



Consumer-centered access for long-term care information, referrals and assessments. For information call 382-8481, x 1234.

ATTENTION SENIOR CITIZENS: Have a nutritional question or concern? If you are participating in a senior meal program, you are eligible to have a free consultation with a Registered Dietitian. Call Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County at 372-1622, ext. 269, for more information.



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
of Schenectady County



107 Nott Terrace, Suite 301  
Schenectady, NY 12308  
Phone: (518) 372-1622  
Fax: (518) 372-8703  
[www.cceschenectady.org](http://www.cceschenectady.org)

Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, protected veterans, and individuals with disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities.

## Preserving Culinary Herbs:

### Herbs – How to store them and preserve them



It's best to *dry* herbs that have pronounced flavors and tough or needle-like leaves — such as rosemary, thyme, sage, oregano, lavender, mint and bay.



*Freeze* herbs with more subtle flavors and tender leaves — such as parsley, cilantro and chervil.

Preserving basil is the exception:  
It dries well, but its flavor is brighter if frozen.

**Harvesting Herbs:** Using garden shears cut stems long enough to tie together if drying. If the leaves are clean, it is not necessary to wash them; some of the oils may be lost during rinsing. However, if the leaves are dusty, or have been thickly mulched, rinse them briefly under cold water. Shake off any excess water and hang the herbs, tied in small bunches, just until the water evaporates away. Discard any dead or yellowed leaves.

**Indoor Air Drying Herbs.** Tie herbs and hang – leafy ends down – so that the essential oils in the stems will flow into the leaves. Tie the bundles tightly, because the stems will shrink as they dry. As soon as possible, take the herb bunches in and hang them in a warm, dry place which is well ventilated and not exposed to direct sunlight; avoid the kitchen (Do not hang the herbs above the stove you cook on; grease and odors can damage the delicate texture, flavor, and aroma of the herbs).



To prevent dust from collecting on the drying leaves, place each bunch inside a paper bag before hanging. Gather the top of the bag and tie the herb stems so the leaves hang freely inside the bag. For ventilation, cut out the bottom of the bag or punch air holes in the sides.

**Cool Oven Drying:** Another method, especially nice for mint, sage or bay leaf, is to dry the leaves separately. In areas of high humidity, it will work better than air drying whole stems. Cut the best leaves from the stems. Lay the leaves on a paper towel, without allowing leaves to touch. Cover with another towel and layer of leaves. Five layers may be dried at one time using this method. Place the covered herbs in a cool oven with the light on for 24 hrs, longer if the leaves are large. The oven light provides enough heat for drying. Leaves dry flat and retain a good color.

**Processing Herbs:** When the leaves become brittle, crispy dry and crumple easily between the fingers, they are ready to be stripped from the stems and store them in jars. Dried leaves may be left whole and crumpled when ready to use, or coarsely crumpled before storage. Husks can be removed from seeds by rubbing the seeds between the hands and blowing away the chaff. Place herbs in airtight containers, label and date the containers, then store in a cool, dry, dark area to protect color and fragrance.

When herbs are fully dried, they are safe from bacteria, mold and yeast, and will remain potent for at least six to 12 months. Dried herbs are usually 3 to 4 times stronger than the fresh herbs. To substitute dried herbs in a recipe that calls for fresh herbs, use 1/4 to 1/3 of the amount listed in the recipe.

**Freezing Herbs:** Follow these steps to preserve basil and other herbs by freezing: Coarsely chop the leaves and then pack them loosely in ice cube trays. Add water and freeze. When the cubes have frozen, remove them from the trays and store them in plastic freezer bags for up to 3 months. Add the cubes to sauces or soups for summertime flavor. Or, gently purée the herbs along with a small amount of olive oil (one-quarter cup oil to 1 cup of leaves) and then freeze the paste in a plastic freezer bag. Cut off the amount of paste you need to flavor soups, sauces, dressings or marinades.



Sources:

"So Easy to Preserve", 5th ed. 2006. Bulletin 989, Cooperative Extension Service, The University of Georgia, Athens. Revised by Elizabeth L. Andress, Ph.D. and Judy A. Harrison, Ph.D., Extension Foods Specialists. Purdue University, Indiana State 4-H "Drying Herbs"; Online at [http://www.four-h.purdue.edu/foods/Drying%20herbs%](http://www.four-h.purdue.edu/foods/Drying%20herbs%20)