

Fresh Herb & Food Combos – Add Flavor the Healthy Way!

Source: Alice Henneman, MS, RD, UNL Extension in Lancaster County, NE



A quick snip of a fresh herb into a dish instantly improves the flavor and appearance without adding unnecessary and unwanted salt or sodium. The following are some popular combinations:

BASIL - a natural snipped in with tomatoes; terrific in fresh pesto; include in pasta sauce, peas, zucchini

CHIVES - dips, potatoes, tomatoes

CILANTRO - Mexican, Asian and Caribbean cooking; salsas, tomatoes

DILL - carrots, cottage cheese, fish, green beans, potatoes, tomatoes

MINT - carrots, fruit salads, parsley, peas, tabouli, tea

OREGANO - peppers, tomatoes, pasta sauces, chicken dishes

PARSLEY - The curly leaf is the most common, but the flat-leaf or Italian parsley is more strongly flavored and often preferred for cooking and garnishing. Natural for parsley include potato dishes, carrots, soups

ROSEMARY - chicken, fish, lamb, pork, roasted potatoes, soups, stews, tomatoes

THYME - eggs, lima beans, potatoes, poultry, summer squash, tomatoes

Unless directed otherwise by your recipe, add the more delicate herbs -- basil, chives, cilantro, dill leaves, parsley, and mint -- a minute or two before the end of cooking or sprinkle them on the food before it's served. The less delicate herbs, such as oregano, rosemary, and thyme, can be added about the last 20 minutes of cooking.

Approximate equivalent amounts of different forms of herbs are:

- 1 tablespoon finely cut fresh herbs
- 1 teaspoon crumbled dried herbs
- ¼ to ½ teaspoon ground dried herbs

Fresh herbs are optimum in flavor so use fresh herbs when they are available.

Ground dried herb flavors are more intense than when in a crumbled dried form. Begin with ¼ teaspoon of most ground spices or ground dried herbs for each pound of meat you will prepare, in recipes yielding 4 or less servings and for each pint of soup or sauce you are preparing. Adjust the amounts as needed for taste preference or for larger yielding recipes. Note: Red pepper intensifies in flavor during cooking; add in small increments. And when doubling a recipe, do not double spices and herbs. Increase amounts by 1½ times. Add more if needed.



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