

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. There is nothing better than being able to tiptoe barefoot outside, plucking fresh herbs right from your garden and then immediately taking them into the kitchen so you can add them to whatever you have cooking. The flavor is unmatched. However, at least for me, herbs are something that seem to be either feast or famine. I have an obscene amount of fresh parsley or basil or sage or absolutely none at all. And that is why I am diving into my four favorite ways to preserve herbs. In today's episode, I'm guessing at least one or two of these techniques will be new to you. So keep on listening. I am your host Jill Winger, and for the last 10 years I've been helping people who feel disenchanting by modern life. I'll show you how to create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and master old fashioned skills.
- Speaker 1: [01:11](#) So herbs are something that are an absolute necessity in my kitchen. I cannot cook without them, which is evidenced by the fact if I go to someone's house, like my mother's, mom, I love you, but your herb supply is dismal and I'm trying to make something without some oregano or some garlic or some onions or some sage or basil or thyme, I feel naked without those in the kitchen. It drives me crazy. In my kitchen I have an old antique Coke bottle rack. It's metal and I have it stood up on one end up against the wall and it's next to my oven. So that's where I keep all of my commonly used herbs. Then I have another basket up in my kitchen cupboard that contains my slightly less commonly used herbs but still ones that I might need, you know, on a weekly basis.
- Speaker 1: [02:11](#) And then I have a whole nother basket in my pantry of my more rare herbs that I don't use as much. Or sometimes I have stockpiles because I have a fear of running out of oregano or thyme or sage in the middle of a recipe. Safe to say, I'm kind of obsessed. Dried herbs are my stand by for most of the year because let's face it, it's always winter in Wyoming and I can't grow them year round. And the ones at the store are really pricey and just not as good. So I use dried herbs most of all, but in that short window of summer when the herb gardens are producing and everything is lush, it is so amazing to be able to them fresh. Now unfortunately, most of my herbs are pretty fleeting, right? We have a short growing season, so the chives and the sage, I've got to give them props because they last well into fall and start early in the spring.
- Speaker 1: [03:16](#) They are definitely the golden children of my herb garden. But the others, they go in and out pretty quick. I've gotten pretty darn handy at learning how to save my homegrown herbs for

later. And I wanted to dive into some of my favorite techniques today that go beyond the typical drying because that's the most common one. It works great, but there's other ways to get this done. So let's get started. Okay. So to kick off this list, I do have to acknowledge drying herbs because it's simple. It is not expensive to do this and it's really effective. So there's nothing wrong with drying herbs, whether you're doing that by hanging them in your kitchen, in bunches upside down, or you're drying them in your oven at a very, very low temperature, like 150 degrees Fahrenheit. Or you can even use an actual food dehydrator to get the job done.

Speaker 1: [04:15](#) So I have an Excalibur, which is a really, really amazing model of a food dehydrator, but you can use a cheaper brand as well. Either of those three ways will very effectively and very affordably dry large quantities of herbs after they're dry, you want to crush them up, put them in air tight containers, and that's it. It's pretty easy. Now keep in mind that dried herbs, whether you're getting them from the grocery store or you're drying them yourself, they do lose their potency over time. It's not like they're necessarily going to go bad or rancid, but you might just open that bottle of oregano one day and it just doesn't smell like oregano very much anymore. So you're going to want to plan on using them up between let's say four and six months. Some may last longer, some may start to a decrease in flavor before that.

Speaker 1: [05:12](#) But I'd say that's a pretty safe window. Alright, so number two, this method isn't quite as commonplace as drying, but you can freeze your herbs. Now just sticking a plain herbs into the freezer usually doesn't work out that well. They can get really limp and black when you thaw them out and they're just not very usable. So you will want to change them or put them in something before you stick them in the freezer. My very favorite way to do this is to wash the herbs. Let's say sage for example, cause I have a lot of Sage growing outside. I wash it, I dry it thoroughly, I will mince it up and then I put a tablespoon or so into an ice cube tray. Then on top of the Sage in the ice cube tray, I pour in olive oil just to the top, um, and freeze it in the olive oil.

Speaker 1: [06:15](#) Now the cool thing about this is you pop those cubes out. You can store them in a jar or a baggy after they're frozen, but they make a fantastic starter. Anytime you need a little bit of oil in a pan, whether your sauteed onions or your Browning, some meat or searing a roast, you can start with that oil and those herbs and just going to give a little extra flavor punch. So I use olive oil because I have a lot of it and it's easy since it's liquid.

But you can also use coconut oil for this. It's going to be, or most coconut oils are solid at room temperature, so you need to melt it, pour it, and then of course it will solidify in the freezer. But basically any cooking oil will work for this. Or you could also just freeze them in water, which won't be as handy if you wanting to, you know, the oil makes it nice for a recipe starter.

Speaker 1: [07:11](#) But if you're just going to add them to soups or stews, a little bit of water is totally fine. You can also chop them up or make a paste such as a pesto before you freeze them. And I love, love, love doing this with my garden greens. So these aren't herbs necessarily, but when I have an influx of kale or chard or spinach, I will use those to make a pesto. Or sometimes if I'm really lucky, I have a bumper crop of basil and I actually can make legitimate basil pesto, but more often than not I have meager basil and plenty of other things. So it's a really great option for preservation. You'll find the recipe that I use for homemade green pesto in the Prairie homestead cookbook, or you'll also find a version of it on the blog. I have a garlic scape pesto recipe on there.

Speaker 1: [08:15](#) The cool thing is you can take out the garlic scapes and use other leafy greens or herbs in place of that. So pesto is so, so versatile and so easy and it freezes like a dream. Okay, so we have drying, we have freezing in various forms. Then we have number three, herb salt. I feel like this one doesn't get as much recognition, but it's awesome and it lasts for forever. Basically we're taking our fresh herbs, whatever you want, whether it's parsley, dill, mint, oregano, thyme, cilantro, Rosemary, basil, you name it. We are going to chop those up and put them with salt and the salt is going to keep them from going rotten, right? Salt's an amazing preservative. And then we get to have that salt be flavored with the herbs and we can use that salt in all sorts of dishes. I have a post on how to make your own herbs salt on the blog.

Speaker 1: [09:23](#) I'm just going to go through it real quick so you get an idea of how this works. Okay. So after you wash the herbs, you remove the stems. You want to dry them really, really well because we don't want this to end up being a sludge. We want it to be an actual salt. You're going to place the herbs and some coarse salt, coarse sea salt or kosher salt, whatever you have in a food processor and you're just going to pulse it until you have a coarse grind. You don't want to paste, you don't want to puree just a coarse grind. Now if you don't have a food processor, you can still do this in a high powered blender or even just an old knife and cutting board. It's going to take a little bit longer. Um,

little more crunchy trying to get everything incorporated with the salt and the herbs.

Speaker 1: [10:13](#) But it will work once you have everything uniform and incorporate it, puts your herbs salt in a glass jar, stick it in the fridge for about a week and let the flavors come together and meld. You can shake it if you think about it to kind of help things mix up. You don't have to. And then you can use this homemade herb salt in any recipe that you can imagine that would benefit from an extra punch of flavor. You know, obviously it's very salty, so start by using it maybe one to one for the salt that's called for in the recipe, but it's really easy. You can rub it on roasts, you can put it in stews, you can put it on chicken before you roast it, you know, whatever you can imagine, it's going to work really, really well. Now, people always ask me how long the herb salt will last in the refrigerator. I think the official answer is about six months. However, my deep dark secret here is I've had jars of herb salt in the refrigerator for a year or two, probably more on the two side, and it's still good. Salt is amazing and as long as it smells good and the herbs don't look nasty or slimy or black, which mine never have, it should last a very, very long time.

Speaker 1: [11:41](#) Okay. My last idea for you to use in preserving your herbs for winter would be to create some sort of infusion. There are lots of ways you can infuse herb flavor into other liquids. A few of the options would be herb infused oils or vinegars, honey, even you could infuse it into sugar. There's lots of ways to get creative with infusions. A great example of this would be the chive vinegar recipe I recently posted on the blog. You use plain old vinegar, you pick the little chive, the purple chive flowers off in the spring when they're prevalent, you soak them in this vinegar solution for a couple of weeks, strain it and all that oniony chive flavor is now in the vinegar and it's incredible for adding to recipes. So vinegar is a really simple option because the acid in it keeps the infusion or the recipes safe, right?

Speaker 1: [12:48](#) Anything that's high acid is has a lower chance of going bad. Now when we're making herb infused oils, that's a little bit trickier because oils can go rancid, especially if we accidentally introduced water into the oil while we're doing this infusion process. So while you will see some recipes online that say, you know, stick your fresh herbs into your oil and let it sit for two months, I would steer clear from that. And just stick with using dried herbs to make your infused oils so you know, dry them first, make sure they're completely devoid of any sort of moisture, then you can use them in all of oil or whatever other sort of cooking oil. You have to make them full of herbal flavor.

And sometimes you can do it on the stove top. Other times you can just let it sit in a sunny window sill and make a sun infusion.

Speaker 1: [13:44](#)

And that works really, really well. The same goes for honey. You can also take dried herbs and let them soak in honey to give that honey and extra pop of flavor. So there's lots of options and I'm not going to go into every single detail today just because there's lots of variables and different ways to do it, but I just wanted to put it in your awareness that it's a possibility and definitely a really effective way to save your herbal flavors for later. So wrapping it all up. The takeaway I have for you today is that while nothing will beat that amazing flavor of fresh picked herbs from the garden or the farmer's market when it is the dead of winter, you're going to be so glad that you spent a little extra time in the summer or the fall to get creative and preserving those herbs for later.

Speaker 1: [14:37](#)

So if you are falling in love with the idea of an old fashioned intentional kitchen full of nourishing food and rich memories, you're going to love my heritage kitchen handbook. I've packed this little ebook full of my very best tricks for cooking and eating like a farmer even if you live in this city and you can grab it for free over at [www.heritagekitchenhandbook.com](http://www.heritagekitchenhandbook.com) and that is it for today and my friend, if you have just a second, I would be so honored if you would hit subscribe and leave a quick review for this podcast so more people can find it and bring homesteading into their lives. Thanks for listening and I'll catch up with you next time on the old fashioned on purpose podcast.