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**DRYING HERBS**

The best way to dry herbs is air drying. It is the easiest, least expensive way to dry fresh herbs, and the slow drying process doesn't deplete the herb of its oils. The air drying process works with herbs that have a low moisture content, like Bay, Dill, Marjoram, Oregano, Rosemary, Summer Savory and Thyme. Basil, Chives, Mint, Tarragon are moisture dense herbs and preserve better in a dehydrator, or by freezing them. It is not recommended to use a microwave or oven to dry herbs because this actually cooks the herbs to a degree, diminishing the oil content and flavor.

**Harvesting**

* Harvest before flowering. You should harvest all season to keep your herbs from flowering. Late summer is a good time to begin drying your herbs.
* Cut herbs in mid-morning after the dew dries from the leaves, and before the plants are wilting in the afternoon sun.

**How to Dry Herbs**

1. Cut healthy branches and remove any dry or diseased leaves.
2. Shake gently to remove any insects and if necessary, rinse with cool water and pat dry with paper towels. Make sure your herbs are dry because wet herbs will mold and rot.
3. Remove the lower leaves along the bottom inch or so of the branch, bundle 4 - 6 branches together and tie as a bunch. Use smaller bundles for herbs with higher water content.
4. Punch or cut several holes in a paper bag and label the bag with the name of the herb.
5. Place the herb bundle upside down (stem side up) in the bag.
6. Gather the open end of bag around stems of the bundle and tie closed. Do Not crowd the herbs inside bag.
7. Hang the bag upside down from the tied end in a warm, airy room.
8. Start checking in about two weeks to see how things are progressing. Checking weekly until your herbs are dry and ready to store.

**How to Force Dry Herbs**

1. Cut healthy branches and remove any dead or diseased leaves.
2. Prepare an ice bath and boil some water.
* Dip your herbs in the boiling water for 15 seconds
* Immediately pull them out, and drop them in to the ice water for 30 seconds
* Pull them out and pat dry or use a salad spinner to remove excess water

*This step reduces mold organisms and helps preserve the color of the herbs. Don’t dip them for more than the few seconds-you want to blanch them, not cook them!*

1. Air filters for the home A/C are excellent for force drying herbs. Purchase several 24” x 24” filters and find a good square box fan of roughly similar dimensions.
2. Place the first air filter on your table and carefully spread herbs on the air filter, but do not stack the herbs.
* When the first filter is full, place another filter on top of it and spread herbs on that one as well.
* Continue layering to a maximum of three loaded filters at a time.
* Place an empty filter on top of this and use bungee cords or packaging tape to hold the four sides firmly closed together.
* Attach the stack of filters to the box fan, turn the fan upright, and set the fan to blow at full speed.
* Run the fan until the herbs are nicely dried, then store as normal.

 **Storing Dried Herbs**

* Dried herbs must be stored in air tight containers. Zip closing bags or small canning jars will do. Label and date your containers.
* Store the leaves of the herb whole and crush them when you are ready to use them.
* Discard any dried herbs that show the slightest sign of mold.
* Place containers in a cool, dry place away from sunlight.
* Use your dried herbs within a year because as your herbs lose their color, they are also losing their flavor.
* 1 teaspoon of crumbled dried leaves is equal to tablespoon of fresh herb leaves.

### FREEZING HERBS

Frozen herbs will keep their flavor for several months and unlike dried herbs, where the flavor gets more concentrated when drying, frozen herbs can be used in the same proportion as fresh herbs. Here are two very simple methods for freezing your herbs:

**Method 1**

1. Harvest the freshest, healthiest leaves.
2. Wash, if necessary, and pat dry with paper towels
3. Spread the individual leaves on a small tray or cookie sheet. Freezing the leaves flat and individually will prevent them from freezing together into a brick.
4. Cover and place the tray of leaves into the freezer
5. When frozen solid, place the herbs in airtight containers. Label the container with the name of the herb and return to the freezer. Once frozen individually, the leaves will not meld together.

**Method 2**

1. Harvest the freshest, healthiest leaves
2. Wash, if necessary, and pat dry with paper towels
3. Stuff 2-3 individual leaves or a spoonful of chopped herbs in ice cube trays.
4. Fill the tray half way with water. Make sure the leaves are down into the water, as best you can.
5. They will tend to float, but we'll fix that with the next step. Place the half filled tray in the freezer.
6. Once the ice cubes are frozen, finish filling the tray with water. The leaves will no longer be able to float and should be completely surrounded with water. Now place the tray back into the freezer to freeze solid.
7. Once the ice cubes are frozen, remove from the tray and store in zip closure bags. Label the bag with the name of the herb and return it to the freezer
8. When ready to use, toss the whole ice cube into your favorite stew or dish.

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