How-To Preserve Fresh Herbs

Air Drying, Powders, Freezing, Extracts, and Oxymels
Herbal Properties

- **Rosemary** -- energy, circulation, digestion, nerves
- **Sage** -- antifungal, antibacterial, antiviral; used for digestive problems
- **Thyme** -- for upper respiratory infections, coughs, bronchitis; also antiviral and antibacterial
- **Oregano** -- for upper respiratory infections, also antiviral and antibacterial
- **Mint** -- stomach soothing, digestive aid
- **Raspberry Leaves** -- rich in antioxidants and iron; used for PMS and menstrual cramping
- **Lemon Verbena** -- reduces inflammation and fever, strengthens muscles, boosts immunity, digestive aid, relieves stomach issues
- **Basil** -- to ease inflammation and joint pain; for mental fatigue, stress, and depression
- **Chamomile** -- for improved sleep quality and to promote digestive health
- **Hyssop** -- used for digestive and intestinal problems including liver and gallbladder conditions and loss of appetite; also for respiratory problems
- **Shiso** -- antifungal, antibacterial, antiviral; high in iron, calcium, and carotene; used for respiratory problems, improved immunity, and digestive upset
Air Drying & Powders

- Works best with herbs with low moisture content, like bay, dill, oregano, rosemary, and thyme
- Indoor Air Drying
  - Harvest branches, remove dry or diseased leaves, and clear bottom inch of each stem
  - Tie stems in bundles and hang upside down
  - Place bundle in a holey paper bag & label
  - Hang upside down in warm, airy, dry room for ~2 weeks (avoid kitchen for heat and steam)
- Make a Powder
  - Mortar & pestle, clean coffee grinder, food processor
  - Jar & label, and discard any jar that grows mold, and re-dry any jars that show signs of moisture
  - Store jars in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight
  - ¼ part dried = 1 part fresh
  - Use within 1 year
Freezing Herbs

- Herbs with higher water content are better preserved frozen than dried, like basil, chives, cilantro, mint, parsley
- Unlike dried herbs, frozen herbs can be used in same proportions as fresh herbs
- Freeze as Individual Leaves:
  - Clean, dry, and separate leaves from stalks
  - Spread individual leaves flat on a cookie sheet and cover with waxed paper or plastic wrap
  - Freeze 2hrs to overnight
  - Store in zippered bags
- Freeze as “Ice Cubes”
  - Clean, dry, and chop herbs and add one tablespoon to each portion; cover with water
  - Alternatively, blend fresh herbs with a preferred cooking oil and freeze in individual cube portions
DIY Extracts

- Extracts use alcohol to pull beneficial nutrients from the herbs over time
- Use 80 Proof (40% alcohol by weight) vodka + fresh herb leaves
- Clean and dry herb leaves well, then chop roughly
- Pack leaves into a small jar, leaving a bit of wiggle room
- Fill jar with vodka to cover the leaves
- Store out of direct sunlight, shaking daily for 6-8 weeks
- Strain out leaves and enjoy, storing out of sunlight
- Can use same method to make homemade vanilla extract
Oxymels

- A sweet & sour herbal syrup, from Latin “oxymeli” meaning “acid and honey”
- Made of 1 part herbs + 3-4 parts vinegar and honey
- Vinegar helps draw out beneficial vitamins and minerals, and both honey and vinegar act as preservatives
- Keep refrigerated or in a cool, dark place for ~1yr
- Hot Method:
  - Use 2x the allotted amount of vinegar and simmer for 15-30 minutes with desired herbs
  - Strain & mix finished product with an equal part honey
  - ~1 year shelf life
- Cold Method:
  - Fill small jar ½-¾ full of herbs
  - Pour honey over herbs, then vinegar; about half and half, or more vinegar to taste; Stir
  - Shake daily for ~2 weeks, then strain herbs out, bottle it and store in a cool place or the refrigerator
Infused Oils

1. Clean the jars
2. Choose flavoring / aroma
   a. Chili pepper, garlic, aromatic herbs for culinary oil
   b. Lavender, rose petals, rosemary for cosmetic oils
3. Choose an oil (EVOO for cooking; baby or almond oil for cosmetics)
4. Fill container, 1c plant material, 2c oil
5. Leave in sun for a few days, until plant material begins to brown
6. If not strong enough, strain and repeat with fresh plant material
7. When to your liking, strain thoroughly and put in a clean bottle
8. Store in cool, dry place