

Parsley, Sage, Rosemary & Thyme Camerota's Cupboard May, 2010

This is the season for fresh herbs either bought or home grown. Herbs are easy to grow, Place them in a container in the sun, water occasionally, and you'll be rewarded with plants that provide fragrance and flavor to food. Most are perennials that will reappear each spring. Many appear to have health benefits including cancer fighting antioxidants. This month, instead of several recipes, I've offered one and provided an abundance of information about herbs plus sources below, courtesy of AICR (American Institute for Cancer Research):

With fresh flavor and fragrance, green herbs can help you turn over a healthy new leaf this spring. Like all plant foods, they contain cancer-fighting phytochemicals that give them their unique qualities.

Herbs can add flavor without adding salt. That's in line with AICR's advice to limit the amount of salty and salt-cured foods you eat. Herbs and spices may also fight inflammation, which is related to cancer development. Researchers are finding antioxidants in herbs that may protect cells from damage that can lead to cancer.

But more studies are needed before isolated herbs and spices may be used safely to prevent or treat cancer and other diseases. In fact, since herbal and other supplements may interfere with medications, it's best to stick with foods and ask your doctor before taking herbal extracts or supplements for a medical condition.

Until more is known, AICR encourages enjoying a wide variety of herbs as part of a mostly plant-based diet filled with many different

kinds of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans to get the most protection from cancer.

### **Dry or Fresh?**

Dried herbs are usually stronger tasting (although they lose flavor over time). Store dried herbs in a cool, dark place, especially if their container is clear; they will last about a year.

Fresh herbs need to be washed. You may need to use three or four times as much fresh herbs as dried. Wrap fresh herbs in a damp paper towel, place them in a plastic bag and refrigerate; or put them stems down in a container of water, with a plastic bag over the leafy part, in the refrigerator. They will keep for about two weeks.

One classic French herb mix is “fines herbs:” parsley, chives, tarragon and chervil used with omelets, dressings or meats. Chervil is a less common herb, like borage, marjoram and savory. If you buy a prepared blend, watch out for high salt content by reading the label before buying.

Experiment with herbs you’ve never tried. Sniff an herb before you add it to a dish. If it smells appealing, add just a little at first because the flavor may become stronger when cooked or chewed.

The table below lists 12 top herbs and a few of the many phytochemicals each contains:

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decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

Source: The Role of Herbs and Spices in Cancer Prevention, NIH Public Access  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2771684/?tool=pubmed>

\* Dill and chives liven up a yogurt dressing for young greens, cucumbers and other salad vegetables. Fish like tuna and salmon are ideal for dried or fresh dill.

\* Fresh basil leaves are classic with sliced tomatoes and fresh mozzarella, drizzled with balsamic vinegar and a little olive oil.

\* Cilantro and its relative parsley go with almost any vegetable dish, tomato-based sauces and salsas.

\* Rosemary itself has a strong, piney flavor and scent. It's often added to bread before baking and to poultry and meat dishes before roasting.

\* Thyme is milder and sweeter than oregano or basil.

\* Tarragon has a strong lime like taste. Use it with poultry or fish or in a salad dressing.

You can read more about herbs and growing them at:

\* University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, Food Reflections

\* Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, About Herbs, Botanicals & Other Products

For additional sources, contact American Institute for Cancer Research, 1759 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009

Tel: (800) 843-8114 | (202) 328-7744 in DC | Fax: (202) 328-7226 |

Email: [aicrweb@aicr.org](mailto:aicrweb@aicr.org)

## **Herb-Roasted Chicken Breast**

This recipe, from AICR, calls for dried herbs; fresh ones are even better. Last weekend there were plenty of herbs being sold at the Civic Garden Center annual sale. This weekend more herbs will be offered at the Appalachian Festival at Coney Island. Findley Market and local farmers markets are other good source for fresh cut herbs and herb plants you can grow.

Again, suggestions from AICR:

Celebrate National Garden Month by using some home-grown herbs to amp up your meal. Add flavor without much salt in this recipe, highlighting the season's multitude of fresh herbs and spices. Lemon zest and cayenne pepper give a flavorful kick without overpowering the boldness of the oregano, thyme and sage. Pair with a cool spring salad and your meal will be the envy of any garden party.

\* 2 tsp. minced garlic

\* 1 tsp. grated lemon zest

- \* 1/4 tsp. dried oregano
- \* 1/4 tsp. dried thyme
- \* 1/4 tsp. ground sage
- \* 1/8 tsp. ground fennel (optional)
- \* Pinch of cayenne pepper
- \* 1/2 tsp. salt
- \* 1/8 tsp. freshly-ground black pepper
- \* 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- \* 1 Tbsp. lemon juice
- \* 1 split whole skinless chicken breast with ribs, about 1 1/2 lbs, cut into 4 pieces
- \* Olive or canola oil cooking spray

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

In a small bowl, combine garlic, lemon zest, oregano, thyme, sage, fennel (if using), cayenne, salt and black pepper. Whisk in oil and lemon juice. Rub mixture over chicken pieces, coating pieces well. Place chicken on a plate, cover with plastic wrap, and set aside for 15 minutes.

Arrange chicken in a shallow baking dish just large enough to hold pieces. Bake for 15 minutes. Lightly coat chicken with cooking spray, and bake 15 minutes more. Spray chicken again. Bake until juices run clear and meat looks white when the breast is pierced with a knife in center at thickest point, about 10 minutes more. Let sit 10 minutes for juices to settle before serving. Serve hot or at room temperature.

Makes 4 servings.

Per serving: 188 calories, 5 g. total fat (1 g. saturated fat), 1 g. carbohydrate, 31 g. protein, 0 g. dietary fiber, 379 mg. sodium.