



BASIC CULINARY HERB RECIPES

by Peggy Riccio

Herbal Vinegar

Wash one cup of herbs, allow to air dry. Pack leaves (can use stems too) in quart glass jar with wooden spoon. Fill with 3 to 3½ cups vinegar to one inch from top. The vinegar should be 5% acidity and best types of vinegar are white or red wine vinegar, rice wine vinegar, or apple cider vinegar. Push down with spoon and bruise leaves. If a metal lid, first cover with plastic wrap, if plastic lid, just close. Store in dark place for 4 to 6 weeks, shaking every few days. Taste to see if too strong, add more vinegar, or too weak, add more herb. When done, strain leaves out and pour liquid into clean bottles and add a sprig of fresh herb for decoration. Label.

Butter

Wash herbs, let dry. Take a stick of unsalted butter out of the fridge, put in bowl, and let come to room temperature so is soft. Add 2 to 3 tablespoons of the chopped herb, do this to taste. Depending on the leaf, may have to cut into small pieces. Can put in a container to keep in fridge for 2 weeks or roll into plastic wrap like a log and freeze for up to 6 months.

Syrup

Put one cup of water and one cup of sugar in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer. When sugar dissolves, turn of heat, add large handful of herb leaves. Bruise with a wooden spoon by smashing against side of pot. Cover and let sit for 30 minutes. When cool, strain leaves out and pour syrup in glass jar and store in fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Pesto

Pulverize in the blender 2 cups washed fresh basil, 4 cloves of garlic (chopped), and ½ cup olive oil until pasty. Add ¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese, blend again. Can freeze in plastic ice cube trays or flat in plastic bags. Try this with other green herbs like cilantro and parsley.

Marinade for Meat

Depending on the amount of meat can change quantities but the ratio is ¼ cup of olive oil, 1 tablespoon of vinegar like a wine vinegar, ¼ cup water, a dash of salt (like soy sauce), a dash of sugar (honey or brown sugar) and about a cup of fresh herb leaves (tear leaves apart if large). Marinade meat in this mixture for at least 30 minutes. Drain and cook meat.

Herb Paste for Preserving Herbs in the Freezer

Can use this as a frozen base for pesto and then add the fresh garlic and Parmesan cheese to the thawed paste. Clean herbs but make sure they are completely dry as water and oil do not mix. Blend in the food processor 4 cups of herb leaves to ¼ to ⅓ cup extra virgin olive oil to make a paste. Freeze in bags or plastic ice cube trays. There should be some texture to herb so is a paste and not pureed like liquid. Good with savory herbs such as basil, parsley, and cilantro. If using a "sweet" herb like mints, may want to try sunflower seed oil instead.