

# HERBS

## IN THE CAFETERIA

New Hampshire Harvest of the Month provides resources for the cafeteria, classroom, and community to promote the use of local, seasonal foods.

[www.nhharvestofthemonth.org](http://www.nhharvestofthemonth.org)

### Tidbit

Herbs have the ability to add a huge amount of flavor, with a small application. Herbs are unique in that they derive from all parts of a plant: roots, stems/bark, leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds. Fresh or dried, they are guaranteed to liven up your meal.

### Kid-Friendly Eating Tips

- Blend up basil with olive oil and cheese to make a pesto sauce for pasta or a sandwich spread.
- Add fresh basil to a pizza, pasta or soup.
- Add crushed mint to lemonade or steep it in boiled water to make tea.
- Add fresh mint to a fruit salad.
- Oregano is a perfect addition to a vinaigrette dressing.
- Oregano, lemon and a bit of honey make a delicious seasoning for meat.
- Grow a few potted herbs in your sunniest window, or on an easily-accessible outdoor space—have kids pick and garnish away!

## RECIPES

### Basil Pesto

**Yield:** 6 cups; 100 one-tablespoon taste test servings

**Ingredients:**

- ½ head of garlic, peeled
- 1½ Tbsp. salt
- 1 quart, plus 1 cup loosely packed basil leaves
- 1¼ cups olive oil
- 1¼ cups grated hard cheese, such as cheddar or parmesan

**Directions:**

1. Combine all ingredients in a food processor and process until finely chopped.
2. If desired, add hot water to the mixture to thin it out.

Source: Weston Nicoll, Chef-Owner of Café Shelburne

### Mint Lemonade

**Yield:** 64 cups

**Ingredients:**

- 2 quarts, plus 2 cups fresh-squeezed lemon juice
- 10 quarts cold water
- 3 quarts, plus 2 cups mint syrup (see recipe below)

**Mint Syrup:**

- 1 quart, plus 3 cups granulated sugar
- 1 quart, plus 3 cups water
- 2 quarts, plus 2 cups mint leaves

**Directions:**

1. Combine sugar and 1 quart, plus 3 cups of water and bring to a boil, stirring to incorporate the sugar.
2. Once sugar has melted, remove the pan from heat and add the mint leaves; allow to steep for 10-30 minutes.
3. Cool completely.
4. Combine all ingredients and serve over ice. Garnish with some mint leaves and fresh lemon slices.

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## Selection

When buying these three featured herbs fresh, choose firm, richly green leaves and avoid drooping, yellowing or brown-edged leaves.

## Storage Tips

- **Fresh:** Store in the fridge, wrapped in a slightly damp paper towel in a plastic bag; leave bag partially open or poke holes to allow herbs to breathe.
- **To dry:** Wash, dry, then bunch together freshly clipped herbs with a rubber band. Do not bunch too tightly, as exposure to air is important. Next, hang bunches upside down in a dry, cool, dark space; herbs can also be dried lying on a rack or mesh screen. Drying times will vary.
- **Dried:** Keep in a sealed container in a dry, cool, dark space.
- **To freeze:** Put in freezer grade bag, whole or chopped; do not blanch. You can also fill ice-cubes trays with leaves and cover in olive oil, stock or water. Put cubes in a freezer grade plastic bag.

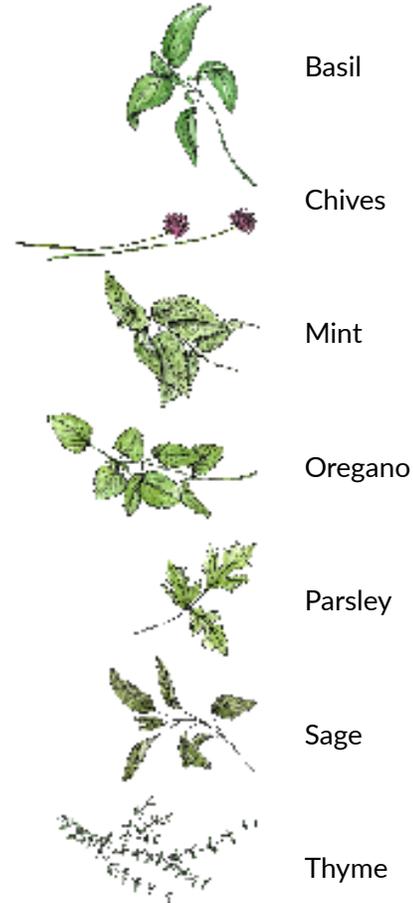
## Benefits

- **Basil:** The volatile oil of basil helps to relieve digestive issues, headaches, and poor circulation; some varieties contain anti-bacterial properties.
- **Mint:** Peppermint (*Mentha piperata*), contains the organic compound menthol, which is known for aiding in digestion, muscular pain and headaches.
- **Oregano:** The volatile oil of oregano contains the phenols (aromatic organic compounds) thymol and carvacrol, which are strong antimicrobial agents; it is also rich in antioxidants.

## Cooking Tip

To avoid spoilage, wash fresh herbs right before use; use a large basin to rapidly immerse, then shake leaves or use a colander. A salad spinner will remove the most moisture.

## SOME TYPES OF HERBS:



## Mini Activities

- Guess the herb using smell and or taste.
- Have students match jars or packets of various herbs to where they think their place of origin is on a world map.
- Have students create their own tea blend from a selection of dried herbs.

Sources: High Mowing Seeds, The Encyclopedia of Healing Foods, The Visual Food Encyclopedia