1

ALL ABOUT ROSEMARY

Rosemary boasts a rich history, dating back to ancient civilizations such as the Greeks and Romans, who revered it for its medicinal and sacred properties. It was believed to enhance memory, earning its association with remembrance and fidelity in various cultures. Throughout history, rosemary's aromatic allure has woven it into rituals, folklore, and cuisines, making it a symbol of significance.

Indigenous to the Mediterranean region, rosemary has adapted across a significant portion of Europe and is a common resident of gardens in temperate climates. Formally known as Salvia rosmarinus, rosemary is a small evergreen herb from the mint family whose leaves are prized for their wellness and culinary contributions.

Rosemary stands as a perennial shrub, typically reaching a height of approximately 3 feet, although select varieties may reach over 6 feet tall. Its elongated leaves boast a dark green hue on their upper surface, while their undersides showcase a white contrast. Demonstrating resilience, rosemary remains mostly resistant to common pests and plant disease.

Rosemary is best planted in the spring once the weather has warmed and there's no frost in the forecast. To successfully nurture this aromatic herb, start by selecting a sunny location with well-draining soil, essential for preventing waterlogged roots. Whether you begin from seeds or opt for young nursery plants, ensure proper spacing of 2 to 3 feet to accommodate its potential growth. To embrace its natural drought tolerance, water rosemary when the soil is dry, avoiding excess moisture that could lead to root problems.

Regular pruning not only maintains its shape but also encourages lush growth. As your rosemary matures, harvest its fragrant leaves in the morning, capitalizing on the concentrated essential oils that promise both increased sensory and culinary satisfaction.

2

HEALTHY INGREDIENT CONTRIBUTION

Although not typically consumed in large quantities, rosemary offers a range of potential health benefits due to its rich array of compounds, including antioxidants and essential oils. While more research is needed, the health contributions of rosemary to the human body are promising.

Immune Support: The antioxidants present in rosemary may help support the immune system by neutralizing harmful free radicals and supporting overall wellness.

Anti-Inflammatory Effects: Rosmarinic acid, found in rosemary, has anti-inflammatory properties that may help reduce inflammation and oxidative stress in the body. Chronic inflammation is linked to various health issues, including cardiovascular disease and certain types of cancer.

Cognitive Function: Some studies suggest that rosemary may have positive effects on cognitive function and memory. The aroma of rosemary essential oil has been linked to improved cognitive performance and alertness.

Digestive Health: Rosemary has been used traditionally to support digestion and alleviate indigestion. It may help stimulate the production of bile, which aids in the digestion of fats.

Body Functioning: Rosemary is high in Manganese, an essential nutrient for metabolic health. Manganese also helps the body to form blood clots, allowing injuries to heal faster.

Phytochemical Source: Rosemary is especially rich in phytochemicals. While phytochemicals aren't essential for survival like vitamins and minerals are, they are nevertheless important for fighting disease and maintaining overall health. The phytochemicals in rosemary may help to improve eye health, regulate liver function, and lower the risk of asthma.

Nutritional Information/Values from USDA FoodData Central

3

TYPES AND VARIETIES

Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) comes in different types and varieties, each with its own unique characteristics in terms of growth habit, leaf color, flavor, and other attributes. The specific attributes and uses of each type make them suitable for various gardening, culinary, and ornamental purposes. When selecting a rosemary variety, consider factors such as your climate, intended use, and preferred growth habit.

Culinary Varieties:

- **Common Rosemary**
  - Most Widely Cultivated
  - Needle-like, Dark Green Leaves
  - Used for Culinary and Aromatic Purposes
- **Tuscan Blue Rosemary**
  - Tall, Upright Stems with Bright Blue Flowers
  - Slightly Broad, Dark Green Leaves
  - Strong Flavor & Aroma
- **Arp Rosemary**
  - Hardy for Cold Weather
  - Gray-green Leaves
  - Slightly Mild Flavor
- **Salem Rosemary**
  - Dark Green Leaves with Dense Growth
  - Strong Flavor & Aroma
  - Used in Both Cooking & Landscaping

Ornamental Varieties:

- **Prostrate Rosemary**
  - Known as Creeping Rosemary
  - Low, Trailing Growth
  - Used as Ground Cover and Hanging Baskets
- **Blue Spires Rosemary**
  - Hybrid Plant with Attractive Flowers
  - Tall Spikes of Deep Blue Flowers
  - Narrow, Dark Green Leaves
- **Golden Rain Rosemary**
  - Bright Yellow to Golden Foliage
  - Slight Lemon Scent

4

SELECTING AND STORING

Selecting and storing rosemary properly ensures that you get the best flavor and quality from this aromatic herb. By following these guidelines, you can enjoy the wonderful flavor and aroma of rosemary in your culinary creations for an extended period.

Selecting Rosemary:

- **Freshness:** Choose fresh rosemary whenever possible. Look for vibrant, green leaves without signs of yellowing or wilting. Avoid dried-out or brown leaves.
- **Aroma:** Fresh rosemary should have a strong, aromatic scent. Gently crush a few leaves between your fingers to release the fragrance.
- **Appearance:** Look for rosemary sprigs with firm stems and healthy leaves. Avoid stems that are woody or brittle.
- **Leaves:** Choose rosemary with tender, young leaves. They have better flavor and are less woody compared to older leaves.

Storing Rosemary:

- **Airtight Containers:** Whether storing fresh, dried, or frozen rosemary, use airtight containers to prevent moisture and air from affecting the herb's quality.
- **Location:** Store dried rosemary and rosemary-infused oil away from direct sunlight and heat, which can cause the flavors and aromas to deteriorate.
- **Labeling:** When storing dried rosemary or rosemary-infused oil, label the containers with the date to keep track of freshness.
- **Use Soon:** While dried and frozen rosemary can last for several months, it's best to use it within a year for the best flavor.
- **Avoid Overhandling:** Handle rosemary gently to avoid damaging the leaves and losing the essential oils that contribute to its flavor.
- **Short-Term Storage:** If you plan to use rosemary within a few days, you can store the fresh sprigs in the refrigerator. Wrap the rosemary in a damp paper towel and place it in a plastic bag. Seal the bag loosely to allow some air circulation.
- **Long-Term Storage:**
  - **Drying:** Hang the rosemary sprigs upside down in a cool, dry place with good air circulation. Once dry, remove the leaves from the stems and store them in an airtight container in a dark, cool place.
  - **Freezing:** Remove the rosemary leaves from the stems, chop them, and place them in ice cube trays. Fill the trays with water or olive oil and freeze. Once frozen, transfer the cubes to a freezer-safe bag and store them in the freezer. Frozen rosemary can be used directly in cooking without thawing.

CULINARY USES

Rosemary is a versatile herb that adds a distinctive flavor and aroma to a wide range of dishes. Its pine-like fragrance and earthy taste make it a popular choice for enhancing various culinary creations. Remember that rosemary has a strong flavor, so use it sparingly at first and adjust to your taste preferences. It's a robust herb that can transform ordinary dishes into flavorful masterpieces, making it a favorite among home cooks and professional chefs alike.

Roasted Meats: Rosemary pairs exceptionally well with roasted meats, such as lamb, chicken, beef, and pork. Sprigs of rosemary can be tucked under the skin or placed on top of the meat while roasting to infuse it with flavor.

Grilled Foods: Use rosemary as skewers for kebabs or sprigs to brush meats and vegetables with olive oil during grilling. The heat releases the herb's aromatic oils, imparting a delightful flavor.

Marinades and Rubs: Combine rosemary with other herbs and spices to create marinades or dry rubs for meats and poultry. The herb's flavor infuses into the food during marinating or cooking.

Herbed Butters: Blend chopped rosemary into softened butter to create a savory herb butter. This can be used as a spread for bread, to flavor vegetables, or to finish grilled meats.

Breads and Focaccia: Sprinkle chopped rosemary on bread dough before baking or use whole sprigs as a decorative topping for focaccia.

Infused Olive Oil: Make your own rosemary-infused olive oil by steeping fresh rosemary sprigs in olive oil. The oil can be used for cooking or as a dipping sauce for bread.

Desserts: In creative culinary experimentation, some chefs have incorporated rosemary into desserts, such as rosemary-infused ice cream or rosemary-flavored shortbread cookies.

FUN FACTS

- The name "rosemary" is derived from the Latin words "ros" (dew) and "marinus" (sea), which translates to "dew of the sea." This is because rosemary is native to the Mediterranean region and often found near coastal areas.
- Herbs like rosemary were thought to ward off evil spirits in Roman times.
- Rosemary is sometimes planted alongside vegetables in gardens to help repel insects that might harm the crops.
- Rosemary was named Herb of The Year in 2000 by the International Herb Association.
- In French cuisine, a "bouquet garni" is a bundle of herbs, including rosemary, tied together and used to infuse flavor into soups, stews, and sauces. It's then removed before serving.
- Rosemary produces small, edible blue or purple flowers. These flowers can be used to add color and flavor to salads, desserts, and beverages.
- Rosemary has over 3 times more iron than spinach.
- Rosemary essential oil, when used in high quantities, can be poisonous to humans.
- Rosemary, what many consider a simple herb, commanded a market volume of over $210 million in 2019 with it predicted to grow 25% to $260 million in 2024.

7

RECIPE

Rhubarb-Rosemary Sorbet
Yield: 1 Quart

Ingredients:

1 Pound Rhubarb, Sliced (approx. 4 C.)
1 C. Water
¾ C. Honey
2 t. Fresh Rosemary, Minced
2 T. Lemon Juice
2 T. Vodka or Gin
¼ t. Sea Salt

Directions:

1. In a large nonreactive saucepan, combine the rhubarb, water, honey and rosemary. Bring to a simmer and cook for five to 10 minutes, until the rhubarb has softened, and the honey is dissolved. Add water as needed to keep the rhubarb from sticking to the pan.
2. Remove the pan from the heat and add the lemon juice, alcohol and salt. Puree the mixture until smooth using an immersion blender; alternatively, transfer it to a food processor or upright blender to puree.
3. Pour the mixture into a 9- by 13-inch baking pan and let cool to room temperature.
4. Cover the pan with a plastic lid or wrap and freeze for four to six hours. Occasionally remove the mixture, quickly stir it with a fork until it forms pebble-sized chunks and then return it to the freezer.
5. When the sorbet is nearly frozen hard, puree again to smooth it out. Refreeze the sorbet for at least 1 hour before serving. For longer storage, transfer the sorbet to a freezer-proof container.

8

QUIZ

After you read through this month's Ingredient of the Month, take this quiz to test your knowledge. In order to earn continuing education hours (CEHs) from the American Culinary Federation (ACF), the test must be completed through the ACF's Online Learning Center. Seventy-five percent accuracy is required to earn one hour of continuing education credits toward professional certification.

9

QUIZ

Question #1

Where is rosemary indigenous to?

A. Mediterranean Region
B. South America
C. North America
D. Middle East

10

QUIZ

Question #2

When is the best time to harvest rosemary leaves for optimal essential oil concentration?

A. Noon
B. Evening
C. Morning
D. Night

11

QUIZ

Question #3

How do the antioxidants found in rosemary potentially benefit the body?

A. By promoting inflammation
B. By neutralizing free radicals
C. By increasing oxidating stress
D. By disrupting immune function

12

QUIZ

Question #4

What traditional use of rosemary is related to digestive well-being?

A. Reducing appetite
B. Stimulating acid production
C. Alleviating indigestion
D. Enhancing nutrient absorption

13

QUIZ

Question #5

Which variety of rosemary has gray-green leaves, a mild flavor, and grows well in colder climates?

A. Tuscan Blue
B. Salem
C. Common
D. Arp

14

QUIZ

Question #6

Blue Spires is a variety of rosemary used by chefs that has tall, upright stems, blue flowers, and a strong flavor/aroma.

A. True
B. False

15

QUIZ

Question #7

A strong, aromatic scent left on the fingers after crushing rosemary leaves is a sign of freshness.

A. True
B. False

16

QUIZ

Question #8

Dried rosemary and rosemary-infused oils should be stored away from direct sunlight and heat to avoid the flavor from _____.

A. turning bitter
B. deteriorating
C. turning sour
D. Both A and B

17

QUIZ

Question #9

Chefs tend to use rosemary sparingly in the kitchen because of its _____.

A. high cost
B. sourcing difficulties
C. strong flavor
D. short growing season

18

QUIZ

Question #10

Rosemary has _____ more iron than the amount found in spinach.

A. 2x
B. 3x
C. 4x
D. 5x

19

JOIN US NEXT MONTH!

Stay tuned for the next ACF Ingredient of the Month! Be sure to visit the Online Learning Center (OLC) to download a copy of each month's ingredient presentation. Don't forget to take the official IOTM quiz through the OLC to earn one hour of continuing education credits toward professional certification.

For more information:

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20