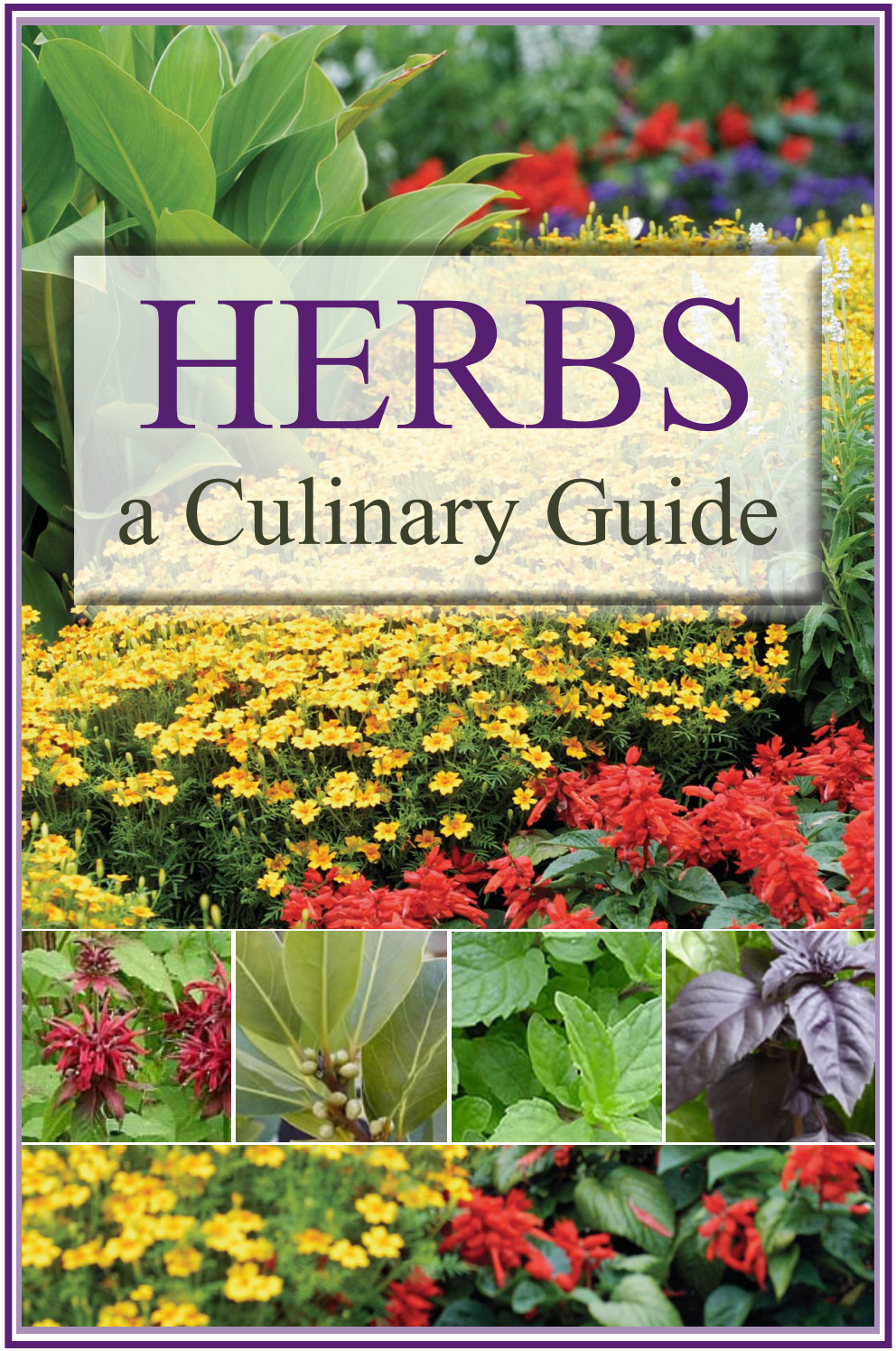
Walt Helmick
Commissioner of Agriculture



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Arugula

Arugula is technically known as a salad green or salad herb. Add to lettuce, tomatoes and any other mixed baby salad greens, and create new and exciting taste sensations.

You can usually find arugula in the fresh produce section in your health food store or at larger supermarkets. Like most salad greens, arugula is very low in calories and is also high in Vitamins A and C.

Arugula is also known as rocket, roquette, rugula and rucola, and is very popular in Italian cuisine.

Rinse the leaves in cool water; dry on paper towel and store in a zip lock bag. Best if used within two days.

Its leaves have a unique, peppery sweet tang, adding pizzazz even to the blandest salads. Although arugula provides a flavor impact, it does not have an aftertaste.

Anise (aniseed)

Anise is known for its flavor, which resembles liquorice, fennel and tarragon. Anise is sweet and very aromatic, distinguished by its licorice-like flavor. The seeds, whole or ground, are used in a wide variety of regional and ethnic confectioneries, including Greek stuffed vine leaves (dolma), British aniseed balls, and Italian pizzelle. It is a key ingredient in Mexican “atole de anís” or champurrado, which is similar to hot chocolate, and can be taken as a digestive after meals in India.

Basil

One of the most popular culinary herbs is sweet basil. The best flavor of purple basil comes from the Red Rubin variety. Especially good in Thai dishes is the Thai basil whose leaves have a spicy aniseed aroma with hints of mint and citrus. All can be found at most seed and plant nurseries. If you are unfamiliar with the nuances of different basils, your best bet is to start with the sweet basil which is most often used in pesto. Basil is available in fresh leaves and in dried leaves, which are also sometimes called rubbed. Fresh leaves may be stored in a cool place or in the refrigerator for a very short time.

Also indispensable for many Mediterranean dishes, the fresh leaf has a sweet, clove-like spiciness and is excellent with tomato dishes. Its flavor is strong enough to stand up to the pungency of garlic, so it is often paired together like in pesto.

If you have an herb garden with an excess of basil, you can dry the leaves and store them in a cool dry, dark place. Dried basil will retain its flavor for six months.

Add dried herbs at the beginning and during cooking. Add fresh herbs only at

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Notes

the end of cooking or upon serving.

Many species of the basil herb exist, but the most popular is sweet basil. Basil is considered one of the most important and highly used herbs in the culinary world and is popular in the cooking of many types of cuisine.

The strong, clove like flavor is essential to many Italian recipes and it is paired most often with tomatoes. Basil is primarily used in sauces, pizzas, salads and pasta dishes. It is also the main ingredient used in pesto.

Bay Leaf

Also know as sweet bay, sweet laurel, bay laurel and laurel leaf. Bay leaf should be stored in a cool, dry place and away from bright light, heat and moisture. Available fresh, dried whole leaves or ground dried leaves. Bay leaf is probably the one herb that most cooks prefer using dried than fresh.

Add a bay leaf or two to marinades, stock, pâtés, stews, stuffings and curries. When poaching fish, add a bay leaf to the water. Store with rice in a tight fitting jar and the leaf will impart its flavor to the rice when cooked.

Bay leaves greatly improve flavor if you are cutting down on salt. Try adding a leaf or two when you boil potatoes to replace salt. Always remember to remove the whole leaf after cooking in any dish.

Fragrant bay leaves are a basic ingredient of bouquet garni, but they have other wonderful uses. Bay leaves may be added to many fish dishes, particularly salmon, custards, stews, rice dishes and especially soups.

Homemade chicken soup would not be homemade without a bay leaf or two. Don't worry about using the fresh herb, the dried version is usually all that is needed. However, overuse of this herb can make a dish bitter.

Remember to always add leaves at the start of cooking and remove before serving.

Bergamot or Bee Balm

Although limited in its culinary uses, bergamot imparts a wonderful citrus-like flavor and fragrance that complements fruits, summer beverages and teas. At one time Native Americans used it to season and preserve meats and it became popular as a substitute for tea in New England after the Boston Tea Party in 1773.

The flowers make an attractive garnish and can be crystallized. It is said that a western species, *M. menthaefolia*, can be used like oregano and the spicy flowers can be added to chili and salsa.

A Spanish botanist, Dr. Nicholas Monardes, likely came to the name "bergamot" because of its fragrance which is similar to the small, bitter Italian bergamot orange. Bergamot oil, which is used in authentic Earl Grey tea, is extracted from this plant.

The flowers maybe scattered in salads and the leaves infused by simmering for 10 minutes in an enamel saucepan for greater flavor. Put fresh leaves into China tea for an Earl Grey

flavor or into wine cups and lemonade. Used for jams, jellies and bergamot milk (made by pouring 1 cup boiling milk over 1 tablespoon dried or 3 tablespoons shredded leaves, steep for 5 - 7 minutes, strain and serve) but add sparingly to salads, stuffings and pork.

Borage

Borage is a culinary herb, mostly popular in Central Europe. Its light cucumber fragrance is usually suitable for salads prepared from raw vegetables. Sometimes borage is used to make pureed soups.

Borage is a favorite herb for flavoring summer drinks, usually fruit or wine cups. The blue and occasionally pink delicate flowers are edible. The leaves can be eaten in salads and the flowers added as decoration. The blooms can also be candied.

The tender leaves which are thorny-like, and star-shaped flowers have a very mild cucumber flavor. The borage plant grows wild in Central and Eastern Europe.

Boiling, frying and simmering will quickly destroy most of this herb's characteristic fragrance.

Young flowers of borage can be pink and become blue only in the course of their individual flowering period.

Calendula or Marigold

One of the most versatile herbs, calendula is popular as a colorful garden flower and for its use in cosmetic and culinary recipes.

This hardy annual seems to flower continuously. Persians and Greeks garnished and flavored food with its golden petals. In Europe, it has long been used to flavor soups and stews and to color butter and cheese.

Adding this herb to rice will impart a pretty yellow color and give a light tangy flavor to the rice. Use in fish, meat soups, soft cheese, yogurt, butter, omelettes, milk dishes, cakes and sweet breads. You can also add one teaspoon of calendula petals to fish and venison or garnish meat platters, paté and fruit salads. The leaves can be sprinkled in salads and stews.

Caraway

Caraway can be both an herb as well as a spice. The aromatic seeds come from a plant in the parsley family.

The caraway plant, native to Asia, produces a sickle shaped seed that gives rye bread its distinctive flavor. The spice is used in beef stews, pork dishes, soups, candies, and baked goods, especially bread.

The caraway plant grows up to 2 feet

Thyme

Fresh thyme can usually be found during the summer months, but dried thyme is available year round at most grocery stores. Dried thyme should be kept in an airtight container in a cool dry place for up to six months.

Fresh garden thyme is an herb that has thin grayish green leaves and a subtle lemon, yet minty aroma and taste. Thyme is used in a wide variety of cuisine, but is most closely associated with French cuisine.

It is often used in soups and sauces, with meat, poultry or fish. It is also a very important component of *herbes de Provence* and *bouquet garni*. Fresh thyme has the most flavor when it is used whole, with the stem.

Thyme is included in seasoning blends for poultry and stuffing and also commonly used in fish sauces, chowders, and soups. It goes well with lamb and veal as well as in eggs and croquettes. Often, thyme is paired with tomatoes.

Stevia

This herb, also known as sweet stevia, was once banned by the U.S. FDA in 1991, but 3 years later approved its sale as a dietary supplement. Stevia cannot be sold for use as a tabletop sweetener, which is considered a conventional food.

Stevia is an herb from a semitropical perennial shrub of the daisy family, native to the mountains of Brazil and Paraguay. This plant packs so much sweetness into its leaves that they can be used in place of sugar.

One dried leaf, ground, is 10 to 15 times sweeter than an equal amount of sugar, and powdered extracts made from the leaves are up to 300 times as sweet, without the calories (imagine that! No calories!). Plus it is a very attractive plant that pots well.

Nonetheless, people can buy stevia powder and use it as a sugar replacement at home. One fresh stevia leaf is enough to sweeten a cup of tea, coffee or a glass of lemonade. The leaves can be added to barbecue sauce, salad dressings, soups, and stews.

Tarragon

This herb is also known as French true tarragon and is native to Siberia. Fresh tarragon is only available during the summer and early fall months and should be refrigerated for up to a week. Keep dried or powdered tarragon in a cool, dry place.

Tarragon is an exceptional herb with a subtle and sophisticated flavor and is an essential herb in French cuisine. It's flavor is delicate and almost licorice or anise-like.

Tarragon, together with parsley, chervil, and chives make a traditional French blend, *Fines Herbes*. Tarragon is exceptional in egg dishes and with poached fish, mushrooms and other vegetables.

Tarragon is good with chicken and in salad dressings. It is often used in sauces like béarnaise and French cuisine. Tarragon is also often used to infuse vinegar and olive oils.

in height with feathery leaves and cream white flowers. It is the leaves of this plant that can be used in cooking or in salads. Their taste is very fresh with a sweet undertone much like parsley. The leaves should be cut during the growing season.

Caraway seeds may also enhance the flavor of many vegetables. They are good tossed with boiled and quartered new potatoes, cabbage or in sauerkraut. Caraway seed is also known as a mild digestive aid.

Chamomile

Chamomile is a common name for several daisy-like plants. These plants are best known for their ability to be made into a tea which is commonly used to help with sleep and is often served with either honey or lemon. Chamomile is the national flower of Russia and has been used as a dye to produce a green color.

Chamomile is available fresh, frozen, and freeze dried. Store dried chives in a cool, dry, dark place away from sunlight, heat and moisture and will keep for 6 months to 1 year.

Chives

Chives are a milder member of the onion family. This herb has many uses and can be added to potato salad, baked potatoes, soups, salads, omelets, dips, spreads, pastas and sauces.

Use it anywhere you want to add onion flavor without the harsh pungency of onion but is best if used fresh because the flavor is lost in drying.

Add fresh or dried chives at the end of cooking to preserve the flavor. However, once you taste fresh chives, you will know there is no comparison of flavor. Soon, you will probably want a fresh pot of chives on your windowsill, even if you have nothing else in your herb garden.

Chopped chives lift many foods above the ordinary. Sprinkel them on soups, salads, chicken, potatoes, cooked vegetables and egg dishes. Blend chopped chives with butter or cream cheese, yogurt, sauces and baked potatoes. Add toward the end of cooking or as a garnish.

Store fresh chives in a damp paper towel inside an airtight container in the refrigerator. You can also chop fresh chives and freeze them with water in ice cube trays to use later when needed.

Cilantro

Cilantro is also known as coriander plant, Chinese parsley, Yeun Sai and Japanese parsley. It is readily available fresh or dried in most grocery markets.

Cilantro is used in many cuisines around the world. Most notably it is used to enliven Mexican and South American food as well as as Thai and Vietnamese.

This is a multi-ethnic herb that is used in everything from delicate Asian spring rolls

to substantial Mexican dishes. Cilantro is the leaf part of the coriander plant. It's unique flavor is quite distinctive and can liven up even a simple chicken broth.

This herb has a faint overtone of anise and a somewhat delicate peppery taste.

Use cilantro in tacos, salsa, soups, stews, chicken and rice, salads, tomato based sauces and as a garnish, but remember to use sparingly.

The coriander seed can be used in tomato chutney, ratatouille, frankfurters and curries; also in apple pies, cakes, biscuits and marmalade. Whole seeds may also be added to soups, sauces and vegetable dishes. The seeds are often used in Middle Eastern, southern Asian, as well as Latin American cuisines. In India, both coriander seeds and leaves are extensively used in curries and spice mixes.

Dill is available in weed and seed, both fresh and dried. Store dried seeds and leaves in a cool, dry, dark place away from heat, light and moisture. Dill leaves will keep for six months and the seeds will keep indefinitely.

Fresh leaves can be kept in a plastic bag in the refrigerator or chop finely and mix with one tablespoon of water and freeze in ice cube trays. After the cubes are frozen, place in plastic zip-lock freezer bags and return to the freezer.

Dill or dill weed is an herb that produces clusters of small flowers from which dill seeds are gathered and dill weed is obtained from the thin, feathery leaves. The light aroma of dill faintly resembles licorice.

This herb is good in soups, omelets, seafood dishes, herring, salmon, potato salads, and steamed vegetables. Dill seed is used in breads, pickling, cabbage dishes, stews, rice and cooked root vegetables.

Dill has a totally unique, spicy green taste. You can add whole seeds to potato salad, pickles, bean soups and salmon dishes. Ground seeds can flavor herb butter, mayonnaise and mustard. The leaves go well with fish, cream cheese and cucumber.

Fennel is also known as finocchio, common fennel, sweet fennel, wild fennel and sweet cumin. This herb should be stored in a cool, dry, dark place away from heat, light and moisture. The seeds will stay fresh for 2 years. Ground fennel will keep for 6 months to 1 year if stored properly.

Fennel yields an herb and a spice and the stems and leaves are all edible. The spice comes from the dried seeds, the herb comes from the leaves and the stalk and root are the vegetable.

Fennel is native to the Mediterranean and is one of our oldest cultivated plants. Roman warriors took fennel to keep in good health while their ladies ate it to prevent obesity.

The seed is similar to anise seed, but sweeter and milder. It pairs well with fish, but Italians also like to add it to sauces, meats & sausages. If you are familiar with the taste, it is probably from having it in commercially prepared sausages.

You can add the seeds to sauces, breads, savory crackers and water

lovely plant, all distinctly scented with enticing names such as "Fringed Apple", "Peppermint Lace", "Prince of Orange" and "Rober's Lemon Rose."

Infusing the leaves' oils in food is the most successful way to flavor foods with a geranium's scent, and one of the easiest ways to do this is with a simple syrup. Measure equal parts granulated sugar and water in a saucepan and, without stirring, place on high heat until the sugar dissolves. Reduce temperature and continue to simmer until mixture thickens, about 10 minutes. Remove pan from heat and add 1 cup of cleaned geranium leaves. Allow leaves to steep for up to an hour, remove leaves, and store syrup covered in the refrigerator for up to two weeks

Flavoring sugars with scented geranium leaves is another way to cook with their subtle scent. Add cleaned and dried nutmeg, chocolate mint or ginger leaves to light brown muscovado sugar. Cover and allow to sit for up to one week. Remove leaves and sprinkle flavored sugar on top of baked goods before they go in the oven. Rose-scented leaves can be treated the same way with granulated sugar and used to sweeten whipping cream and hot tea.

Sorrel is a green leaf vegetable native to Europe. It is also called common sorrel or spinach dock, and is actually considered less a vegetable and more an herb in some cultures. In appearance sorrel greatly resembles spinach and in taste it can range from comparable to the kiwifruit in young leaves, to a more acidic tasting older leaf. As sorrel ages it tends to grow more acidic due to the presence of oxalic acid, which actually gets stronger and tastes more prominent.

Young sorrel may be harvested to use in salads, soups or stews. If you are planning on using sorrel in salads, it's a good idea to stick with small tender leaves that have the fruitier and less acidic taste. Young sorrel leaves are also excellent when lightly cooked, similar to the taste of cooked chard or spinach. For soups and stews, older sorrel can be used because it adds tang and flavor to the dish.

Throughout the Caribbean you can find deep red sorrel, which is not a close relative to European sorrel. Unlike European sorrel, it is an annual plant instead of a perennial. It does have a similar acidic taste and is favored in drinks, jellies, and sometimes in tarts.

Sage

Sage is available in fresh or dried leaves whole, crumbled (rubbed) or ground. Fresh sage can be refrigerated for about a week, while dried should be kept in an airtight container and stored in a cool dry place.

Sage is an herb from an evergreen shrub in the mint family. Fresh sage sprigs have long, narrow grayish green leaves and, although it is a member of the mint family, it has a musty yet smoky aroma.

Sage enhances pork, lamb, meats, and sausages. Chopped leaves flavor salads, pickles, and cheese. Crumble leaves for full fragrance. Remember to use ground sage sparingly as foods absorb its flavor more quickly.

Sage is a wonderful flavor enhancement for seafood, vegetables, stuffing, and savory breads. Try rubbing sage, cracked pepper, and garlic into pork tenderloin or chops before cooking.

Savory

Savory is available in fresh or dried leaves. Tender fresh leaves can be added to salads, used as a garnish or bottled in vinegar. Once dried and chopped, it is an integral part of herb mixtures like Herbes de Provence.

There are two types of savory – winter and summer. The two look much the same, but winter is a bit more pungent. Savory smells and tastes like mint and rosemary chopped together.

This herb is nicknamed the bean herb and is typically used in soups, beans and as a meat and poultry seasoning. Savory tastes slightly warm and sharp. It is a very strong herb and should be used sparingly.

Most commonly used as a seasoning for green vegetables, savory's special affinity is for beans. Use summer savory, with its more delicate flavor, for tender baby green beans, and winter savory to enhance a whole medley of dried beans and lentils.

Scented Geraniums

It's easy to see why the Victorians were so fond of scented geraniums. Bursting with the scents of citrus, rose, spice or mint, these native South African plants are easily grown inside and offer an olfactory treat to winter-weary gardeners. They also lend themselves well to culinary uses, such as herbal scented sugars.

Scented geraniums were so named in the 1600s and have been mistakenly referred to since. Part of the Geraniaceae family, scented geraniums are actually pelargoniums and are grown for their scented leaves, not delicate flowers. There are more than 200 varieties of this

for poaching fish; stuff the leaves into oily fish like mackerel or sprinkle finely chopped stems and leaves on salads and cooked vegetables. It can also be added to soups and stuffings.

Garden Cress

Garden cress is a fast-growing, edible plant which is related to watercress and mustard and also shares their peppery, tangy flavor and aroma. In some regions garden cress is known as garden pepper cress, pepper grass or pepperwort.

This herb is a perennial plant, and most typically used as a salad herb or as a leaf vegetable. Its leaves develop a hotter flavor as the plant matures.

Cress is commonly used in English sandwiches such as egg and cress sandwiches (made with shelled and crushed boiled eggs, mayonnaise, salt and some cress cuttings). Cress can be purchased live in most UK supermarkets.

Cress is best added fresh to recipes and works well with egg dishes, salads and sandwiches. Try roast beef, some sour cream, creamy horseradish sauce and cress on good bread for a wonderful treat.

Garlic Chives

Garlic chives are hardy perennials and can be easily grown in any herb garden. The foliage is flat rather than hollow, likes regular chives. They grow to about 12 inches high and the flower stalks grow up to 30 inches high. The stalks are topped with a greenish-white flower head that is quite showy.

Garlic chives can be used like regular chives when you want to add a subtle garlic flavor in uncooked dishes where raw regular garlic would be overwhelming or too spicy. This herb is a great replacement for garlic salts and powdered garlic.

Garlic chives are particularly good in Oriental dishes especially Oriental soups. Finely chopped blades are great added to stir-fry and egg dishes.

As with regular chives, garlic chives are harvested by shearing the leaves at ground level. Older leaves become coarse, so shear the plants occasionally even if you have no immediate use for the herb. This will encourage the plants to produce the desirable tender shoots.

Garlic chives do make a very small bulb that can be used like a small green onion. Harvest bulbs before the flower opens, while it is just a bud. Be sure to leave some bulbs in the ground so they will continue to make more.

Horseradish

Originally native to Eastern Europe, this herb now grows abundantly in the U.S. as well. Grated bottled and creamed horseradish is available, as well as a dried form, which must be reconstituted before using.

Horseradish is an ancient herb, one of the five bitter herbs of the Jewish Passover festival and is grown mainly for its pungent spicy roots.

Fresh horseradish is in many supermarkets. Choose roots that are firm with no sign of blemishes or withering. The roots should be peeled and grated before using and stored in the refrigerator in plastic bags.

This herb is most often grated and used in sauces or as a condiment with fish or meat. Mix horseradish with sour cream for a tasty sauce for brisket or roast beef or use as a sandwich spread.

Hops

The hops plant was mentioned by the Roman writer Pliny in the first century A.D. as a popular garden plant and vegetable whose young spring shoots were sold in markets and eaten like asparagus.

By the ninth century, the hops plant was used in brewing throughout most of Europe for its clearing, flavoring and preserving qualities.

Today most home garden hops growers are cultivating them because they make their own home brew. However like the early Romans, the stems can still be steamed and eaten like asparagus.

Hops are the flowers used to season beer. Bittering hops, meaning adding hops early on in the boil process, provide bitterness to the beer to balance the sweetness of the malt. Hops added at the end of the boil, referred to as finishing hops, add flavor and aroma to the beer. Adding hops directly to the fermenter, or dry hopping, lends additional hop aroma to the beer.

Hops also serve as a natural preservative, helping to prevent spoilage in beer. Hops come as either whole flowers or compressed pellets (think rabbit food). There are many varieties of hops available to home brewers, allowing for great diversity of flavors and aromas.

Different hops are used to brew different styles of beer. For example, cascade hops give American pale ales their distinct citrus quality, fuggles have an earthiness common in English-style ales, and saaz lends the spicy/herbal characteristic found in European Pilsners.

vegetables, roast beef, lamb, chicken and pork.

Generally used to season Mexican, Italian, Greek and Spanish dishes, oregano has a warm, aromatic scent and robust taste. It's uses include seasoning soups, stews, meat pies, pasta sauces and shellfish.

Parsley

Also known as curled or curly parsley, flat leaf parsley and Italian parsley, this herb is readily available in dried and fresh leaves. Store dried leaves in a cool, dry, dark place and store fresh in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Parsley is a great all around herb. It quickly adds a touch of color and texture to any recipe. The aroma and taste of parsley is very distinctive for a herb that is generally described as being mild and non obtrusive.

You can use fresh or dried parsley in any recipe and is especially good in omelets, scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, soups, pasta and vegetable dishes as well as sauces to go with fish, poultry, veal and pork. Fresh leaves can be used as garnish.

Parsley has a delicate favor that combines well with other herbs like basil, bay leaves, chives, dill weed, garlic, marjoram, mint, oregano and thyme.

Flat leaf or Italian parsley is used primarily in cooking because of its more robust flavor and curly parsley is used primarily for garnish. Make sure to add at the end of cooking for better flavor.

Rosemary

Rosemary is available in fresh leaves, dried whole leaves or dried ground. Store this herb in a cool, dry, dark place. Ground rosemary will keep for up to 6 months and the leaves for up to 1 year, if stored properly.

Rosemary is an herb of the mint family. It is a small evergreen shrub that is native to the Mediterranean and likes warm climates, but will flourish in nearly any climate. It is produced all over the world.

Rosemary's aromatic flavor blends well with garlic and thyme to season lamb roasts, meat stews, and marinades. Rosemary also enlivens lighter fish and poultry dishes, tomato sauces, and vegetables.

Dress fresh rosemary with steamed red potatoes and peas or a stir fried mixture of zucchini and summer squash. Rosemary has a tea like aroma and a piney flavor. Crush the leaves by hand or with a mortar and pestle before using.

Mint is good in soups, salads, sauces, plain meat, fish and poultry, stews, sweet or savory recipes, extremely good with chocolate or lemon based desserts. Add near the end of cooking for a better flavor.

Mustard

Mustard has been known since prehistoric times and has a plethora of uses. The Romans named this herb from mustus (the new wine they mixed with the seed) and ardens (for fiery).

The hot little black and brown mustard seeds are ground and mixed with water, vinegar or other liquids, and turned into a condiment also known as mustard. The seeds are pressed to make mustard oil, and the edible leaves can be eaten as mustard greens.

White mustard seeds are used in pickles as a strong preservative and in mayonnaise as an emulsifier.

The yellow, four petalled blooms of the plant that flower in midsummer are also edible and contain a mild mustard flavor. They can be sprinkled on sandwiches or tossed on salads.

The oval pointed dark green leaves have a pungent flavor and may be tossed in salads if young.

Nasturtium

Nasturtium has many varieties. It has round flat leaves with red, yellow or orange trumpet like flowers which appear from midsummer to mid-autumn.

Both the leaves and flower buds have a slightly peppery flavor reminiscent of watercress and are used to add bite to salads and sandwiches as well. Whole flowers make a stunningly beautiful and exotic garnish. The flowers may also be chopped and used to flavor butters, cream cheese and vinegar.

The unripe seed pods can be harvested and pickled with hot vinegar, to produce a condiment and garnish, sometimes used in place of capers, although the taste is strongly peppery.

There is also a species found in the Andes which is grown as a vegetable tuber crop.

Oregano

Oregano is also known as wild marjoram. It is the *O. vulgare* variety of the Origanum family. Oregano is available in fresh leaves from most grocery stores. This herb is also found dried in leaf form or ground. Store dry forms in a cool, dry, dark place.

Oregano is an herb that derives its name from two Greek words meaning “the joy of the mountain”.

This herb is a hardy member of the mint family that has been used for flavoring fish, meat and sauces since ancient times and goes well with

Hyssop

A pretty plant, hyssop is a perennial with dark, narrow leaves and spikes of flowers in late summer. The usual color is blue but both pink and white varieties are available.

The semi-evergreen leaves of hyssop have been used as a medicine since Old Testament times and hyssop tea is sometimes recommended to relieve bronchitis and catarrh.

These days it is the culinary value of the leaves which is more important. The flavor is strong and is usually described as sage-minty, licorice-minty or bittery-minty. Hyssop’s bitter, slightly minty flavor, brightens salads, pork, chicken soup, marinades, fruit soups, and sage stuffing. Both its leaves and flowers are edible, but they should not be used together because the flavor of the leaves overpowers that of the flowers.

Bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds love this plant, and this alone makes it a valuable addition to the herb garden.

The green-gray needle like leaves and spikes of fragrant purple-mauve flowers are known to almost everyone, but there are other varieties with green leaves and white, pink or dark purple flowers. Even if you don’t use it in cooking, hyssop makes a nice addition to any herb garden.

Lavender

Lavender is an incredibly versatile herb for cooking. In today’s upscale restaurants, fresh edible flowers are making a comeback as enhancements to both the flavor and appearance of food.

Both flower and leaf of this herb can be used fresh, and both buds and stems can be used dried. Lavender is a member of the mint family and is close to rosemary, sage and thyme. It is best used with fennel, oregano, rosemary, thyme, sage and savory.

English lavender has the sweetest fragrance of all the lavenders and is the one most commonly used in cooking. Lavender has a sweet, floral flavor, with lemon and citrus notes. The potency of the lavender flowers increases with drying. In cooking, use ⅓ the quantity of dried flowers to fresh. Because of the strong flavor of lavender, a little goes a long way.

Lemon Balm

Lemon balm is a lemon scented herb of the mint family. For a tasty general seasoning, use it in tandem with tarragon. Try adding some freshly minced leaves to lamb or fish marinades for the grill.

The taste of the leaves adds the perfect tangy note to fruit salads. Freshly steamed vegetables come alive when tossed with a chiffonade of lemon balm and a touch of cracked pepper.

Although lemon balm dries quickly and easily, it will not be as fragrant dried as it is fresh. It can be dried outside in partial shade but will brown quickly if there is any night moisture. When dry, store in tightly closed containers.

When using whole leaves be sure to handle with care, as they tend to bruise and turn black. Mix lemon balm with other fresh herbs for homemade herb vinegar. or freeze some leaves in ice cubes to serve in lemonade.

Lemongrass

Lemongrass is a tall perennial grass with common names such as lemon grass, barbed wire grass, silky heads, citronella grass, fever grass or Hieba Luisa amongst many others.

Lemongrass is widely used as a herb in Asian (particularly Vietnamese, Hmong, Khmer, Thai, Lao, Malaysian, Indonesian, Philippine, Sri Lankan) and Caribbean cooking. It has a citrus flavor and can be dried and powdered, or used fresh.

For soups and simmered dishes, cut the trimmed stalk at a very sharp angle into inch-long pieces, exposing its fragrant interior. Smash with the flat blade of a cleaver or heavy knife to bruise and release the aromatic oils before adding to these dishes.

For salads, cut with a sharp knife into very thin rounds, breaking up the fibers that run the length of the stalk. When slicing, if the outer layer seems fibrous, peel it off before proceeding. Such thinly sliced rounds of the inner stalk can be easily mixed with other salad ingredients for a refreshing burst of lemony herb flavor.

For curries, cut the stalk into thin rounds before pounding in a stone mortar to reduce to paste. Although lemongrass appears dry when you are slicing it, when crushed, you will see that it really is quite moist. Crushing breaks the juice sacs in the fibers and releases the aromatic oils that make lemongrass so special.

This herb is great for growing in window boxes and does well indoors in a sunny window.

Lemon Verbena

Chefs value this herb as a companion to citrus lemon because its flavor holds up in cooking and is great for fruit salads, jams, jellies, and candies.

If you like lemon, this is the herb for you! It has a very lemony taste without any bitterness. Originating from Central and South America, this herb was carried home by Spanish explorers in the seventeenth century. It's popularity quickly spread throughout Europe.

Sprinkle this herb over salads and vegetables for a wonderful lemony flavor, create flavor in stuffing for meat or poultry or stir it into cottage cheese. It also makes a refreshing tea in combination with mint or alone and is wonderful as a garnish for iced tea.

You can use this herb liberally when on a low salt diet. Also try combining lemon verbena with dried celery, ground peppercorns, lovage leaves or any mix of herbs and spices that taste well with lemon as a mild seasoning mixture.

Lovage

Lovage is also known as love parsley, sea parsley, lavose, liveche, smallage, maggi plant and old English lovage. The grated fresh root of this herb can be cooked as a vegetable or used raw in salads, icings, syrups and some liqueurs.

Lovage is a hardy perennial herb, with ribbed stalks similar to celery with hollow stems that divide into branches near the top. It has yellow flowers and it's leaves are dark green. The Roots have a nutty favor.

Lovage has a strong taste and odor similar to celery and parsley. The leaves can be used fresh in salads, soups, stews, stir-fries, potato dishes, squash and has been used to make tea and wine.

Leafstalks can be eaten fresh or candied and hollow stems can be candied and used as straws in Bloody Marys. Lovage seeds can be used whole or ground in candies, cakes, meats, biscuits, sauces, cheeses, salad dressings, or pickled.

Marjoram

Marjoram is also known as sweet marjoram and knotted, pot or winter marjoram. It is available in dried leaves or ground. This herb should be stored in a cool, dry, dark place and will keep for six months to one year.

Marjoram is an herb that has a mild, sweet flavor similar to oregano (it is closely related and of the same family, Origanum) with perhaps a hint of balsam. It is said to be "the meat herb" but it compliments all foods except sweets.

While fresh marjoram is excellent with salads and mild flavored foods, it has the best taste and greatest pungency when dried. Marjoram has a slightly more delicate flavor than oregano.

Marjoram, because it is more delicate, should be added toward the end of cooking so its flavor is not lost. Marjoram goes well with pork and veal and complements stuffing for poultry, dumplings and herb scones or breads.

Mints

Also known as water mint and wild mint, this herb is available in fresh or dried leaves. Dried leaves will keep for 6 months to 1 year in a cool, dark, dry place.

Mint is an herb that comes in many varieties such as peppermint, spearmint, apple mint, lemon mint and even chocolate mint. Mint came to the New World with colonists, who used it in tea for medicinal purposes.

Mint is used for seasoning lamb, vegetable such as carrots, bell pepper, and tomatoes, in yogurt dressings, and breads. It is also used in the Middle East for salads, tabouli and marinated vegetables.