

Herbs Made Easy gives new twist on homegrown spices

March 8 2012, By Kathleen Phillips



“Herbs Made Easy” includes an illustrated wheel with information about growing, preserving and using 10 common herbs, as well as a recipe booklet with examples of herb-laden foods. Credit: Kathleen Phillips

Herbs can be fun to buy and easy to grow, but how to use them sometimes puzzles home gardeners, Texas AgriLife Extension Service specialists note.

Now a new set of informational materials called “Herbs Made Easy” may help. The set includes an illustrated wheel with information about growing, preserving and using 10 common herbs, as well as a recipe booklet with examples of herb-laden foods.

“We created this herb wheel to help us do a couple of things,” said Dr.

Jenna Anding, AgriLife Extension nutrition and food sciences program leader. “It gives us ideas for how we can use the herbs in everyday cooking, and it gives us ideas on how we can preserve these herbs so we have them available after the growing season is over.”

The wheel works like this: turn the inner circle until the cutout meets with the picture of a herb of choice. Inside the cutout appears a list of foods in which the herb might be used.

“Let’s say I had some oregano. When I turn the wheel to oregano, it tells me that Mediterranean food, meats, tomatoes, poultry, stews, soups and seafood are good combinations with oregano,” Anding said. “And it can help add some flavor, without having to add some extra salt or fat which is something that many of us are trying to watch the intake of.”

A 23-page recipe booklet was created to accompany the wheel, Anding said, because often a [herb](#) plant will produce so much that the gardener doesn’t know how to make use of the product.

“The booklet was put together to inspire budding cooks or even seasoned cooks on different ways to use the herbs that they are growing,” Anding noted. “It is just a starting point, but it does give some good ideas and tips on how to use herbs in everyday dishes.”

Each recipe has the complete nutritional value per serving. The booklet also includes information on drying and freezing herbs so they are available after the growing season, she said, adding that this helps save money versus purchasing these herbs retail.

The 10 herbs featured on the wheel and in the booklet are those most commonly available from garden centers, home improvement stores and farmers markets, and are among those easiest to grow, according to Dr. Joe Masabni, AgriLife Extension vegetable specialist who co-authored

the material with Anding. They include bay, chives, basil, Italian parsley, oregano, thyme, sage, rosemary, cilantro and mint.

Masabni said people need to consider space, soil and sun requirements of each plant when growing herbs.

“Many herbs can be grown in small areas,” he noted, adding that all 10 of the herbs need full sun. He said most herbs do not need to be saturated with water and that few pesticides are needed because the plant parts will be eaten.

“Hand-pick caterpillars and wash off other small insects or use a safe, organic insecticide to remove bugs,” he said.

More information: “Herbs Made Easy” wheel and cookbook are available from the [AgriLife Bookstore](#) by ordering B-6202 at \$15 for the set.

Provided by Texas A&M AgriLife

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