

YOUR GUIDE TO THE COMMUNITY HERB GARDEN

An overview of the herbs we have and what to do with them.

2012

Basics for using any fresh herbs:

- Chopped fresh herbs are much more pungent than dried herbs, so use less until you have tasted the dish before adding more.
- All herbs can be used to make teas, this is a good way to learn the individual tastes of herbs.
- Prior to chopping fresh herbs or adding whole stems of herbs to a roast, dunk them into boiling water for a minute to help release the aromatic oils. This will also give them a brighter look when added to salads (shake off excess water prior to cutting and adding to a salad).
- Herbs are a great substitute for salt, so cut back on salt and use herbs to flavour your food.
- Herbs have different qualities (bitter, sour, mellow, spicy, sweet, etc.), so if you have added an herb to a dish and don't like the taste use another herb (of different taste quality) to get the dish tasting to your palette. For example, if the Sorrel is too sour for your taste then add fennel or tarragon to sweeten the dish. Or, if the parsley is too strong add mint, dill, sage, or cilantro to counter the parsley.
- Experiment and try new things, the latest rage is to dip the large leaf herbs (mint, sage, tarragon) into a sugar syrup (or into a fine sugar), let dry for several hours and use as garnishes on appetizers, drinks and desserts.



The basil herb is usually associated with Italian and Mediterranean cooking despite its Asian origins. As a main flavoring agent in sauces, eaten fresh or made into an olive oil and garlic sauce called pesto, the basil herb has found its way into many traditional European dishes. It is also a common ingredient in Thai food, including curry recipes and stir-fries. The diversity and mellow flavor of the basil herb have also led it to be included as a common ingredient in salads, salad dressings, pasta dishes and even sandwiches.

BASIL

(visit the South Herb Garden to try)



Although limited in its culinary uses, bergamot imparts a wonderful citrus-like flavor and fragrance that complements fruits and summer beverages and teas. The flowers maybe scattered in salads and the leaves infused by simmering for 10 minutes in an enamel saucepan for greater flavor. Put a fresh leaf into China tea (for an Earl Grey flavor), wine cups or lemonade. Add sparingly to salads, stuffings, pork. Use for jams, jellies and bergamot milk; pour 1 cup boiling milk over 1 tablespoon dried or 3 tablespoons shredded leaves, steep for 5 - 7 minutes, strain and serve.

BERGAMOT

(visit the South Herb Garden to try)



The aroma is strong but mellow, fruity, and penetrating. The taste is lemony and flowery. The pods are the key ingredient of chai tea. The leaves can be minced and added to curry pastes, or used like bay leaves, adding them whole to stews and soups to add subtle zest and sweetness. Cardamom pairs well with apples, oranges, pears and coffee.

CARDAMOM

(visit the North Herb Garden to try)



Chives are a mild member of the onion family. Chives has many uses and can be added to potato salad, baked potatoes, soups, salads, omelets, dips and spreads, pastas and sauces. Use it anywhere you want to add onion flavor without the harsh pungency of onion. Best if used fresh. Add fresh or dried chives at the end of cooking to preserve the flavor. Chopped chives lift many foods above the ordinary. Sprink them on soups, salads, chicken, potatoes, cooked vegetables and egg dishes. Blend chopped chives with butter or cream cheese, yogurt sauces and baked potatoes.

CHIVES

(visit the South Herb Garden to try)



Cilantro is the most popular herb in the world - having recently become popular in as a component of Tex-Mex foods and used extensively in both Indian and Thai cooking. The Chinese often add the root to stir fries. Cilantro has a distinctive, pungent earthy taste similar to a blend of lemon and sage; the herb is great with chilli, carrot, basil, mint, chicken, beef, avocado, coconut, couscous, garlic, ginger, soy sauce, fish, prawns, scallops and mussels.

CILANTRO

(visit the North Herb Garden to try)



The light aroma of dill faintly resembles licorice. Dill is good in soups, omelets, seafood dishes, herring, salmon, potato salads, and steamed vegetables. Dill seed is used in breads, pickling, cabbage dishes, stews, rice and cooked root vegetables. Dill has a totally unique spicy green taste. Add whole seeds to potato salad, pickles, bean soups and salmon dishes. Ground seed can flavor herb butter, mayonnaise and mustard. The leaves go well with fish, cream cheese and cucumber.

DILL

(visit the North Herb Garden to try)



The seed is similar to anise seed, but sweeter and milder. It pairs well with fish, but Italians also like to add it to sauces, meats & sausages. Add the seeds to sauces, breads, savory crackers and water for poaching fish. Stuff the leaves into oily fish like mackerel and sprinkle finely chopped stems and leaves on salads and cooked vegetables and can also be added to soups and stuffings.

FENNEL

(visit the North Herb Garden to try)



Lavender is an incredibly versatile herb for cooking. In today's upscale restaurants, fresh edible flowers are making a comeback as enhancements to both the flavor and appearance of food. It is best used with fennel, oregano, rosemary, thyme, sage, and savory. Lavender has a sweet, floral flavor, with lemon and citrus notes.

LAVENDER

(visit the South Herb Garden to try)



Mint is an herb that comes in many varieties such as peppermint, spearmint, orange mint, ginger mint, pineapple mint and even chocolate mint. Mint is used for seasoning lamb, vegetable such as carrots, bell pepper, and tomatoes, in yogurt dressings, and breads. It is also used in the Middle East for salads, tabouli and marinated vegetables. Mint is good in soups, salads, sauces, plain meat, fish and poultry, stews, sweet or savory recipes, extremely good with chocolate or lemon based desserts. Add near the end of cooking for a better flavor.

MINT

(visit the North Herb Garden to try)



Oregano goes well with vegetables, roast beef, lamb, chicken and pork. Generally used to season Mexican, Italian, Greek and Spanish dishes. Oregano has a warm, aromatic scent and robust taste. It's uses include seasoning soups, stews, meat pies, pasta sauces and shellfish.

OREGANO

(visit the South Herb Garden to try)



Parsley is a great all around herb. It quickly adds a touch of color and texture to any recipe. Especially good in omelets, scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, soups, pasta and vegetable dishes as well as sauces to go with fish, poultry, veal and pork. Use fresh leaves as garnish. Parsley has a delicate favor that combines well with other herbs like basil, bay leaves, chives, dill weed, garlic, marjoram, mint, oregano and thyme.

PARSLEY

(visit the South Herb Garden to try)



Rosemary's aromatic flavor blends well with garlic and thyme to season lamb roasts, meat stews, and marinades. Rosemary also enlivens lighter fish and poultry dishes, tomato sauces, and vegetables. Dress fresh steamed red potatoes and peas or a stir fried mixture of zucchini and summer squash. Rosemary has a tea like aroma and a piney flavor. Crush leaves by hand or with a mortar and pestle before using.

ROSEMARY

(visit the South Herb Garden to try)



Sage enhances pork, lamb, meats, and sausages. Chopped leaves flavor salads, pickles, and cheese. Crumble leaves for full fragrance. Sage is a wonderful flavor enhancement for seafood, vegetables, stuffing, and savory breads. Rub sage, cracked pepper, and garlic into pork tenderloin or chops before cooking.

SAGE

(visit the South Herb Garden to try)



Savory is nicknamed the bean herb. It is typically used in soups, beans and as a meat and poultry seasoning. This herb tastes slightly warm and sharp. It is a very strong herb and should be used sparingly. Most commonly used as a seasoning for green vegetables, savory's special affinity is for beans. Use summer savory, with its more delicate flavor, for tender baby green beans, and winter savory to enhance a whole medley of dried beans and lentils.

SAVORY

(visit the South Herb Garden to try)



In appearance sorrel greatly resembles spinach and in taste sorrel can range from comparable to the kiwifruit in young leaves, to a more acidic tasting older leaf. Young sorrel may be harvested to use in salads, soups or stews. If you are planning on using sorrel in salads, it's a good idea to stick with small tender leaves that have the fruitier and less acidic taste. Young sorrel leaves are also excellent when lightly cooked, similar to the taste of cooked chard or spinach. For soups and stews, older sorrel can be used because it adds tang and flavor to the dish.

SORREL

(visit the South Herb Garden to try)



Tarragon is an exceptional herb. It has a subtle and sophisticated flavor and is an essential herb in French cuisine. It's flavor is delicate and almost licorice or anise-like. Tarragon is exceptional in egg dishes, poached fish, mushrooms and other vegetables. Tarragon is good with chicken and in salad dressings. It is often used in sauces like béarnaise and French cuisine. Tarragon is also often used to infuse vinegar and olive oils.

TARRAGON

(visit the South Herb Garden to try)



Fresh garden thyme is an herb that has thin grayish green leaves and a subtle lemon, yet minty aroma and taste. Thyme is used in a wide variety of cuisine, but is most closely associated with French cuisine. Thyme is included in seasoning blends for poultry and stuffing and also commonly used in fish sauces, chowders, and soups. It goes well with lamb and veal as well as in eggs. Thyme is often paired with tomatoes.

THYME

(visit the South Herb Garden to try)