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Using and Storing Herbs and Spices

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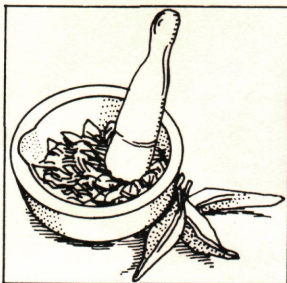
Sally Wheeler, Livingston County Extension Home Economist, and Virginia Messina,
Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist

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HERBS AND SPICES

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Herbs and spices add the variety to food preparation that keeps things interesting! Be careful not to overdo it, however, as "too much" is easily detected.

Using Herbs and Spices

Use herbs and spices sparingly—to enhance foods' natural flavors, rather than to dominate them. Exceptions are some heavily spiced, exotic dishes.

To substitute dried herbs for fresh herbs, use 1/3 teaspoon powdered or 1/2 teaspoon crushed for every tablespoon fresh, chopped herbs.

In cooking, place whole herbs or spices in cheesecloth bags for easy removal.

Do not overboil spices or herbs since some may become bitter.

Nutritional Value

Because of the small amounts used in cooking, nutritional contribution is negligible. Spices and herbs can be used to flavor foods, however, without added calories.

How to Dry and Store Herbs

Herbs—Home grown herbs can be dried or frozen.

Air drying: Tie herb stems together. Hang upside down in a dark, well-ventilated place to dry.

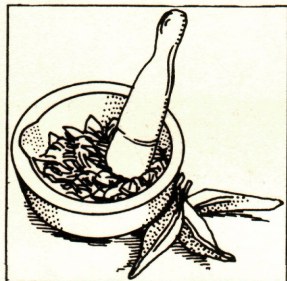
Microwave oven drying: Place clean herbs in a single layer between two paper towels. Heat for 1 to 3 minutes on high, mixing after every 30 seconds. Cool and test for brittleness. Repeat if necessary. To prevent damage to the oven, place a small container of water in the oven during drying.

Oven drying: Place clean herbs on shallow trays in oven, leaving oven door ajar. Turn heat to lowest setting, about 150°F. Allow herbs to dry, testing after each hour. A small electric fan placed to circulate air into oven cavity will speed drying time.

To store dried herbs: Place in airtight jars, out of direct sunlight.

To freeze: Wash fresh herbs carefully and pat dry. Place in airtight freezer bags or containers, seal and freeze. Blanching is not necessary.

Spices—Ground spices tend to lose their flavor over time and should be replaced at least once a year. Date jars or cans when purchased. Store in dark, non-absorbent containers in a dry, cool area.



Curry

There are many recipes for curry. Try one of these in chicken, seafood, rice or mixed vegetable dishes.

Curry I

- 1 ounce each of ginger, coriander and cardamom
- 1/4 ounce cayenne
- 3 ounces turmeric

Curry II

- 1 ounce each of turmeric, coriander and cumin
- 1/2 ounce each of ginger and peppercorns
- 1/4 ounce each of dried hot peppers and fennel seed
- 1/8 ounce each of mustard, poppy seeds, cloves and mace

Herb Butters

Tightly wrapped frozen herb butters keep for 6 months. Simply slice off the amount you need.

Lemon-Parsley Butter

- 1/2 cup softened butter
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon minced garlic
- 2-3 teaspoons lemon juice
- salt and pepper to taste

Blend all ingredients and form into a roll. **Wrap** and **freeze**. For variety, try replacing parsley with a mixture of basil, tarragon, chervil or other herbs of your choice.

Prepared by **Sally Wheeler**, Livingston County Extension Home Economist, and **Virginia Messina**, Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist, MSU.

Poultry Seasoning

- 1 tablespoon dried sage
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon dried marjoram
- 1 tablespoon dried savory
- 1 tablespoon dried rosemary

This mixture of herbs is used in stuffing for veal and pork. It is a "must" for adding flavor to poultry. **Add** 1 to 2 tablespoons of mixture to any stuffing recipe.

Chili Powder

- 1 tablespoon dried mild chili pepper, chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon dried hot chili pepper, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried cumin seed
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon dried garlic
- 1 teaspoon salt

Combine all herbs and **pulverize** to a coarse powder. Use for chili, barbeque sauce, bean dishes, or meat loaf.

Bouquet Garni

- 2 sprigs or 6 tablespoons dried parsley
- 3 tablespoons dried celery leaves
- 3 tablespoons dried onion, chopped
- 1 sprig or 3 tablespoons dried thyme

Tie all herbs in a small piece of cheesecloth and **immerse** in a pot of simmering soup or stew. **Remove** and **discard** before serving.

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