 tsp. each tarragon, chervil, burnet, chives, shallot, basil  
1/4 tsp. salt  
6 grinds fresh pepper

Herb purees with olive oil also serve

to extend the life of such compatible herbs as oregano or fennel. Kept refrigerated, herbs preserved in this fashion retain their color and are used in olive oil dishes in the same quantity as fresh herbs would be used.

A final suggestion is to preserve herbs in frozen rolls of herb butter. The butter used for this recipe should be unsalted butter which has a higher butterfat content and less water than the salted variety.

### HERBED BUTTER

16 oz. unsalted butter  
1/2 cup packed minced herbs  
2 tsp. lemon juice  
1/4 tsp. salt

12 grinds whole white pepper

Let butter come to room temperature before creaming in mixing bowl with all other ingredients. Spread butter at the longest edge of a sheet of waxed paper measuring 12 by 8 inches. Roll jelly roll style with the palms of your hands until you shape a smooth cylinder. Chill before using or wrap well and freeze.

**NOTE:** Amount of herbs per pound of butter may be increased if you want a more concentrated flavor. Any number of herbs would work well with butter. Tarragon, chives, oregano and marjoram all were recommended. A basil butter was suggested for veal dishes and it was pointed out that any of the herb butters, as well as the olive oil purees, would be ideal for pasta.

**SPEAKING OF** pasta, you might enjoy trying this unusual herbed pasta dish before your summer's harvest is totally depleted. If you don't care for anchovies, you might substitute a few as Yvonne Gill did for her demonstration.

### ANGELS HAIR PASTA

with herbs and anchovies

8 oz. fine pasta  
2 qt. boiling water  
1 tsp. salt

1 cup heavy cream  
1/2 cup freshly grated parmesan cheese  
1 oz. minced anchovy fillets  
1 tsp. each tarragon, chervil, chives, parsley and shallots  
1 oz. sweet butter

8 grinds of fresh pepper

Melt butter in heavy bottomed pan over medium heat. Add minced anchovies (or shrimp) and stir for two to three minutes. Add cream and bring to a boil. Add parmesan cheese and cook 4 to 5 minutes until it thickens slightly. Remove from heat and hold warm.

Add salt to boiling water and drop in pasta. Stir to separate the pasta and

cook 3 to 4 minutes. Drain in colander and remove all excess water, then add pasta to sauce in pan. Return pan to heat, add fresh herbs and ground pepper and stir to coat pasta with the sauce.

### OVEN POACHED FISH FILLETS

2 lb. fresh fish fillets (black bass, whitefish, lake trout, swordfish steaks)

1/4 cup dry white wine  
1/4 cup fish fumet  
2 tsp. olive oil

sprigs lemon, thyme, tarragon, curry herb

2 crushed bay leaves  
Salt and pepper

2 oz. curry herb butter

Place fillets skin-side down, close together in the baking dish. Drizzle lightly with oil and strew with torn herbs. Pour heated liquids over the fillets and cover with buttered parchment paper. Place in preheated 350-degree oven and poach 8 to 10 minutes until just done. Remove and drain liquids into a small pan. Boil quickly and reduce by 1/2 the volume. Sauce can be further enriched by swirling in the curry herb butter or this step may be omitted.

Place fillets on warm platter and mask with sauce. Serve with steamed new potatoes, skinned cherry tomatoes sautéed in basil butter and a simple salad. Yvonne Gill described this as "one of the simplest, lowest calorie, freshest ways to cook fish fillets."



Shrimp and broccoli are combined in a casserole for a high flavor, low calorie entree.

## Shrimp broccoli bake high nutrition combo

Webster defines shrimp as "a small or puny person or thing" but the only part of that definition that applies to shrimp is that they are small. There is nothing puny or unimportant about these little crustaceans, after all they do have the reputation of being the favorite with thousands of people.

Their versatility is well known and they are delightful whether in appetizers, canapés, cocktails, salads or gourmet entrees. Shrimp are power-packed with protein and other nutrients while being low in fat and calories. They may be purchased raw or cooked, peeled or unpeeled, and fresh or frozen in many parts of the country as well as being available in convenient 4 1/2-ounce cans.

The Shrimp Broccoli Bake wins accolades for the cook. The flavor of the shrimp is accentuated in an Italian dressing, catsup, onion, and parsley mixture. The shrimp are heaped on top of and surrounded by buttered broccoli and baked in a covered casserole for about 30 minutes. Just before serving, sprinkle the shrimp entree with cheese and pop back into the oven until the cheese melts, or omit the cheese for those who are counting calories.

### SHRIMP BROCCOLI BAKE

1 1/2 pounds raw shrimp, cooked, peeled and deveined, or,

3 cans (4 1/2 to 5 ounces each) shrimp

1 1/2 cup Italian dressing

1/4 cup catsup

1/4 cup finely chopped onion

2 tsp. chopped parsley

2 pkg. (10 oz. each) frozen broccoli spears,

cooked and drained, or, 1 lb. fresh broccoli,

cooked and drained

2 tsp. butter or margarine

1 tsp. lemon juice

1/2 cup finely shredded process American

cheese (optional)

Rinse canned shrimp, if used, in cold water; drain well. Combine and mix Italian dressing, catsup, onion and parsley. Pour over shrimp; mix carefully. Cut broccoli stems into small pieces. Arrange in bottom of shallow 1 1/2-quart baking dish. Arrange cauliflower flowerettes at either end of casserole. Melt butter or margarine; stir in lemon juice. Drizzle over broccoli. Spoon shrimp mixture between broccoli flowerettes. Cover with aluminum foil, crimping it to edges of dish. Bake in 400-degree oven about 20 minutes or until hot. Uncover; sprinkle with cheese if desired. Return to oven to melt cheese. Makes six servings.

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