



Preserving Herbs

Herbs are a great, tough plant that can thrive in urban gardens, as we mentioned in our post “[Harvesting Herbs](#).” Given the right conditions, herbs can also be super productive. If you’ve got an abundance of herbs, check out some of these ways to preserve them for less-balmy times!

Drying

Many herbs dry well and hold their flavor. Best bets 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. 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 in an airtight container in the dark.

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. Store them in an airtight container in the dark.

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



Preparing herbs to dry, freeze, or chop for herb butter.

Freezing

Herbs can be frozen in ice cube trays with water or oil. Simply pack each ice cube division $\frac{3}{4}$ full with herbs that have been taken off 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. For pesto recipe ideas, check out [our recent article](#). 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.



Herbed vinegar.

Herbed Vinegar

Herbs can be cleaned, dried, and added to vinegar. After a week or two, the vinegar is infused with herb-y flavor. Taste it often, and when the vinegar has a flavor intensity that you like, strain and bottle it, then store in the refrigerator. For a full article on herbed vinegars, check out [this one from the archives](#).

Mint Tea Concentrate

Have a lot of mint, lemon verbena, and/or lemon balm? [Here's a recipe](#) for a concentrate that can be frozen, then enjoyed, hot or cold, no matter what season.

As you can see, there are lots of ways to make use of herbs throughout the seasons. And the more herbs are picked now, the more they will produce over the season. So harvest, preserve, and enjoy those herbs!