



April 2001 – Using Herbs

Kitchen Garden- Herbs

There are a few simple herbs that are easy to grow, pest free, love hot dry soil and some are green all year round. I have this area by my front door that is under the house eave and is south facing. It is hot and dry in the summer, and protected in the winter. I decided to plant some herbs in this area and they are thriving with little attention. I have dwarf rosemary that blooms twice a year including once in the winter. I have sage, several different kinds of thyme, lavender, dill, fennel, oregano, hops, chamomile and summer savoury. In a slightly more shaded part of my garden, I have an abundance of Parsley, mint and lemon balm that seed themselves out every year. In my greenhouse, I have a bay tree that is getting a bit too big for its britches, also a lemon verbena plant. In the spring, I grow Basil in pots on my porch.

The benefits of growing your own herbs are numerous. What I love most is their scent, the aroma that fills the air on a hot summer day is amazing. Plus I have fresh herbs at my fingertips for any salad dressing I might be creating or perhaps a stew, marinade, pesto or tea. The pretty flowers can be used to decorate a dish or a cake. Tie some sprigs of rosemary to the end of a skewer and use it as a basting brush for barbecuing.

Herbs are easy to dry and store for winter use. Many can be picked on stems, tied together in bunches and hung upside down in a dark-cool place, once dry they should be stored in ziplocks or in a jar with a lid.. Another method is to pick, clean and freeze the herbs, lay them out on a cookie sheet to freeze, then pack them in a jar with a lid.. Basil takes well to being chopped and packed in ice-cube trays, then filled with water before freezing. Pack jars with chopped basil and filled with Olive oil for storage.

Herb Vinaigrette

1/2c Olive oil
3T Red wine vinegar
1T Dijon mustard
1/2t Pepper-freshly ground
1/2t Sugar
1/2t Salt
1t Fresh thyme-minced
1t Fresh tarragon-minced
1t fresh oregano or mint-minced
1t Fresh basil-minced

-place all the ingredients in a jar, sea the lid tightly and shake for 10seconds. Use immediately or refrigerate. The variety and quantity of herbs used in this recipe are only a suggestion, improvise to suit your needs and taste.

Raspberry and Lemon Verbena butter

1/2lb unsalted butter
4oz Razzberries-if frozen then thaw and drain.
1T Sugar

-bring all ingredients to room temperature and blend in a food processor. This could take a little time. The ingredients will eventually emulsify.

1/4c Lemon verbena leaves-finely chopped

-blend in to the butter.

This recipe is great on warm muffins in the morning or on pancakes.

Butters

Incorporating chopped herbs into butter and then freezing the butter mix is a quick and easy way to fancy up a meal. The butter can be as diversified as your imagination. Ideas are garlic butter with chives for French bread, or a knob placed on grilled fish or chicken. Use the herb butter to make pastry for a savoury dish. For a quick meal you can toss some butter in with pasta.

Pesto

The word pesto means paste, it originated in Genoa, Italy and does not require cooking. The original recipe contains Basil, pinenuts, Parmesan cheese, garlic and Olive oil. Today we can use many different combinations or herbs and nuts, try substituting spinach for the basil and sunflower seeds for the pinenuts (poor persons version!)

1c Fresh Basil
4sprigs Parsley
2sprigs Marjoram
4oz Pinenuts
2 Garlic Cloves
1/3c Parmesan
1/3c Romano
1/4c Olive oil
2T Butter
1/2t Salt

-finely chop all ingredients in a food processor, then put in a large skillet.

1/2c Chicken stock

-stir in and simmer for 5mins.

1lb Linguine-cook al dente.

-toss pasta in the pesto, put in a warm serving bowl.

1/2c Parmesan cheese

-sprinkle on the pasta and serve.

Clams Marinière with Tomato and Onion

1c Dry white wine

2 Garlic cloves-minced

-bring to a boil and simmer 2mins

2lbs 1" hard shelled clams or 36 2" hard shelled clams-scrubbed well.

-add clams and steam covered for 3 to 5 mins, until open. Discard any unopened ones. Transfer clam with slotted spoon to a bowl and keep warm, covered. Strain liquid through fine sieve to remove grit. Return the liquid to a simmer.

1/2 small onion-chopped fine

3 Plum tomatoes-seeded and chopped

2T Fresh Basil-chopped

2T Fresh herbs-any combination. Try some oregano, savoury, thyme and some parsley.

-add to the simmering liquid.

2T Butter-cubed

2t Fresh lemon juice

-swirl into simmering liquid. Divide the clams into 4 bowls, pour sauce over them and garnish with a sprig of fresh herbs.

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