

Cooking Guide: Fresh Herbs

You can store herbs for several days by immersing the stems in 1 inch of water in a tall glass. Cover with a plastic bag and refrigerate; replace water when cloudy. You can also freeze herbs by removing the leaves from the stems, rinsing and drying the leaves, and then placing them in a heavy-duty sealed plastic bag for up to six months. (Frozen herbs darken but retain much of their flavor.)

Herb	Flavor	Great with	Note
Basil	Fragrant and spicy — almost peppery	Tomatoes, vegetables, poultry, grilled pizzas, salads	It's best used as whole leaves or torn. Smaller leaves at top of bunch are the sweetest.
Parsley	Peppery and fresh; curly parsley is milder than flat-leaf Italian	Salads, vegetables (especially potatoes), pasta	Either variety is a breath freshener.
Dill	Fresh and grassy; feathery leaves used in pickle brine	Tuna salad, omelets, vegetables, seafood dishes, yogurt dressing for cucumbers, herb vinegars	Use dill fresh or add to hot food just before serving.
Oregano	Earthy; balances acidic tomatoes — hence common on pizza	Lamb, beef, eggs, beans, eggplant	It's closely related to marjoram (but more pungent), so they aren't classified separately.
Cilantro	A lively flavor; soapy, some say; looks similar to flat-leaf parsley	Asian, Mexican and Indian dishes; mix in salsas and chutneys	Leaves become bitter after plant flowers. Dried seeds are the spice coriander.
Rosemary	Pungent aroma and pine flavor	Mediterranean dishes, lamb, poultry, fish, breads; add sprigs or finely chopped leaves to long-cooking stews	When grilling, sturdier stems make good skewers; branches can be a basting brush.
Thyme	Minty and citrusy	Mediterranean dishes, stews, eggs, seafood, poultry; toss sprigs into boiling water to flavor steamed rice	Strip leaves from stems by pulling through fork tines.
Mint	Cool; brightens up both savory and sweet dishes	Beverages, jellies, sauces, marinades for meat and vegetables; often tossed with buttered peas	The most popular variety is spearmint. To dry, hang in a dark place with low humidity.
Chives	Subtle onion with grasslike leaves	Egg dishes, soups, sauces, baked potatoes, fish	Snip with scissors for best results. Chive flowers make a pretty garnish.

Sage	richly peppery-rosemary flavor	Poultry, Beans, Stuffing, Pasta	Deep-fried sage is a lovely garnish.
Tarragon	Reminiscent of licorice	Mediterranean dishes, stews, eggs, seafood, poultry; toss sprigs into boiling water to flavor steamed rice	Two types; French is preferred over the more bitter Russian

When cooking with the fresh herbs you grow, the only rule is to please yourself and your guests.

Some general rules of thumb when cooking with fresh herbs:

- Flavors will vary. Taste your herbs before you add them to your cooking.
- Freshly picked herbs will start losing their flavor if stored for days.
- Tender herb leaves, like [basil](#), chives, coriander, dill, and [parsley](#) should be shopped just before use and added at the end of cooking, to retain their flavor.
- Thicker and woodier herbs, like bay, [oregano](#), [sage](#), [thyme](#) and [rosemary](#) can be adding during the cooking process to allow them time to meld with the other flavors.
- Thicker herb leaves, like rosemary and sage, can be very pungent and should be finely chopped and used sparingly or added whole and removed before serving.
- To substitute dried herbs for fresh, the general rule is:
1 Tbsp. Fresh Chopped =
1 tsp. Crumbled Dry or
1/4 tsp. Ground Dry.