

# KITCHEN SEASONINGS— SALTS & HERB BLENDS

***For your own culinary pleasure or for a great gift, you can make seasonings that match your taste and beat anything you can buy!***

I like to work with several types of seasonings, all distinctly different. Herb Blends, Seasoned Salts, Herb/spice blends and, possibly my favorite, Infused Salts.

***Herb Blends*** are a combination of dried herbs. Once crushed or chopped, herbs lose their potency, so it's best to only make a small amount of these at a time. You can add dried minced garlic or onion to some of these. The ingredients generally keep their individual characteristics which blends in the cooking of the food you add them to.

***Seasoned Salts*** are a simple combination of salt and ground spices. Many dry rubs are essentially seasoned salts.

***Herb/Spice Blends***, made with dried herbs and spices, are great to have on hand for quick ethnic dishes. I keep a 'Mexican' blend to liven up chili or refritos.

***Infused Salts***, are a combination of fresh herbs and garlic blended into salt, then dried, lending their flavor to the salt itself. These are incredible on grilled meats, fish, vegetables and many other dishes, as well as used right at the table.

For the following recipes do NOT use iodized table salt. Choose Sea Salt, Kosher Salt, Sal Gris or whatever you prefer. You do not want the texture to be too fine.

## RECIPES

***Herb Blends***—Here are 3 blends of herbs we grow, dry, and combine to brighten our meals. Several of these herbs are hard to find in the store.

## FISH FEST

Sprinkle Fish Fest over any kind of seafood before cooking. Also sprinkle with a bit of lemon pepper or a squirt of lemon juice.

*Lemon Thyme*—Wonderful fragrant perennial.

*Lemon Basil*—Another wonderful basil. Loves hot weather. Annual that you can harvest it repeatedly and it will rapidly grow back as do all the basil. Just remember to cut it above 2 new leaf shoots.

**Lemon Basil and Lemon Thyme are hard to find in stores, so plan ahead and grow your own if you want to try this blend.**

*Dillweed*—The feathery leaves, not the seeds.

*Oregano*—Another hardy perennial. Greek is milder, Mexican stronger, use accordingly. We prefer Greek.

*Sweet Marjoram*—Very fragrant annual. Relative to Oregano, used with eggs, vegies and meats.

*Celery Leaves*—I actually grow a specific type of celery that mainly produces leaves. You can save the leaves from celery (organic) you buy and dry them in a colander or basket after trimming from the stalk.

*Garlic*—Garlic granules or dried, minced, garlic. Garlic granules are slightly coarser than garlic powder, and are definitely NOT garlic salt. Store it in glass jar with airtight lid.

*Onion Granules*—this we buy as well. Both can be purchased from the bulk jars at the Co-op or Eureka Natural Foods.

## ITALIAN SEASONING

Add to tomato sauce for pasta, lasagna, or any tomato dish or sprinkle on pizza.

*Oregano, Sweet Basil, Rosemary, Thyme, Garlic*—See above for all of these.

*Fennel Seed*—We buy these, toast lightly in a small, heavy pan (we use cast iron) and then crush it slightly with a mortar and pestle.

### **MEAT TREAT**

Sprinkle over chicken, turkey, roasts, whatever, before cooking. Add 1 or 2 teaspoons to oil and vinegar with ½ teaspoon salt for a nice herb vinaigrette.

*Rosemary*—Easy to grow perennial in the ground or a pot.

*Sweet Basil*—Hot weather annual, easy to grow, pick repeatedly to keep from flowering and it will grow back.

*Thyme*—The regular sort, variegated or plain, perennial with tiny leaves.

*Bay Leaves*—Mediterranean Bay (the kind you get in stores) is milder. If you use the west coast native Bay Laurel, use it sparingly.

*Garlic*—(See above)

## **PREPARING THE HERBS (IF YOU GROW YOUR OWN)**

All the herbs listed here are harvested early in the morning after the dew has dried off of them, and hung in bunches by their stems in a well ventilated place out of direct sunlight. I like to use a rubber band to hold the bunch and a twisty-tie from vegetables I purchased at the store, or string, tied on to hang them by. The rubber band conveniently stays tight as the herbs dry and the soft stems of basil and others shrink in diameter. Woody stemmed plants such as rosemary and thyme have no problem. As to the bay, I just prune off a very small branch full of leaves to dry. Herbs dry well inside a perforated paper bag, keeping them out of direct light.

When dry, strip the leaves from the stems and store as whole leaves in airtight containers (we use glass jars) in a cool, dark cupboard. When you make a blend or use the herbs directly in

cooking—that is the time to crush or chop them. Once broken they will lose their aromatic and flavor qualities faster.

**By the way, you can save the stems and bundle them, tie with cotton or jute string, and throw on hot coals when grilling for herbally flavored smoked meats. You can also place them in the cavity of poultry when roasting.**

## **ASSEMBLING THE BLENDS**

This is the inventive part. I never measure anything unless I have to, and cannot begin to give you exact measurements for any of these, but I do have some “rules of thumb”. In all the blends use **equal amounts of the large leafy herbs** (basil, oregano, dill, celery).

Grind these coarsely with a herb grinder (there are many styles, I like the Mouli Parsmint best) or chop with a knife.



**Thyme and rosemary are more compact**, use only ½ to ⅔ the amount of one of the others after grinding. You can run the rosemary through the grinder as well.

To ½ cup blended herbs add 1 or 2 large bay leaves, ground, and/OR 1 Tablespoon garlic granules and/OR 1 Tablespoon onion granules, or 2 teaspoons fennel seed, as called for. (If you use bay laurel, use less).

Mix all ingredients in a bowl, then store in an airtight container until used. Best used within 6 months.

## HERB/SPICE MIXES

Great in beans, stews, casseroles—you will find many uses.

**Cajun Mix**—Good in red beans, Hopping John, shrimp, eggs, be creative!

1 Tablespoon white pepper, ground  
1 Tablespoon black pepper, ground  
1 Tablespoon onion granules  
2 Tablespoons sea salt  
1 Tablespoon dried thyme leaves  
1 Tablespoon dry mustard  
¼ cup paprika  
1 Tablespoon dried oregano leaves  
2 Tablespoons cumin  
2 Tablespoons sugar

Combine ingredients, putting dried herbs through herb grinder (see herb blends). Store in airtight container. Best used within 6 months.

**Mexican Seasoning**—Great in chili, enchilada sauce, refritos, fajitas and more. *From Sunset Recipe Annual cookbook (recipes from 1989, published in 1990.)*

¼ cup chili powder  
2 Tablespoons EACH: ground cumin, ground coriander, dry oregano leaves, dry basil leaves  
1 Tablespoon EACH: dry thyme leaves, garlic powder  
¾ teaspoon cayenne

Stir together ingredients. You can grind dry herbs as noted above. Store in airtight container. Best used within 6 months.

## SEASONED SALTS

The simplest of all to make. Just measure and blend. Store up to six months in an airtight container.

**Everyday Season Salt**—Use as for any commercial Seasoned Salt. Use on everything from salads to scrambled eggs, meats of all kinds.

¼ cup Kosher or Sea Salt  
4 teaspoons ground black pepper  
1 teaspoon paprika  
1 teaspoon garlic powder (NOT garlic salt)  
½ teaspoon onion powder  
½ teaspoon ground red pepper

Place all ingredients in airtight container. Stir or shake until combined thoroughly. Best used within 6 months.

### References

Drying herbs: <http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/dry/herbs.html>

Storing herbs & spices: [http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/store/texas\\_storage.pdf](http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/store/texas_storage.pdf)

## TYPE 'A' GRILLING RUB

(An 'overachiever'—good on anything! From Weber grill newsletter) This recipe makes around 2 tablespoons. I often quadruple it to have enough to store for other occasions.

1 teaspoon dry mustard  
1 teaspoon granulated onion  
1 teaspoon paprika  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
½ teaspoon granulated garlic  
½ teaspoon ground coriander  
½ teaspoon ground cumin  
½ teaspoon ground black pepper (freshly ground if possible)

Combine ingredients. Press rub into all sides of meat or fish and refrigerate for 1 hour prior to grilling to intensify flavors. Store in airtight container. Best used within 6 months.

## INFUSED SALTS

Use to “salt” roasts or meat for grilling of all kinds from pork and beef to chicken, game birds, and duck. It’s also great on vegetables of all kinds, dried beans, popcorn, potatoes, eggs, etc.

4 to 5 garlic cloves, peeled  
¾ cup kosher salt, sea salt, or sel gris  
About 2 cups loosely-packed, pungent fresh herbs such as sage, rosemary, thyme, savory, or small amounts of lavender, peppercorns, citrus zest, chive flowers.  
*(For Tuscan herb salt use a mix of fresh rosemary and sage)*

### **Hand-Chopped Method**

1. Cut each garlic clove lengthwise through the center, remove the sprout (if any) in the center and set aside for other cooking.
2. Mound the salt and garlic on a cutting board. Use a chef’s knife to mince the garlic, blending it with the salt as you work.
3. Place herbs in a mound and coarsely chop them. Add the herbs to the garlic salt and chop them together to the texture of coarse sand.
4. Spread salt on baking sheet and leave near open window for a few days to dry. Or in preheated oven (low) with heat turned off for a few hours. Store in clean, dry jars.

### **Food Processor Method**

1. Prepare garlic as noted above In the work bowl of a food processor, combine the garlic and 2 tablespoons of the salt. Pulse until the garlic is chopped medium-coarse. Add the herbs and continue pulsing until the mixture is the texture of very coarse sand. Transfer to a sheet pan and toss with the remaining salt.
2. Dry as noted above. Store in airtight container in dry, dark place. Keeps almost indefinitely

## RESOURCES

Jennifer Bell, UC Master Food Preserver,  
Humboldt/Del Norte Counties

## LOCAL CONTACT

For more information, contact the University of California Cooperative Extension office in your county. See your telephone directory for addresses and phone numbers, or visit [http://mfp.ucanr.edu/Contact/Find\\_a\\_Program/](http://mfp.ucanr.edu/Contact/Find_a_Program/).

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