

Ten “Rules” for Cooking with Herbs

- Season lightly. Herbs should enhance without overwhelming. You can always add more.
- Don't overcook fresh herbs. Long cooking reduces their flavor. Add near the end or sprinkle over food at the table for best flavor.
- Remember that flavor in dry herbs is concentrated. One teaspoon of dry = 1 tablespoon of fresh.
- If you're buying fresh herbs, make sure they're really fresh. Sometimes bargain priced herbs are too old.
- Fresh herbs should always smell like, well, herbs. Herbs that are too old don't smell and will lack flavor. Don't buy musty smelling herbs either!
- Sprinkle herbs in your hand or in a spoon, not directly over simmering food. Moisture in the simmer can get into your container and cause mold.
- Store herbs in a cool, dry and dark place for longest life.
- Store red seasonings in the fridge.
- Buy herbs reasonably whole, not powdered. Bigger pieces retain flavor longer. Crumble just before use.
- Extend the garden season by freezing and drying. Label, date, and use within a year of drying, freezing, or buying.

(from Judi Strauss, thecharmed kitchen.com)

Ten More Ways to Use the “Top Three” Herbs

Basil:

- Muddle a handful into a cocktail
- Add sprigs to Asian soups and noodle dishes
- Toss chiffonaded basil ribbons with greens
- Sprinkle torn leaves over pizza
- Wilt with spinach for a “secret ingredient” flavor booster
- Wrap around mini mozzarella balls
- Steep in a simple syrup for fresh lemonade
- Blend into gazpacho
- Slip leaves inside a wrap sandwich

Rosemary:

- Sprinkle leaves atop focaccia
- Chop and add to butter cookies
- Add sprigs to roasted vegetables
- Skewer vegetables on woody sprigs
- Steep in hot water for an invigorating herbal tea
- Add chopped to pan roasted potatoes
- Flavor poached fruit with sprigs
- Infuse in warmed honey, vinegar, or olive oil
- Blend into fresh bread crumbs
- Chop and fold into scone dough

Sage:

- Fry leaves in oil for garnishes
- Make sage brown butter for pasta (simmer in butter)
- Add a tablespoon to cornbread or biscuit dough
- Slip leaves into grilled sandwiches
- Blend into softened butter for corn on the cob
- Substitute for basil or oregano in sauces
- Use to season a pot of beans
- Stir into risotto
- Roast with winter squash
- Whisk into a frittata

(April/May 2013. vegetariantimes.com)