



Food Safety Facts

A Fact Sheet for People Who Prepare Food

Herbal Vinegars

Bulletin #4092

Herbal vinegars can be used to flavor salad dressings, cooked and fresh vegetables, fruit, and fish or poultry salads. They also may be used in marinades or basting liquids for meat soups and stews, scrambled or poached eggs, and in stir-fries.

Preparing Herbal Vinegar

Fresh herbs are best picked in late morning after dew has dried. Wash the herbs gently, but thoroughly. Lay them out on towels and blot dry. Pack herbs in a sterilized 1-gallon glass jar. Estimate at least 2 cups of firmly packed herbs for each gallon of prepared vinegar. Heat commercially purchased white distilled vinegar (5 percent acetic acid) to near boiling and pour over the herbs. Weight the herbs below the surface of the vinegar using a small plate or glass jar (filled with water if necessary). Cover the herbal vinegar with a glass lid, waxed paper or plastic wrap, then with a regular jar lid. Let the vinegar steep for three weeks. The mixture may steep safely unrefrigerated. Taste the vinegar to test its flavor. When it's strong enough, strain out and throw away the herbs. Pour the flavored vinegar through a coffee filter into a clean, sterilized jar or bottle. Process in hot water bath for 10 to 15 minutes.

To ensure full flavored vinegar, it is important to use the appropriate part

of the herb in your preparation. Here are some helpful tips:

- **Green Sweet Basil:** use the whole leaves and stems (if not too woody).
- **Opal Basil or Purple Ruffles Basil:** use the whole leaves and stems. This makes an incredibly beautiful, bright pink vinegar.
- **Tarragon (French):** use the leaves and tender stems.
- **Dill-Garlic:** use leaves and seeds of dill and 4 or 5 whole bulbs of garlic, which have been peeled, separated into cloves and crushed for one gallon of vinegar.
- **Chive Blossoms:** use the pink-lavender colored blossoms only. The vinegar will become a beautiful pale mauve color with a very onion flavor.
- **Thyme:** use the leaves and tender new stems.
- **Mint:** use the leaves and tender stems.
- **Dill:** use the leaves and seeds.
- **Mixed Herbal Vinegar:** Add 2 cups (total) firmly packed green basil leaves, thyme and sweet marjoram; Greek or true oregano; 3 or 4 peeled crushed cloves of garlic (Do not use whole cloves); 10 whole peppercorns; and 1 dried hot cayenne pepper or 1 teaspoon dried hot pepper flakes.

How to Use Common Herbal Vinegars

HERBAL VINEGAR	USE
Basil	Stir-fried asparagus; tomato salad; tomato soup; “overnight pickles” or marinated slices of carrot, cucumber, squash, green pepper; salad greens.
Blackberry	Basting for chicken; add to mayonnaise as dip for fruits and vegetables; add to yogurt for fruit salad; add to fruit punch or pie filling; steamed puddings.
Chive Blossom	Wherever onion flavor is desired: egg salad, cooked broccoli or Brussels sprouts, marinades.
Dill	Cooked beets or cabbage; three-bean salad; coleslaw; potato salad; poaching eggs or fish; cucumber salad.
Fennel Seed	Avocado, grapefruit, and mushroom salad.
Floral	Fruit or cream dishes; fruit salads; green salads; (flowers to use: violets, carnations, elderberries, roses, or lavender)
Garlic	Green salads; vegetable salads; spinach; marinade for sauerbraten
Lemon Thyme	Mayonnaise; fish and fish salad; stir-fry vegetables such as asparagus, broccoli, zucchini, pea pods.
Mint	Stir into mayonnaise or whipped cream for fruit salads; sauce for lamb; fruit gelatin; fruit punch.
Oregano	Scrambled eggs; salads; pizza.
Rosemary	Pork or lamb marinade; tomato and cucumber salad; orange and onion salad; fried potatoes; fruits.
Tarragon	Chicken, crabmeat, and tuna salads; vegetable juice cocktail; chicken gravy; hollandaise and béarnaise sauces; peas and onions combined; green salad.
Tarragon and Garlic	Robust salads like kidney bean or chefs (use red wine vinegar).

REFERENCES:

Putting Food By, by Janet Greene, Ruth Hertzberg and Petrice Vaughan, Stephen Greene Press, Lexington, MA, 1988.

The Vinegar Book, 3rd Edition, by Emily Thacker, Tresco Publishers, Canton, OH, 1994.

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