



Cousin Jennifer's Guide to DRYING HERBS from your garden

My cousin Jennifer M. is my go-to person for organic seeds, as well as any herb advice for my garden. Last year she hosted an "organic seed" exchange in her small North Dakota town as a way to promote organic gardening. She has introduced me to plants I didn't know existed. Here are her tips for drying herbs as well as making herbed butter to add to any cooking dish.

To dry herbs you can simply tie small bundles together then hang upside down out of the sun to dry. Most herbs can dry simply by stripping the leaves off the branches and laying them on cookie sheets with paper towel linings. Leave them either on your countertop or in the oven with the oven light on. They will dry out in a couple days. You will know when they are ready because they will crumble easily in your fingers. You can speed the process of drying by putting the leaves on parchment and placing on a cookie sheet in an oven on the lowest setting for 2 -4 hours with the door open. Keep watch because they could start to brown. Another yummy way to preserve herbs is simply to wash the leaves, pat dry then put in a glass bottle and pour olive oil over them. You can add pepper flakes or dried pods, garlic and other herbs. Let steep for a week before use. The oil should last about six weeks.

Making herbed butter from your dried herbs:

1. Dice the fresh herbs
2. Place some in an ice cube tray. *(NOTE: if you use a plastic tray, this tray is now designated for herbs because it will smell like herbs forever.)*
3. Pour warm melted butter or oil over the herbs. Let sit for an hour or two then place tray in large ziploc bag and put in freezer. The ziploc is to keep the butter from flavoring your freezer.
4. When you need a cube for cooking or spread, simply pop one out and thaw or put in your cooking pot.

I also like to dice peppers onions and then mix with herbs I place these in a mesh strainer and dip in boiling water to blanch just for a minute or so then let cool and place in small ziploc bags I add a little oil to the bag and then stick it in my freezer for easy chopped onion and herbs for hot dishes, soups, and more.

Thanks to Jennifer Alane Moldenhauer for these tips!