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Garden Diary

Spring Herbs

Herbs all year round

Farmers markets and gardens are bursting with tasty fresh herbs this time of the year, so it is a perfect time not only to enjoy them fresh but also to try preserving them for use later—especially the frost-tender ones, such as basil and sage, which will be gone with the first nip of frost. Preserving fresh herbs is a great way to add flavour to your food and you'll save money by not having to buy tiny bottles of the dried stuff that loses its flavour before you have time to use it up.

Drying herbs couldn't be simpler and is a great way to preserve parsley, rosemary, mint, thyme, and many others. But some herbs will be mere shadows of their former selves when dried, hardly worth the time and effort it takes to do it. Luckily, there are lots of simple alternatives, such as freezing and making herbal butters and vinegars, and pretty much all herbs are suited to these methods.

Freezing Herbs

Freezing herbs is easy, even if you have a small freezer. The simplest way to freeze herbs is to spread dry, clean whole or chopped leaves onto a baking sheet, freeze overnight, and put the frozen herbs into sealed containers or bags in the freezer for later use. Frozen herbs prepared this way last for months before they start to get tired-looking.

For longer storage, freeze herbs by snipping leaves into small bits, packing the bits into an empty ice-cube tray, filling about $\frac{3}{4}$ full with water, and freeze; one measured tablespoon of herbs per cube is a good amount. The next day, top off with water and freeze again (this covers the floating bits with ice to prevent freezer burn). Pop the finished cubes into a sealed container in the

freezer. Drop frozen cubes into soups, stews, and such, for fresh-cut flavour.

Pesto also freezes well—freeze it in an ice-cube tray and store the cubes in airtight containers in the freezer.

Herbal Butters

Another great method for preserving herbs is to make them into flavoured butter and freeze that. Mince 1 part herbs (one type, or a blend) and mash into 2 parts softened butter, shape into a log and freeze. Cut off slices of herb-flavoured butter as needed to melt over vegetables, meat, or fish, or to sauté in recipes for the taste of summer all winter long. My favourite flavoured butter is made with minced garlic and parsley, which makes awesome garlic bread!

By Melissa Lanz

www.organicgardening.com



Lebkuchen Recipe

(in English we call it 'Gingerbread' but the Swiss version of 'Lebkuchen' doesn't actually contain ginger and tastes quite different)

- 200gr sugar
- 1 tbsp vanilla
- 3-4 eggs
- 75 ground lemon peel
- 1 tbsp mixed spice
- 1 tbsp cinnamon
- 200 ground peeled almonds

- 1 tbsp baking powder
- 250gr flour

Pre-heat oven to 175-195 degrees. Chop almonds finely. Beat the eggs sugar and vanilla until light and creamy. Add the lemon peel, almonds and spice mix. Add sifted flour with baking powder and mix. Roll out 1 cm thick and cut into your shape of choice. Bake on baking paper for 15-20 minutes.

By Edith Hess

Wiehnachtsgüezi

Sit geschter geit dür üses Huus
es süesses, chüschtiges Gschmäckli.
Das tuet mym Näsli herrlich wohl
u macht mer roti Bäckli.

Vo frischem Anke schmöckt es da,
vo Nuss u Mandelchärne,
vo Zucker u Zitronesaft
u süesse Zimmetstärne...

Keis Wunder, dass i fröhlich bi,
u das mys Härzli lachet:
I weiss das z' Muetti flüssig isch
u Wiehnachtsgüezi bachet.

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