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Photo Credit: Linda Sapp, Trevor Hylton, and Amelia Davis

References

Alfaro, Daniel. What Are Herbs?, http://culinaryarts.about.com/od/glossary/g/Herbs.htm

James M. Stephens, professor (retired), Horticultural Sciences Department, UF/IFAS Extension, https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh020


Women’s Health Magazine

Leon County Extension Office– Trevor Hylton
5 Minute Ginger Pineapple Juice

**Ingredients:**
1/2 medium pineapple
1 tsp. finely minced fresh ginger

**Directions:**
1. Cut pineapple into 1 inch chunks.
2. Combine pineapple and minced ginger in a bowl and refrigerate for 1/2 hour.

Prep and Cook Time 5 minutes. Best consumed within an hour.

**Did You Know?**
Pineapple juice and ginger are good for a sore throat. For a great drink, put a cup of pineapple juice in the blender add 1/4 in. piece of peeled ginger, blend, heat, and drink. You'll only need two or three cups.

Enjoy the zing that the ginger gives to the pineapple in this easy to prepare addition to your healthiest way of eating that allows you to have a great tasting dessert in minutes.
What are Herbs?

In the culinary arts, the word *herb* refers to any green or leafy part of a plant used for seasoning and flavoring a recipe, but not used as the main ingredient. What exactly does this mean? To give better insight, here’s an example:

Spinach is the green part of a plant, but spinach is a vegetable, not an herb, because spinach is prepared as a food itself, not merely to add flavoring to another food. Similarly, a leaf of lettuce is the green part of a plant, but when you make a salad, the lettuce is the main ingredient, so lettuce isn’t an herb either.

So what is an herb? Examples of herbs are basil, parsley, rosemary, thyme and dill. Note that for each of these, we’re talking about the green or leafy part of some kind of plant. In the case of basil, the leaves can be quite large, whereas rosemary leaves or more like spines. Still, each is the leafy or green part of the plant and thus an herb.

So what exactly is the difference between an herb and a spice? We already know that an herb is the green part of a plant used for seasoning or flavoring. Anything else would be considered spices — for instance, any dried bark, root, berry, seed, twig or other plant matter that is used to season or flavor a dish.

For instance, cinnamon is the bark of a tree. Cardamom is a seed pod. Allspice is a dried berry. Cloves are dried flower buds. These are all examples of spices. Note too that spices are usually used in dried form while herbs can be used either fresh or dried. (Alfaro)

Watermelon Juice with Ginger and Lemongrass

**Ingredients**
- 4 pounds watermelon, peeled and cut into cubes (12 cups)
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 1/2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 1/2 teaspoons finely grated lemongrass*
- 1 1/2 teaspoons finely grated fresh ginger*
- Coarse salt
- Ice cubes

**Garnish:** Trimmed lemongrass stalks

**Directions:**
1. Puree watermelon in a blender until smooth. Strain mixture through a fine sieve into a pitcher. Stir in lemon juice, lemongrass, ginger, and 1/8 teaspoon salt. Refrigerate until chilled, about 20 minutes.

Divide juice among 6 ice-filled glasses, and garnish with lemongrass stalks. Thanks to watermelon’s natural sweetness, this drink doesn’t call for sugar.

*Preferably on a Microplane zester*
Peppermint Lemonade

**Ingredients:**
- 7 cups water
- 2 cup sugar
- 6 Fresh lemons squeezed
- 5 Fresh cut peppermint sprigs

**Garnishes:** lemon slices and Peppermint sprigs

**Directions:**
Bring 7 cups of water to a boil over medium high heat. Stir in sugar. Continue stirring constantly, 1 to 2 minutes or until sugar dissolves; remove from heat. Stir in lemon juice, and mint sprigs; let stand at least 2 hours. Pour lemonade mixture through a wire mesh strainer into a large pitcher, discarding herbs. Serve over ice. Garnish, if desired.

Note: The intensity of mint flavors can be easily adjusted by adding more or less herbs or by steeping for longer or shorter periods of time. Make about 2 quarts.

*Great recipe for summer time.

Herbs in the Florida Garden

Herbs are plants which are grown for the special flavor and aroma of their various parts. They are used mainly to season, enrich, or otherwise improve the taste or smell of certain foods. Since they are not primary dishes, they are not classified as vegetables. However, due to similarity of their growth habits and cultural requirements, herbs are often included with vegetables along in the garden.

Most of the common herbs can be grown seasonally in Florida in sufficient quantities for home use. In south Florida, many herbs may be grown in the home garden throughout the year. Since only a small portion of the plant is usually needed at any one time and because the plants are generally small, herbs are adapted to container culture. Their attractiveness as an ornamental plant makes them fit well into the home landscape, either in a border planting, or included in the flower garden. Specially designed formal herb gardens are both practical and attractive. Due to popular belief, herbs are sometimes planted among vegetables to repel certain insects and other pests. While pest control with herbs is undocumented in scientific journals, this practice will at least reward the gardener with a steady supply of various herbs.

**Location and Soil Preparation**

Since only a few plants of each herb are required for family use, a small space such as a section of the vegetable garden is sufficient. Some of the herbs live from year to year (perennials), so they should be grouped together to one side of the garden. Annual herbs should also may be grouped together for and away from the vegetables. Such grouping would allow specific cultural practices, such as spraying for pest control of other crops in the garden. Very few pesticides are labeled for use on herbs.
In general, most herbs will grow satisfactorily under the same sunlight and soil conditions, and with similar cultural techniques as are used for vegetables. Therefore, check the appropriate vegetable gardening guides for details on soil preparation, liming, fertilizing, and watering. Special consideration should be given to the location and care of a few of the herbs that are somewhat sensitive to soil moisture conditions. Sage, rosemary, and thyme require a well-drained, slightly moist soil, whereas parsley, chervil, and mint grow best on soils retaining considerable moisture.

Additions of organic matter to sandy soils are particularly beneficial to herbs since they are shallow rooting. Keep in mind that some of the herbs, especially the mints, tend to proliferate and become a weed if allowed to grow unchecked. (Stephens)

**Container-Grown Herbs**

Most herbs can be successfully grown in containers attractively arranged outdoors along borders of drives, walk, and patio or on porch and balcony. Hanging baskets are especially suitable for herbs. A few can be grown fairly well indoors with special care. Attention must be given to providing plenty of sunlight. The culture of herbs in containers, including soil preparation and fertilizing, is similar to that for vegetables.

Below are a few container-grown herbs, grown at the FAMU Research and Extension Center in Quincy, Florida.

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**Garlic, Turkey, Okra, and Potato Soup**

**Ingredients:**
- 2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 medium onions
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 pack of turkey ground meat
- 10 okra
- Kosher salt
- garlic salt
- Cracked black pepper
- 2 fresh potatoes
- 2 fresh tomatoes

**Directions:**
1. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a small pot add chopped onions and chopped potatoes cook till onions are tender then set aside.

2. Add all other ingredients chopped tomatoes, okra, salt, pepper and chopped garlic bring to a boil for 50 minutes medium heat. Then add ground turkey to a pot, season meat with garlic powder, salt, pepper, cook till meat is brown. Once meat is done add tomatoes mixture, then potatoes mixture cook for another 20 minutes. Serves 5-6. Enjoy.
Striped Bass with Tomatoes, Corn and Basil

Ingredients
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 striped bass fillets, skin on (about 5 ounces each)
- Coarse salt and ground pepper
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 jalapeno/serrano pepper (ribs and seeds removed, very thinly sliced)
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 2 ears of corn, husks and silk removed, kernels scraped off
- 6 ounces (1 generous cup) cherry tomatoes, quartered
- 1/2 cup chopped basil
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro

Directions:
1. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high. Season fish with salt and pepper, and sear, skin side down, for 4 minutes. With a wide metal spatula, turn fish over and cook 1 minute. Do not cook through. Remove from the pan; set aside.

2. Add onion to the pan, reduce heat to medium, and cook, stirring occasionally, until onion is tender and the edges begin to brown, about 4 minutes. Add garlic and cook 1 minute.

3. Add jalapeno, wine, 1/4 cup water, corn, tomatoes, and fish, skin side up. Cover and cook 4 minutes, or until the fish is just cooked through; transfer, skin side up, to four wide shallow bowls. Stir basil and cilantro into vegetable mixture and spoon around fish.

Most Common Perennials

Aloe—Wonderfully easy plant to grow with amazing skin-soothing and healing properties right off the plant. Grows with little care and needs only infrequent watering; must be brought in when the weather turns cold.

Catnip—Scrappgly looking plant with pretty pink flowers that attract bees. Mostly used as a recreational substance for pet cats but the leaves can be used sparingly in salads an a tea can also be made for its soothing and calming effects.

Chives—Charming and useful member of the onion and garlic family. Cheery flowers borne on low, cylindrical stems. Wonderful addition to baked potatoes and many other vegetables; medicinally have the same properties as onions and garlic.

Fennel—Close relative of Dill, this tall (6 foot) plant makes a nice, feathery back of border plant. It is drought-hardy and needs little care once established, and has a myriad of uses in the kitchen. Ecologically, it is a host for swallowtail butterflies, and as such should definitely be a part of any habitat-type situation.

Ginger—Grows well in sun or shade. The medical form of ginger historically was called "Jamaica ginger"; it was classified as a stimulant and carminative, and used frequently for dyspepsia and colic. It was also frequently employed to disguise the taste of medicines and has been found effective by multiple studies for treating nausea caused by seasickness, morning sickness and chemotherapy. (Note: Ginger was not found superior over a placebo for post-operative nausea.)

Lavender—It is versatile, relatively easy to grow and fits into almost any garden scheme; it does equally well in containers and in the ground. It has limited use in the kitchen, but is medicinally reported to have antiseptic, antibacterial, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory, anti convulsive, and anti-depressant properties, making it a valuable medicinal herb in addition to it’s place in the flower and fragrance gardens.

Lemon Balm—Easy to grow, attractive, low growing plant with a lemony minty taste that lends itself well to many drinks and dishes. Medicinally safe and mild, usually taken in a tea for the calming and overall health benefits. Great starter plant for beginning herb gardeners and a mainstay in culinary gardens.
**Lemon Verbena**—A deciduous perennial shrub that exudes a powerful lemony scent. The leaves are used to add a lemony flavor to fish and poultry dishes, vegetable marinades, salad dressings, jams, puddings and beverages, such as herbal teas. It will not survive frost, but in cold climates it may be brought inside. Be prepared, because it will lose its leaves, but keep it in a sunny window and water once a week to keep it from drying out. By spring it will have leaves again. Lemon verbena is best propagated by cuttings taken in summer.

**Mint**—The mints we are most familiar with are only a small part of a huge family of plants, many of which are quite invasive. Mint is an important source of menthol and flavoring in industry and also a delight in the home garden when grown in pots or otherwise contained in the garden. This rampant grower comes in a variety of flavors from strong to mild, and lends itself well to many uses in the kitchen. Medicinally, the plant is completely safe and is best known as a digestive aid.

**Oregano**—This is a nice plant with either low, sprawling growth or an upright habit, depending on the type. The hot, peppery taste lends itself to many foods beyond the obvious Italian dishes it is best known for. Oregano has not been extensively studied medicinally, but is safe for consumption and is reported to be effective in a variety of minor medical complaints, such as digestion, bloating, flatulence, coughs and headaches, to name a few.

**Rosemary**—Top of the line aromatherapy herb, that can grow into a 6 foot aromatic shrub or be contained to fit proportionately in any size container. Its very amenable to topiary techniques and a popular plant at Christmastime shaped like a Christmas tree and decorated.

**Sage**—Nice looking plant with gray-green leaves that are slightly hairy. Sage is very attractive to bees and as such a good addition to habitat-type situations. Lemony-camphor bitter taste that is well known in the kitchen as an ingredient in poultry stuffing, but also makes a nice addition to meats, poultry, and vegetables. Medicinally safe herb for a variety of medical conditions.

**St. John's Wort**—Short lived, three foot bushy growth type opportunistic plant that has naturalized virtually all over the world. Has bright yellow flowers that bloom in the heat of the summer while other plants are on the decline. Very easy culture, with bluish green leaves and a turpentine like smell. Bitter taste and of no real use in the kitchen, but well-known for its anti-depressant properties medicinally.

**Thyme**—There are multiple varieties, from tiny plants that will fit between brick pavers to cascading types that are perfect for containers or windowsills. In cooking, it blends well with dozens of foods and other herbs. Medicinally, it is believed to work as an antiseptic, antifungal, and anti-parasitic.

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**Grilled Chicken Stuffed with Basil and Tomato**

**Ingredients**

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 6 ounces each)
- 1/2 teaspoon coarse salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 12 fresh basil leaves, plus more for garnish
- 2 beefsteak tomatoes, cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices

**For the Stuffing**

1. Butterfly chicken breasts: Put halves on a cutting board, smooth sides down, with the pointed ends facing you. Starting on one long side, cut breasts almost in half horizontally (stop about 1/2 inch before reaching the opposite side). Open cut breasts like a book. Sprinkle each piece all over with 1/8 teaspoon salt; season with pepper. Transfer to a plate, and coat both sides with garlic and oil. Let stand 30 minutes.

2. Heat a grill or grill pan until medium-hot. Place 3 basil leaves on the bottom half of each opened chicken breast; top each with 2 slices tomato. Fold over other half of chicken breast, and secure with two toothpicks or short skewers.

3. Grill chicken breasts, turning once, until golden brown on both sides and no longer pink in the center, about 15 minutes. Place on a clean serving platter; garnish with basil. If desired, remove toothpicks or skewers before serving.
Most Common Annuals

**Basil**—Popular, attractive plant with many color variations. No herb garden is complete without it. Excellent in salads and as a garnish. Medicinally used mainly for its stomach soothing qualities.

**Dill**—Popular garden herb with feathery silver green leaves. Nice addition to the herb garden. Used as a flavoring for many dishes and in pickling. Not a major medicinal herb, but often used for its stomach—soothing qualities.

**Garlic**—Onion like plant with beautiful flowers. Well known in cooking. Medicinally important herb that is completely safe. Widely available in many forms.
Herbs: The Past, Present and Future

Herbs have been used for food, medicine, healing, and beautification and as a source of poison. Because of this, they have a certain mystic about them that was not viewed in a positive way. Many early Christians regard herb use as paganism, so many early writings about herbs were maliciously destroyed.

Many plants have the capability to produce a wide variation of chemical compounds that are used to perform important biological functions. Today many pharmaceutical companies are becoming aware of the fact that many herbs can be made into effective medicines so more and more there is rebirth in herbal consumption. Herbal medicines do not vary much from conventional drugs in the way how they work but one of the most satisfying properties of herbal medicines is that they produce little or no side effects. It should come as no surprise that many of the pharmaceuticals that are currently available to your physicians have a long history of use as herbal remedies, including aspirin, digitalis, quinine, and opium.

In Asia and Africa herbal medicines is used by the masses for primary health care. This is not so in the US but has become gradually more important in recent years as scientific evidence about the effectiveness of herbal medicine has become more widely available.

Trend

By 2015, the international herb supplement and remedies market is expected to reach $93 billion, according to a report by San Jose, California-based Global Industry Analysts, Inc. Besides the increasing numbers of people discovering the health benefits of botanicals, many are also seeking to cut costs. Many of us are trying to save on medical expenses by staying healthy, and the costs are not just monetary. Conventional healthcare is costly. Lack of health care can result in a depressed quality of life. According to the World Health Organization, by 2030 almost 24 million people will die from cardiovascular diseases. As a result, herbs that are associated with heart health can become in great demand.

Herbs That Heal

(Finding Cures to Common Ailments in Your Backyard)

1. **St. John’s Wort**—The flowering tops are harvested after they begin to bloom and prepared with alcohol, and with oil, to make two of the most useful remedies in my first aid kit. Tincture of St. John’s wort not only lends one a sunny disposition, it reliably relieves muscle aches, is a powerful antiviral, and is my first choice treatment for those with shingles, sciatica, back pain, headaches and migraines.

2. **Dandelion**— You can use any part of the dandelion the root, the leaves, the flowers, even the flowers stalk to make a tincture or medicinal vinegar which strengthens the liver. Taken before meals, dandelion increases the production of hydrochloric acid in the stomach, thus increasing bio availability of man nutrients. The fresh or cooked green leaves are loaded with carotenes, those anti-cancer, anti-heart disease helpers.

3. **Thyme**— Is one of the important essential oils in thyme, found to have antiseptic, anti-fungal characteristics. It is the main active ingredient in various mouthwashes; oil of thyme was used to medicate bandages and can also be found as the active ingredient in some all-natural, alcohol-free hand sanitizers

4. **Rosemary**—. Use for digestive upset and to ease headaches and migraines. It’s also used to treat menstrual disorders, externally; it is used to speed healing in wounds and to treat eczema. Use in blood pressure problems, and rheumatism. The essential rosemary oil is a main ingredient in the industry of cosmetic products because of its analgesic, aromatizing, anti-inflammatory, peripheral blood circulation stimulating, antimicrobial and hair fall preventing action.
Herbs To The Rescue

These sprigs and leaves can do far more than just spice up your food, they can also enhance brain performance, mood, and energy.

**SNIFF IT**

*Rosemary*

Researchers found that cognitive performance improves when a compound in the herb’s oil is absorbed into blood. So put a few drops of rosemary essential oil into an aroma diffuser.

**EAT IT**

*Lavender*

Taking a daily supplement containing the plant’s oil may reduce anxiety and improve sleep, research has shown.

**CHEW IT**

*Mint*

In a 2012 study, researchers found that chewing spearmint gum can reduce daytime sleepiness, without the jitteriness caused by coffee.

Storing Fresh Herbs

The longer herbs are stored, the less appealing and flavorful they become. If you buy herbs a few days before you will use them, it is important to refrigerate the herbs properly to conserve their color and flavor. Here are a few tips:

♦ Make sure any ties or rubber bands are removed from the herbs bundles before storing
♦ Throw away leaves that are discolored or limp
♦ Cut the stems, diagonally as if you were cutting flower stems. Place the newly cut stems in a jar, vase, or tall glass with one to two inches of water
♦ Cover the herbs with a plastic bag, leaving space for air to circulate

Another way to store herbs is to simply place them in an open or only partly closed plastic bag or container. Whichever method you choose, be careful to avoid crushing your herbs. Also, store your herbs in the warmest part of your refrigerator to avoid the possibility of freezing.

If you don’t plan on using the herbs within a week of purchase, it may be best to freeze them. You can follow these easy steps for freezing fresh herbs from the National Center for Home Food Preservation:

♦ Wash, drain, and pat dry with paper towels
♦ Wrap a few sprigs or leaves in freezer wrap and place in a freezer bag.
♦ Seal and freeze.

Make sure to label the freezer bag with the name of the herb and the date. Fresh herbs tend to lose their color and become wilted during freezing, causing all herbs to look the same. Herbs that have been frozen are generally used in cooked meals rather than as a garnish because of their appearance.
Long stem bushy herbs can be kept fresh for a while if they are placed in a vase with water and treated just like a bouquet of flowers. Change the water daily and trim rotting parts from the bottom of the stems this way they will keep fresh just as long as your flowers would, while providing a wonderful aroma for your house. You can use leaves and sprigs as needed. This method of storing will not last as long as freezing but they will certainly stay flaccid.

Short stem bushy herbs like rosemary, thyme and chives may be dried and wrapped in paper towel and placed in an open plastic bag then stored in the refrigerator. Before storage make sure all visible moisture is removed.

Another effective way to freeze herbs is to chop them, put them in ice cube trays, cover with water, and freeze. The ice around them seal out air and helps preserve their flavor and aroma. Thaw as many cubes as needed for your next dish.

### Spice Up Your Life

**NOTE:** Substitute one teaspoon of dried herbs for one tablespoon of fresh herbs, which is a one-to-three ratio. Let your taste buds be your guide.

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<th>Herbs/Spices</th>
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