



How-To: **PRESERVING HERBS**

Herbs are tough, productive plants that can thrive in urban gardens. Here are some methods for preserving an abundance of herbs for use in any season.



ROSEMARY, READY TO
HARVEST AND PRESERVE



SAGE, READY TO HARVEST
AND PRESERVE



A VARIETY OF HERBS, READY
TO BE CHOPPED FOR HERB
BUTTER

DRYING

Many herbs dry well and hold their flavor. Some of the best include rosemary, mint, thyme, oregano, dill, and sage. Varieties like basil, cilantro, and chives can be dried but lose a significant amount of their flavor in the process. Store dry herbs in airtight containers away from light.

A good way to dry most herbs is to cut mature stems at the base and hang, upside down in a paper bag (to keep safe from dust), in a dry, warm, shady location. When the leaves are crispy, they can be crumbled and stored.

Some varieties also have seeds that are used in cooking, like cilantro (coriander), dill, and fennel. To dry seeds, harvest stems when the seeds are just beginning to turn brown. Place the stems upside down in a paper bag (which will catch seeds as they fall), in a dry, warm, shady location. After a week or two, when the seeds are completely brown, shake the bag to release seeds from the plant.

Herbs can also be dried quickly in a food dehydrator or spread in a single layer on a cookie sheet in a hot car.

FREEZING

Herbs can be frozen in ice cube trays in water or oil. Simply pack each ice cube division $\frac{3}{4}$ full with herbs that have been removed from their stems (chop if necessary). Cover in olive oil or water and freeze. When frozen, remove the cubes from the tray and place in a labeled freezer container. Use the frozen herb cubes in winter soups and stews or as a base for any cooked dish. Mint or basil frozen in water also makes a beautiful and tasty addition to drinks.

PESTO

Pesto is a great way to preserve many types of herbs. Most commonly, pesto is made from basil, parsley, garlic, nuts, olive oil, and parmesan cheese. However, many types of herbs can be substituted. Check online or in cookbooks for recipe ideas. Once you've made the pesto, freeze it in an ice cube tray. Then remove and place in a labeled freezer container.

HERB BUTTER

Whip together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup softened butter, 1 tsp. salt, and 1 tsp. pepper, along with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped herbs. Herb butter will store well for up to 2 weeks in the refrigerator and several months frozen in an airtight container.

MINT TEA CONCENTRATE

Have a lot of mint, lemon verbena, and/or lemon balm? This tea concentrate can be frozen, then enjoyed hot or cold. Boil 4 qts water, then add 1 qt packed herbs. Bring to a boil again, then remove from heat. Allow to steep for up to one hour. Strain, add some sweetener if desired, to taste, and freeze in freezer containers. To use, thaw and add 2-3 times water for one unit of tea.



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HERBED VINEGAR

Herbs can be cleaned, dried, and added to vinegar. After a week or two, the vinegar is infused with the flavor of the herbs. Taste it often, and when the vinegar has a flavor intensity that you like, strain and bottle it, then store in the refrigerator. Check online for specific recipes.