



SPICE IT UP!

Discovery Series

This month's spice: Oregano

Oregano is a flowering plant from the mint family. It's native to the Mediterranean region, but now widely grows in the Northern Hemisphere as well. *Oregano* means "joy of the mountain" in ancient Greek. This spice became popular in America after soldiers returned from service in World War II in the Mediterranean, and were craving pizza. This is the reason oregano is often called "the pizza herb".

Flavor profile: Oregano has a slightly bitter, savory, pungent flavor. This pungent flavor is composed of earthy, green, hay and minty notes. It is similar to marjoram but not as sweet. It is a bold herb that will make a dramatic impact in any recipe.

Cuisines that oregano is used in: Turkish, Greek, Spanish, Italian, Mexican, Latin American and French cuisines.

Pairs well with: artichokes, beans, bell peppers, cabbage, cauliflower, corn, chicken, eggplant, eggs, fish, lamb, meat, pizza, pork, potatoes, sweet peppers, squash, tomatoes and zucchini.

It also pairs well with these other spices: basil, cumin, garlic, parsley, rosemary, sage and thyme.

When using dried oregano, crush it a little in your hand to release the essential oils and flavor.

Cookbook recommendations available at Coaldale Library:

- Everyday Food: Fresh Flavor Fast
- Jamie Oliver 7 Ways
- Company's Coming: Slow Cooker Recipes
- Company's Coming: Garden Greens

Cookbook recommendations available within Chinook Arch:

- Sea Salt and Honey : a New Greek Cookbook
- The Greek Slow Cooker: Easy, Delicious Recipes From the Heart of the Mediterranean
- Vegan Recipes from Spain
- Olives & Oranges: Recipes and Flavor Secrets from Italy, Spain, Cyprus and Beyond
- At My Italian Table: Family Recipes From My Cucina to Yours
- The 50 Best Pizza Recipes
- Dinner in French: My Recipes by Way of France
- The Best Mexican Recipes

Greek Salad Dressing

Recipe from cookieandkate.com



Ingredients:

- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 2 medium cloves garlic, pressed or minced
- 2 teaspoons honey or maple syrup, to taste
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano, to taste
- ½ teaspoon fine salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch of red pepper flakes, for heat (optional)

Instructions:

In a liquid measuring cup or small bowl, combine the vinegar, garlic, honey, oregano, salt, several twists of black pepper, and a pinch of red pepper flakes (if desired). Whisk until blended. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil while whisking. Stir until the mixture is fully blended.

Taste, and adjust as needed—add another teaspoon of honey if the mixture tastes too acidic, or another ¼ teaspoon oregano for more herbal flavor. If the mixture is overall too bold for your liking, dilute it with a splash of olive oil, or if it's just not quite right yet, add more salt and pepper. Makes ¾ cup.

Drizzle this Greek dressing over salads made with any of the following ingredients: tomatoes, peppers, cucumber, red onion, radish, carrots, cabbage, zucchini, olives, greens, chickpeas, lentils, feta, nuts, seeds, pasta and quinoa.

Store leftover dressing in the refrigerator, covered, for up to 1 week. It will separate over time, so just whisk it back together before serving (if the olive oil solidifies a bit in the refrigerator, don't worry, that's normal—just let it warm up for about 5 minutes at room temperature or microwave for 10 to 20 seconds).

Pasta Primavera

Recipe from budgetbytes.com/pasta-primavera/ Serves 4



Ingredients:

- 8 oz. penne pasta
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 zucchini
- 1 yellow squash
- 1 carrot
- 1/2 red onion
- 1/2 cup frozen peas
- 1 cup grape tomatoes
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp Freshly cracked black pepper
- 2 Tbsp Fresh lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp butter

Instructions:

1. Start by prepping your vegetables. Wash the vegetables, then cut and slice each vegetable into equal size pieces. Cut the zucchini and yellow squash into half-moons, slice the carrots into thin rounds, cut the grape tomatoes in half and slice the red onion into strips.
2. Next bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook the pasta according to the package instructions, or until al dente. Reserve some of the starchy pasta water before draining the pasta in a colander.
3. While the pasta is boiling, saute the vegetables. In a large deep skillet add olive oil and saute carrots and onion over medium heat for 4-5 minutes. Next add zucchini and yellow squash and saute for an additional 1-2 minutes or until desired softness. Next add the minced garlic, grape tomatoes and frozen peas. Season the vegetables with salt, pepper and dried oregano. Saute for an additional 1-2 minutes, then turn the heat off.
4. Add the butter to the skillet along with the fresh squeezed lemon juice and stir well to combine. Either add the cooked and drained pasta to the skillet, or transfer the pasta and vegetables to a large bowl. Add grated parmesan cheese and some of the reserved pasta water. Stir the vegetables with the pasta until well combined. Serve with fresh chopped parsley (optional garnish) and enjoy!

Chicken Oreganata

Recipe by allrecipes.com Serves 4-6



Ingredients:

- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½ lemon, juiced
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- salt and pepper to taste
- 7 chicken thighs

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F (230 degrees C). Grease a 9x13-inch baking dish. Whisk oil and lemon juice together.
2. Mix oregano with salt and pepper to taste. Rub well over all chicken pieces. Place into the prepared baking dish and drizzle with 1/2 of the oil-lemon mixture.
3. Bake in the preheated oven for 15 minutes. Turn chicken pieces and drizzle with remaining oil-lemon mixture. Bake until chicken is no longer pink at the bone and the juices run clear, 15 to 20 more minutes. An instant-read thermometer inserted near the bone should read at least 165 degrees F (74 degrees C).

Enjoy these perfectly baked chicken thighs with crispy skin, warm, cold or at room-temperature.