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The Good Herb

A monthly newsletter with ideas for
using the bounty of the garden!

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Citrus Herb Butter

1 pound (4 sticks) unsalted butter at room temperature
¼ cup chopped sweet basil
¼ cup chopped fresh sweet marjoram
¼ cup chopped fresh chives
1 Tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
2 teaspoons fresh lemon or lime juice

Chop herbs fine with a knife or Microplane Herb Mill. Blend all ingredients. (Do this by hand – a mixer turns the butter green!) Line a cup or mold with cheese cloth or saran wrap and fill, or put into smaller containers, such as small recycled butter tubs. Chill butter for 24-48 hours to enhance flavor. Use within 2 weeks or put into the freezer for winter use (for up to one year.)

Serve with fresh bread, broccoli, sweet corn, asparagus, Brussels sprouts, or carrots. This can also be stirred into noodles or rice, or brushed over grilled meats.

Asparagus Salad with Marjoram Dressing

Dressing:

1/3 cup white wine vinegar
1/3 cup olive oil
1 Tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 Tablespoon honey
1 Tablespoon finely chopped fresh sweet marjoram
1 clove finely minced fresh garlic
1/4 teaspoon salt
Dash of pepper

2 pounds fresh asparagus, trimmed to bite size pieces
1 diced bell pepper (red, yellow, or orange)
½ cup toasted pecans

Cook asparagus in a large pot until tender, about 4 minutes. Drain, rinse with cold water, and drain again. Put in a large bowl with the chopped peppers. Stir in dressing. Just before serving, stir in the toasted pecans.

Sweet Marjoram

Sweet marjoram is a wonderful herb that many of you may not be familiar with. It has a taste very similar to oregano, but tends to be a little milder flavored and a little sweeter than oregano. It is grown as a hardy annual and can easily be started from seeds. It will withstand some frost in the fall, but usually will not overwinter outdoors in Michigan.

I was always taught that if a recipe called for oregano, which tends to have a very strong flavor, to replace it with a half and half mix of oregano and sweet marjoram. It's wonderful to snip fresh along with basil and chives and add to meats and vegetables when you're grilling.

*To chop up fresh herbs this summer, consider getting a **Microplane Herb Mill**. These are available at most kitchen stores and make quick work of chopping flavorful herb leaves!*

Wild Rice Soup

1 pound breakfast sausage
4 cups fresh sliced mushrooms
1 large red onion, chopped
3 stalks celery, chopped
4 Tablespoons butter
½ cup flour
4 cups chicken broth
2 cups half and half or light cream
1 ½ cups cooked wild rice
1 teaspoon ground dried rosemary
1 teaspoon dried sweet marjoram
Salt and pepper to taste
Fresh herb sprigs for garnish (optional)

In a large skillet, brown sausage and drain, set sausage aside. In a stockpot or Dutch oven put the 4 Tablespoons butter. Cook mushrooms, onion, and celery for 4-5 minutes until tender. Sprinkle flour over vegetables. Stir to combine. Add broth. Cook and stir until mixture thickens and bubbles. Cook and stir 1 minute more. Reduce heat. Stir in sausage, cream, cooked wild rice, rosemary, marjoram, salt and pepper. Cover and cook over low heat just until heated through (about 5 minutes) Garnish soup bowls with fresh herbs.