



Culinary Containers: Personalized Herb Pots

While herbs do well in the garden, tucked in amongst your flowers or in their own bed, there is a lot to be said about the convenience of having the herbs you use the most right at hand. Most of us have a tendency to cook a certain style or type of food more than others. Planting 4-5 of the herbs that complement that style in a large pot and locating it near the kitchen door or grill is an easy way to use fresh herbs more frequently. The more you use them, the better they'll grow!

Plant in a large 14" pot, using a container planting mix for good drainage. You can eliminate some soil (and weight) by inverting an empty pot in your container first, or by filling one-third full of Styrofoam peanuts. Fertilize in spring and again in July with an organic fertilizer for best flavor. Herbs prefer to be on the dry side, so they are easy to care for. Following are some suggested combinations and recipes as an example.

Grilling Herbs: Rosemary, Sage, Thyme, Lemon Verbena, Cilantro

When grilling, there are many ways to incorporate your herbs. Use them as skewers; soak a bundle in water and throw directly on the coals; lay them on the rack under your chicken or seafood; make sauce for finishing or dipping; wrap in foil with seafood or vegetables and place the packets on the rack. The following recipe is a traditional Argentinean condiment for grilled meats.

Chimichurri Sauce

- 1 cup (packed) fresh Italian parsley, 1/4 cup (packed) fresh cilantro
- 1/2 cup olive oil, 1/3 cup red wine vinegar
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled, 3/4 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin, 1/2 teaspoon salt

Puree all ingredients in processor. Transfer to bowl.
Cover and let stand at room temperature.

Seafood Herbs: Dill, Chives, Basil, Parsley, Fennel, Lemon Grass, Tarragon

The mild flavors of fish, shrimp, and scallops are easily enhanced by the fresh flavors of herbs. Sprinkled on after sautéing or grilling, steamed in a packet with wine and butter, or in a compound butter placed on top after broiling or grilling. Compound butters are great because they can be made ahead and frozen for an easy dinner solution.

Lemon Chive Butter

- 6 tablespoons chopped parsley, 3 tablespoons snipped chives
- 2 tablespoons snipped tarragon, 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- 2 cups softened unsalted butter, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, 1/2 teaspoon salt

Mince herbs with lemon zest in food processor, scraping frequently. Add butter, lemon juice, and salt mix well. Form butter into a log on parchment paper, roll up and freeze. Slice off "coins" to top fish or vegetables as needed.

Italian Herbs: Basil, Marjoram, Oregano, Parsley, Rosemary

If Italian is your favorite, tossing a handful of these flavors can transform a soup, salad or sauce. Pesto is a classic option; for something new, try these:

Herb and Wine Muffins

- 1 cup baking mix, 1 tablespoon sugar, 1/4 cup chopped green onions,
- 1 teaspoon each chopped basil, oregano, and marjoram, 1 egg, 1/2 cup milk,
- 1/4 cup softened butter, 4 ounces shredded Gruyere or Swiss cheese, 1/4 cup Sauvignon Blanc

Combine baking mix, sugar, onion and herbs in bowl, mix well. Beat egg lightly with milk and add with 2/3 of cheese, butter and wine, beat to blend. Spoon into greased muffin tins, sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 400 for 15 minutes. Makes 12.