Fresh Herbs: Don’t Miss Out on Summer Flavor

Are you excited to eat your favorite summer foods? Sweet corn and tomatoes, anyone? Fresh peas creamed with small red potatoes and pearl onions? Bring them on! How about a simple cucumber sandwich and a cup of brewed iced tea? Heavenly.

Well…you may not be getting all the summer flavor you deserve. Fresh herbs can make your favorite summer foods taste even better. And, they are good for your health!

Planting herbs in containers will provide a variety of fresh flavors—for little money—throughout the entire summer. Most herbs are perfect container plants and will thrive on your deck, patio, balcony, fire escape, or front steps, if you offer them the right growing conditions. Fill a container with potting soil and you’re ready to go shopping for herbs.

Basil, oregano, sage, cilantro, thyme, and rosemary are among the easiest plants to grow in pots. Here is some “sage” advice to consider if you have never grown herbs.

• One plant of each herb is usually enough. It’s okay to plant different types of herbs in one pot.
• Plant what you use most.
• Place container where it can receive plenty of sun.
• Grow indoor herbs in the sunniest location you can find, but don’t expect them to perform as well as they do outside.
Marvin has been attending Fresh Conversations at Pilgrim Place in Mason City since the first day three years ago.

Marvin Hesse is the helper in the group. He carries in all the supplies, cleans up and carries everything back out.

Stephanie is his Fresh Conversations facilitator. She says, “I couldn’t do it without Marvin! He’s so enthusiastic about helping and excited about what he will learn about.”

Marvin started coming to Fresh Conversations to help get his blood sugars under control and learn about carbohydrates. “I know eating better can help prevent diseases and help with my diabetes.” He has learned a lot about healthier substitutions and how to add in healthy fruits and veggies to foods he already prepares. He especially enjoyed the Muffin Tin Egg recipe, the Roasted Radishes, and he also really liked trying the ancient grain, bulgur.

Marvin has improved his diabetes and appreciates the advice he gets from Stephanie, who also happens to be the dietitian for a local grocery store where he shops.

Marvin enjoys keeping Pilgrim Place in good shape loves to help others. His fellow residents all know they can count on him for help when they need it.

Herbilicious!

You really can’t go wrong cooking with fresh herbs. Smell an herb first then take a small taste. If it is delicious, use a generous amount. If you aren’t sure you like it, then just add a little.

**BASIL**

Top sliced tomatoes with basil and a sprinkle of vinegar. Want to get a little fancy with basil? Stack basil leaves, roll them into a cigar shape and slice into strips.

**DILL**

Add dill to plain yogurt for a refreshing dip for a dill-icious snack or toss into a vegetable salad.

**OREGANO**

Sautee zucchini or any summer vegetable with oregano, mushrooms and onions for a scrumptious, healthy side dish. Sprinkle fresh oregano leaves onto homemade garlic bread.

Want more? Try an herb dipping oil recipe on page 4!

Herb Tips

- To make fresh herbs last a week or more, treat them like flowers. Snip stems and place in a glass filled with water.
- If a recipe calls for a dried herb and you want to use the fresh form, use three times the amount.
- To taste a fresh herb you have not used before, mix ½ teaspoon (finely chopped) with 1 tablespoon cream cheese or sweet butter. Let it stand 10-15 minutes. Taste on a cracker.

Herb Scramble Answers

1. herbs
2. basil
3. oregano
4. dill
5. bacteria
6. sage
7. thyme
8. rosemary
9. hunger
10. cilantro
11. safe
12. washing hands

Want more? Try an herb dipping oil recipe on page 4!
Don't Let Illness-Causing Bacteria Invade Your Summer Fun!

Millions of Americans suffer from foodborne illness each year, resulting in roughly 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Tips for your next summer cookout:
• Use a food thermometer to cook meat to a safe temperature. (See chart below for more information.)
• If you serve burger toppings like mayo, sliced tomatoes or avocado, place them on a tray of ice—and replenish ice as needed.
• Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours (1 hour if temperatures are at or above 90°F) of being placed outside.
• If you are not sure how long food has been sitting out, throw it out immediately.¹ ²

What's a Safe Temperature?

Regardless of everyone’s tastes, it is important to ensure that all meat and poultry is cooked to the safe minimum internal temperatures as measured by a food thermometer.¹ ²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meat</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beef, pork and lamb (steaks, roasts and chops)</td>
<td>145°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>145°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground meats for burgers and sausages (beef, lamb, veal, pork)</td>
<td>160°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole poultry, poultry breasts and ground poultry</td>
<td>165°F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When Should You Wash Your Hands?

• Before, during and after preparing food
• Before eating food
• Before and after caring for someone who is sick
• Before and after treating a cut or wound
• After using the toilet
• After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
• After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
• After touching an animal, animal feed or animal waste
• After touching garbage

Left food out overnight? Eat or toss? Given warm moist conditions, one bacterium that reproduces by dividing itself every half hour can produce 17 million bacteria in 12 hours.

Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol

Recipe of the Month

Herb Dipping Oil

Try a simple herb dipping oil with your favorite bread!

INGREDIENTS
• ½ cup olive oil (or canola oil)
• 1 teaspoon each - chopped fresh rosemary, flat-leaf parsley, and oregano
• 1 garlic clove, minced
• ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
• Salt—sprinkle on top of the oil (kosher salt flakes work well)

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and stir to combine. Serve with crusty bread. Some people enjoy adding a few drops of balsamic vinegar.

Hidden Hunger

People should not have to choose between paying for medicine and buying food. But it happens—more often than we think. Not having enough food increases a person’s risk for poor health. And for diet-related illnesses like diabetes, people need healthy foods at consistent times and in the right amounts.

Take Action Corner

This month I will...

Herb Scramble

Unscramble these key words found in this month’s newsletter. Circled letters can be unscrambled for a bonus word.

1. ersbh
2. sailb
3. greonao
4. lidl
5. criabeat
6. esga
7. hytem
8. mrsoeray
9. ugrehn
10. tranolic
11. fase
12. sihawgn hdans

BONUS WORD

Food Assistance Resources

Get help finding a food pantry, meal delivery service or meal site near you by dialing:

• 2-1-1
• Lifelong Links 866-468-7887
• Food Assistance Hotline 1-855-944-FOOD (3663)

Sources (page 3):