

Florida Food Fare

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Rosemary

History: The herb rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis L.*) is an aromatic plant that originated in the Mediterranean area, said to translate as “dew of the ocean.” In ancient Greece it was used as incense and dedicated to the Goddess of Love - Aphrodite. In antique Rome it was dedicated to Venus as it was considered to give eternal youth and beauty. In Bavaria they still make bridal crowns from this herb and in Sicily their dead are remembered by putting rosemary twigs on the graves. In ancient times, this plant also was supposed to strengthen memory. Greek scholars wore rosemary in their hair to help remember their studies, and the association with remembrance has carried through to modern times. In literature and folklore rosemary is still an emblem of remembrance.

Description: Rosemary is a very attractive garden shrub that is easy to grow in Florida and has many uses. There are two common types - the erect shrub and also a creeping or prostrate rosemary. This ash-colored evergreen shrub has a pungent, pinelike fragrance. It has scaly bark and opposite, narrow, leathery leaves, which are thick and dark green on the top and downy white underneath. Prominent veins run down the middle of the leaves and the margins roll down. The many violet-blue flowers, produced in May, are a particularly attractive feature. Some varieties also produce lavender to pink blooms.

This herb grows well in pots, although it has a massive root system and will become root bound and die if left in the container too long. If planted in the ground this shrub will become as tall as 6 feet and 3-4 feet in diameter. Rosemary and sage do well planted next to or near each other, as they seem to stimulate each other.

Availability: If fresh rosemary is probably maintained it will grow in the Florida garden or yard year round. Sprigs can then be clipped and used as needed. At pruning time the clipped sprigs can be dried or frozen for later use.

Uses: Aromatic, cosmetic, culinary, decorative, and medicinal.

Beauty and health: Rosemary goes very well with lavender and roses in potpourri's. Put crushed rosemary in your bath water, as it stimulates circulation and freshens the skin. The aromatic oil is added to soaps, creams, lotions, perfumes, and toilet waters. The leaves are used in sachets and potpourris as well as in herbal baths, facial steams, hair rinses, and dyes.

Household: Use as an insect repellent in closets and drawers. Burn branches in fireplace for pleasant aroma.

Decorative: A few sprigs added to fresh or dried floral arrangements add both texture and fragrant. I often use a small potted rosemary plant (about 2 feet in height) to decorate in the kitchen or dining areas for the holidays. When I can get them my favorite ornaments for this are small multicolored hot peppers.

Culinary: Rosemary is at its best fresh, but you can dry or freeze it as well. Dried or fresh leaves may be used to flavor poultry, fish, lamb, beef, tomatoes, mushrooms, cheese, eggs, potatoes and other vegetables, vinegars, and herbal butters. Another way to try it is finely chopped in breads and other baked products. Consuming this herb in its raw state is not recommended.

Recipes:

Grilled Rosemary Citrus Chicken

1/4 cup soy sauce	2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary
juice of 1 orange and 1 grapefruit	salt and pepper to taste
6 cloves garlic, crushed	4 boneless chicken breasts, wash and patted dry
1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger	

Combine soy sauce, juices, garlic, ginger, rosemary, salt and pepper in a small bowl. Mix together. Put chicken in a shallow baking dish and cover with marinade. Cover and refrigerate for 1-24 hours, turning occasionally. Heat grill or fry pan to medium high and grill about 4 min. each side.

Rosemary Roast Pork Loin

4 teaspoons chopped fresh rosemary	1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
Or 2 teaspoons dried	2 1/2 to 3 pound boneless pork loin roast

4 large garlic cloves, minced fresh rosemary springs
1 1/2 teaspoons salt

Preheat oven to 400 degree F. Line 13 x 9 x 2-inch roasting pan with foil. Mix first 4 ingredients in bowl. Rub garlic mixture all over pork. Place pork, fat side down, in prepared roasting pan. Roast pork 30 minutes. Turn roast fat side up. Roast until thermometer inserted into center of pork registers 155 degree F., about 25 minutes longer. Remove from oven; let stand 10 minutes. Pour any juices from roasting pan into small saucepan; set over low heat to keep warm. Cut pork crosswise into 1/3-inch-thick slices. Arrange pork slices on platter. Pour pan juices over. Garnish with rosemary sprigs, if desired. Serves 8.

Lemon Rosemary Green Beans

2 pds green beans, trimmed and cut into 1" pieces	1 tablespoon minced fresh rosemary leaves or 1 teaspoon dried rosemary, crumbled
1 medium onion, thinly sliced or chopped	1 teaspoon fresh oregano, crumbled or ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
3 tablespoons unsalted butter	1 teaspoon fresh oregano, crumbled or
1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest	1/4 teaspoon dried

In a kettle of boiling salted water cook the beans and onion for 10-15 minutes, or until they are tender, and drain them. While the beans are cooking, in a small saucepan melt the butter over low heat with the zest, the rosemary, and salt and pepper to taste and keep the mixture warm. Transfer the beans to a serving dish, add the butter mixture, and toss the mixture well. Serves 8.

Rosemary Garlic Red-Wine Vinegar

Flavored vinegars can be used to enliven dressings and marinades, finish pan sauces, or pickle vegetables--and they make wonderful gifts.

Once the steeping is completed, these vinegars keep for several months.

1 cup fresh rosemary leaves plus long sprigs for garnish, rinsed and drained well	8 large garlic cloves, halved 2 cups red-wine vinegar
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In a very clean 1-quart glass jar combine the rosemary leaves, the garlic, and the vinegar and let the mixture steep, covered with the lid, in a cool dark place for at least 4 days and up to 2 weeks, depending on the strength desired. Strain the vinegar through a fine sieve into a glass pitcher, reserving the garlic and discarding the rosemary leaves, and pour it into 2 very clean 1/2-pint glass jars.

Add a rosemary sprig and some of the reserved garlic to each jar and seal the jars with the lids. Makes 2 cups.

Olive, Rosemary and Onion Focaccia

1 package (2 1/2 teaspoons) active dry yeast	3 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon sugar	2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh rosemary leaves plus whole rosemary leaves
1 3/4 cups lukewarm water (105-115 degrees F)	1/4 cup minced onion
4 1/2 to 5 cups all-purpose flour	1/2 pound Kalamata, Nicoise, or green Greek olives, pitted and cut into slivers (about 1 cup)
1 1/4 teaspoons salt	1 1/2 teaspoons coarse salt, or to taste

In the large bowl of an electric mixer stir together yeast, sugar, and lukewarm water and proof the yeast mixture for 5 minutes, or until it is foamy. Stir in 4 1/2 cups flour, salt, and 2 tablespoons oil and knead dough, scraping down dough hook or beaters occasionally and adding as much of remaining 1/2 cup flour as necessary to form a soft, slightly sticky dough, for 3 minutes. Transfer dough to a lightly oiled bowl, turn it to coat it with oil, and let it rise, covered, in a warm place for 1 hour, or until it is double in bulk. *Knead in the chopped rosemary, press the dough with lightly oiled hands into a well-oiled 15 1/2- by 10 1/2-inch jelly-roll pan, and let it rise, covered loosely, for 30 minutes. The dough may be made 8 hours in advance and kept covered and chilled. Dimple the dough with your fingertips, making 1/4-inch-deep indentations, brush it with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil, and top it with the onion, the olives, the salt, and the whole rosemary leaves. Bake the focaccia in the bottom third of a preheated 400 degrees F. oven for 35 to 45 minutes, or until it is golden and cooked through. Transfer the focaccia to a rack, let it cool for 10 minutes, and serve it, cut into squares, warm or at room temperature.

*Note: This can also be prepared in an automatic bread machine for the first part. Add ingredients in order recommended for your bread machine. Follow instructions for sweet breads or use regular dough setting and stop after the first rising. Continue with the procedure above beginning with the kneading.