



Other Methods:

You've probably read a lot about preserving herbs by freezing. The most common method is to chop the herbs and freeze them with water in ice cube trays so that you can pull them out one at a time as needed.

Another popular method is to create herbal butters. And another great method is to freeze the entire herb wrapped in plastic wrap and just chop off what you need in small quantities.

All of these methods work really well and I use them all at various times based on what I know I will be cooking up in the future.

How Concentrates Are Different:

But for me, herb concentrates offer some advantages I can't get with the other freezing methods.

Making a concentrate is similar to making a pesto – except that there are only 2 ingredients: herbs and oil.

The concentrates are stored in the freezer like the methods above. But the difference is that the herbs are not frozen in ice cube trays. Instead herb concentrates are frozen in small containers (I like to use 4 Oz. canning jars).

And because the herbs are suspended in oil (rather than water), you are able to use a spoon to just scrape off the quantity needed from the top rather than having to use a whole ice cube size at a time. So you can scrape off a "pinch", a teaspoon or scoop out as much as you want.

Summary of Herb Concentrate Advantages:

- As the name suggests, they are concentrated powerhouses of flavor.
- You can easily use a little or a lot at a time.
- Concentrate is used exactly as you would freshly chopped herbs and in the same quantity.
- Each bit of herb is coated in oil which helps preserve its flavor and color.
- You can make them with one herb or custom blends of multiple herbs. (I like an “Italian Blend” of rosemary, oregano, thyme and basil)
- They easily last an entire year in the freezer.

Herb Concentrate Recipe:

Makes 4 oz.

Herbs: Use this basic recipe with any culinary herb. You can also use edible herb flowers – especially basil. You can even combine more than one herb to create your own custom blend. My favorite single herb concentrates are: basil, sage, mint, rosemary or lemon verbena.

Measurements: The measurements here are very forgiving. You can add a bit more or less of the herb or oil and it will all turn out fine. It is more of a method than a specific recipe. The trick is to use enough oil that you have completely coated every bit of herb well.

Dry Measure: It is best to make concentrates with herbs that are not damp or wet. If you have washed the herbs just before using, be sure to pat them dry as best you can.

Trouble shooting: When making concentrate, it is better to have a little too much oil rather than too little. If you do not use enough oil, the concentrate becomes too hard and is difficult to scrape with a spoon later. If this happens, just defrost the concentrate for 10 minutes on the counter each time you use it. The oil quickly warms and is easier to scrape that way. Refreezing it is not a problem.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups (hard-packed) herb leaves (see note below)
- 1/3 – 1/2 cup high quality oil (I prefer olive oil)

Note on “hard-packed”. When measuring herbs, the leaves can have a lot of air space between them and that will alter your measurement. So, measure this recipe by filling your measuring cup and pressing the herbs down with your hand. When it reads 1 cup while pressing down, you have 1 cup “hard-packed” herbs.

1. Place the herbs in a food processor.
2. Pulse the processor until the herbs are finely chopped. (just a few pulses).
3. Turn on the processor and with the blades running, drizzle in your oil until the herbs are very well coated.



4. Stop the processor, scrape down the sides and stir. If you need to, repeat to add more oil until all the herbs are covered well in oil.
5. Place the concentrate in a small container (4 oz. canning jars are usually the perfect size per batch). Label and store in the freezer for up to one year.

To use:

- Use in any recipe calling for fresh herbs.
- Pull the concentrate from the freezer and use any metal spoon to scrape the top. It should easily peel layers until you have the amount you need. If the concentrate is too hard, set on the counter 5-10 minutes before scrapping.
- Use the same amount of concentrate as you would freshly chopped herbs. So 1 tsp. concentrate = 1 tsp. fresh herbs.