

Tips for Drying Herbs and Cooking with Herbs

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- Fresh herbs are generally best for cooking, but one of the exceptions is **oregano**; there is better flavor from dried. If you find oregano too strong, use marjoram instead.
- **If using dried herbs** instead of fresh, use half of the amount called for in the recipe.
- **If doubling recipe**, do not double herbs- try 1 ½ times the amount.
- **Add dried herbs** at the beginning of cooking and fresh near the end of cooking.
- **Most herbs dry nicely** in a dehydrator with a thermostat and a fan at 95-125 degrees, depending on the humidity. Some dry in an hour while others take much longer. A few exceptions are **dill** - seed-dry heads in a brown paper bag in the dark, **garlic** - spread out on racks to dry, **lavender** and **rosemary** - tied in bunches and hung to dry. Make sure dill seed heads, rosemary and lavender picked when dew has burned off. Check occasionally for mold.
- **Pick herbs in the morning** before heat of the day. Rinse in cold water to remove bugs, dirt, and debris.
- **Place in salad spinner** and remove as much excess water as possible. Lay leaves on trays (with space between leaves) of dehydrator for herbs such as basil, lemon verbena, sage, lemon grass, lemon balm. Lay sprigs sparingly of herbs such as fennel, dill, oregano, thyme, marjoram and then remove stems when dried and ready to store.
- Use clean jars with tight lids. Mason jars are a good choice. **Crush herbs when you are using them**, not when packing in jars for storage (keeps oils and scent from being released until needed).
- Many years ago a speaker at a meeting for Herb Society of Wake said that she used **virgin olive oil** much more often than extra virgin olive oil. The reason being that the wonderful flavors of the herbs could be covered up by the bold flavor of the extra virgin olive oil.
- If you find **pesto** to be too strong for your taste, try using ½ flat leaf parsley and ½ basil for your recipe.
- **Infused oils** will become rancid, so if adding herbs to oils, use within a few weeks.
- **Infused vinegars will last a long time.** Place herbs in vinegar - mason jars are good because of wide mouth for adding herbs. Place in a **dark cupboard** for six weeks. Strain vinegar and place in glass container.