

Some more herb preserving ideas....

## A Recipe for Pesto

*Freezing pesto makes for delicious pasta and pizza all winter long. Ice cube trays work great for pesto, too! Just make sure you have plenty of good, juicy garlic before you get started.*

1 large bunch basil

¼ cup parmesan cheese

¼ cup pinenuts

3 cloves garlic, finely minced

½ cup olive oil (or as much as is needed to achieve the right consistency)

Blend gradually in food processor, adding small amounts of each ingredient. Continue until all ingredients have been added and you have a fragrant paste. Put into ice cube trays, freeze and then put into freezer bags. Enjoy for the months ahead!

## Basil and Tomatoes in Oil

*If you're crazy about this herb-veggie combination, be sure to try this out!*

1 large bunch of basil

dehydrated tomatoes

Layer several dried tomatoes at the bottom of a clean mason jar. Cover them with whole basil leaves (cleaned, dried, with stems removed). Cover in olive oil. Add another tomato layer, followed by another layer of basil, until the jar is full. Be sure everything is completely covered with oil.

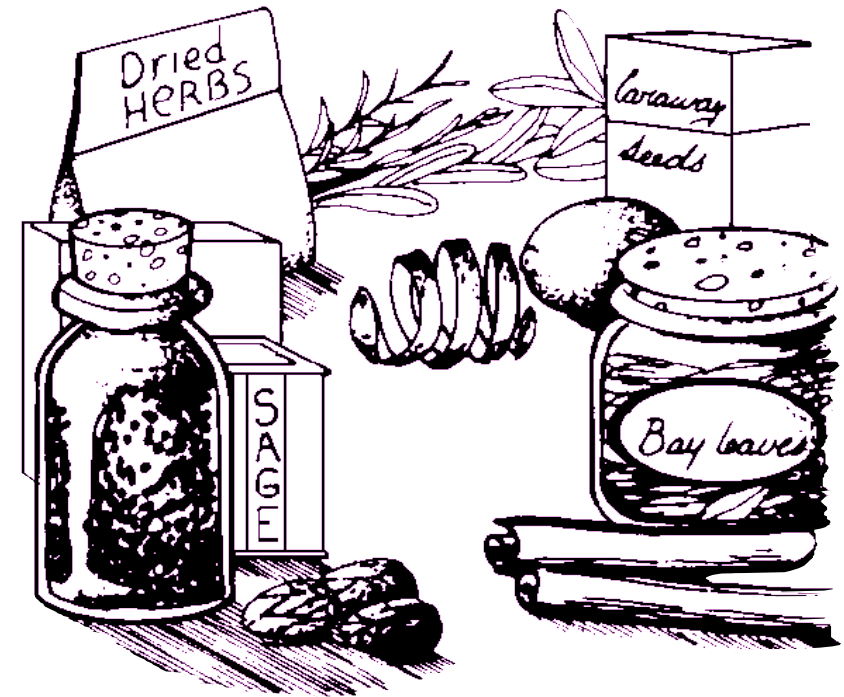
Put the lid on a place in your cupboard! The oil preserves the tomato and basil, while getting infused with their delicious flavours!

Use leaves, tomatoes and flavoured oil in all kinds of cooking throughout the winter!



**Preserving The Harvest**

## Keeping Herbs Year Round



*So – you find yourself with an excess of fresh herbs. Maybe you bought a giant bunch of parsley and don't want to use it all, or perhaps your backyard sage plant is extraordinarily productive this year. Whatever the reason, 'tis the season for parsley, sage and basil. If you choose to preserve your herbs, you will find that there are many methods you could choose. The best one for you depends on the particular herb you have, as well as what you have available in your home. Be sure to keep in mind your eating and cooking habits, too – be careful not to freeze four bags of dill if it's not something you use often (trust me, I've done it). Read on for details on some home herb preserving options.*

## The tie-and-bunch method

Most herbs can simply be bunched, tied together, and hung up in a dry, dark place. This method is easy, uses no energy, and results in great dried herbs. **Dryness, darkness, and steady air flow through the leaves** are the ideal conditions for drying herbs. Light will cause the herbs to lose flavour while drying.



**Perennial herbs dry well**, including sage, oregano, thyme, tarragon, lemon balm, summer savory, rosemary, and mint.

Basil, parsley, lovage, mint, and chives **do not dry well**.

1. **Tie herbs into small bunches.** Elastic bands work well for keeping the bunch together.
2. Attach each bunch to a cloths hanger and with cloths pin and **hang in a dry dark place**, like the inside of a closet. Alternately, tape some string across a hallway (the darker, the better) and hang each bunch from the string. If it's not very dark, put a small paper bag over each bunch and attach the bag with an elastic – thus creating your own artificial dark-room!
3. Check your herbs when you think of it; when the **leaves are dry and crumble** between your fingers, they are ready.
4. Remove any stems, but **leave leaves whole** for full flavour retention.
5. Stored in a mason jar or plastic container, dried herbs should keep for about a year.
6. When **substituting dry herbs in a recipe that calls for fresh ones**, use 1/4 to 1/3 the amount called for.

## Using a Dehydrator

Though this method requires some special equipment, and results in **delicious, flavourful dried herbs**. Dehydrators dry herbs much more quickly than air-drying, and therefore produce brightly-coloured, high quality dried herbs.

Basil, parsley, lovage, mint and other **herbs that have high water** content benefit from this method. Dehydrators dry these herbs quickly, avoiding opportunities for moulding, and stops them from turning black.

1. It's important to dry your herbs at the **lowest temperature possible**, as this will allow them to retain oils and stay flavourful longer.
2. **Remove stems** from herbs (especially from basil) and **place the leaves side-by-side** on the tray.
3. **Allow plenty of space for air** to move around the leaves (you may need to remove the tray above).
4. **Check frequently**, and turn off the dehydrator once the herbs crumble easily in your hands!
5. **Store whole or crumbled.**



## Freezing Herbs

These methods works especially well for herbs with a **high water content**, like chives, which can take longer to dry – and have been known to sometimes mould before drying completely.

## Freeze-drying – a simple, low work method

Dill, parsley and chives work particularly dry well by this method.

1. **Finely chop** your herbs.
2. Place them **in the freezer in a paper bag**.
3. After several days take them out of the freezer and **store them in an airtight container** – or just leave them in the freezer until you need them in your cooking.

## Freezing in butter or oil – making “Herb Butter”

This method takes a little more initial prep work, but results in a product that's easy to use – especially if you like making soups and stews in the winter.

1. Start by **finely chopping your herbs** (it's fun to mix different types together – anything from tarragon, to parsley, to rosemary).
2. Using a wooden spoon, **press them into some soft butter or mix with olive oil** (use about 1/4 of herbs for 1/2 cup of butter or oil).
3. **Fill ice cube trays** with the herbed butter.
4. Remove frozen cubes from the tray and **store frozen in a freezer bag**.
5. **Use cubes one at a time** to saute your onions and garlic when making a winter soup! Or melt herb butter is also great on steamed or roasted vegetables and on fish.