

Herbs

Drying and Freezing Fresh Herbs

To dry fresh herbs: hang in bunches or lay on screens in a warm, dark area (not over 90 degrees) or a warm oven (less than 110 degrees). When herbs are brittle when rubbed between the hands, crumble into powder and store.

To freeze fresh herbs: rinse carefully and dry between paper towels. Place in freezer bag or container with tight-fitting lid and freeze.

Cooking With Herbs

- The art of using herbs and spices is in learning how to add and how to mix flavors. It is best to start with a tested recipe. Then add more or less seasoning to suit your taste.
- Many cooks prefer fresh herbs, if available. The flavor of fresh herbs is not as strong as dried. Use two to three times as much fresh as dried herbs. As a general rule, 1/4 teaspoon powdered = 3/4 to 1 teaspoon crumbled = 2 to 3 teaspoons fresh.
- When creating your own recipes, use about 1/4 teaspoon dried herbs or spices for each serving. Use less when using stronger seasonings. It is easier to add more than to try to make up for adding too much.
- The flavor of herbs and spices becomes weaker if cooked for a long time. When a recipe will be cooked for an hour or more, add seasonings about 45 minutes before it is done cooking.
- When using crushed or ground herbs and spices, add them 15 minutes before cooking is complete.

Storing Herbs and Spices

- Whole dried herbs and spices last much longer than crushed or ground forms. For greater freshness, buy the whole form and crush or grind when ready to use.
- The flavor of dried herbs and spices weakens over time. Check ground or crushed herbs and spices for freshness at least once a year. Crush a little bit in your hand and sniff.

If the aroma is weak, throw away. Buying the smaller size instead of the economy size will save money in the long run if the larger package is not used while still fresh.

- Store dried seasonings in a cool, dark, dry place. Heat, sunlight and dampness cause herbs and spices to lose their flavor and aroma quickly. Jars and bottles with tight-fitting lids are the best containers for storing. Keeping seasonings in the freezer will increase their shelf life.



Seasoning	Storage Life
Whole	2-3 years
Ground	6 months-2 years
Leafy herbs	3 months- 2 years
Dehydrated vegetables	6 months

An easy way to reduce fat and salt in the diet is to cook with herbs and spices. Herbs and spices add flavor to foods without adding fat and salt.

Recipe

Herbs and Spices in a Healthy Diet

There is no question that what we eat affects our health. Many years of research has shown that:

- A high-fat diet increases the risk for heart disease, stroke, certain types of cancer, diabetes and obesity.
- Too much sodium (salt) can lead to high blood pressure in some people.

Most Americans should cut back on the amounts of fat and salt in their diets.

Healthy people over the age of two years should limit dietary fat to no more than 20-35 percent of total calories for adults (50-80 grams a day). Sodium should be limited to 2,300 milligrams per day – about as much as you would get in 1 tablespoon of salt.

Vegetable Medley

- 1 tablespoon low-fat margarine
- 2 medium yellow summer squash, sliced
- 1 medium zucchini, sliced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 3 medium fresh tomatoes, diced
- 1/2 cup frozen corn
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon basil
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

In a large pan over medium heat, melt margarine. Add squash, zucchini and onion. Sauté 3 to 4 minutes. Add tomatoes, corn, garlic and seasonings and cook another 2 to 3 minutes. Serve immediately.

Makes 4 servings

Calories: 92

Carbohydrate: 15 g

Protein: 4 g

Fat: 1 g

Sodium: 15 mg

Cholesterol: 0 mg

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Enjoy Arkansas' Fresh Herbs