

How to Dry Fresh Herbs at Home

The process is too easy, and the flavor is leagues beyond the dried herbs you'll buy on supermarket shelves.

By [David McCann](#) Allrecipes September 01, 2021

I hate to be the bearer of bad tidings, but now is the time to start thinking about the coming months of cool/cold weather when we will no longer have the option of running outside to pick armloads of fresh herbs whenever we want them. But never fear, you can actually dry your own herbs straight from the garden, and you will end up with dried herbs that are head and shoulders above the pricey ones you buy in little jars from the supermarket. The best part? Drying your own herbs could hardly be easier.

Step 1: Harvest the Herbs

The first thing to remember is that you want to pick your herbs early in the morning, long before the peak sun and heat of the day can get to them. The herbs' volatile oils are at their most potent in the leaves early in the day, so you will get the best flavor by harvesting early. Using a pair of [garden shears](#), cut the herbs so that a long stem remains. I like to give my herbs a quick rinse, just in case. Then I lay them out to dry on a [clean kitchen towel](#); flip them occasionally to dry off as much water as possible.

Step 2: Bundle the Herbs

When the herbs are dry, gather 3 to 4 stems and tie them together — I use [cotton kitchen twine](#) — leaving enough string to hang the bundles. (Note: Binding only 3 to 4 stems at a time may seem like a rather dainty bouquet, but if the bundles are too large and the herbs are crowded, they can mold before they have a chance to dry out.) Hanging the herbs upside-down to dry is important as it allows flavorful oils present in the stems to flow down to the leaves over the next couple of weeks.

Step 3: Hang the Herbs

I hang my herb bundles from open shelves in my kitchen, but if you have attic, garage, or closet space available to hang, those locations would be even better. Essentially, you're just looking for a dark place that's generally void of direct sunlight for this process. Many people also cover the bundles with [brown paper "lunch bags"](#) to ensure a dark environment, to protect the herbs from dust, and to catch any herb pieces that fall off the stem. This has never proven to be a problem for me thus far, so I leave mine unbagged.

Step 4: Package and Enjoy Your Dried Herbs

As soon as the herbs are dry enough to crumble (this will take between one and two weeks), you're practically done. All you need to do is carefully take the bundles down, lay them on a piece of [parchment paper](#), untie them, pull the leaves off of the stems, and transfer the whole leaves into [lidded containers](#) that can be sealed airtight. Store your homemade dried herbs in a cool cupboard [or drawer](#), away from light and heat, and crumble leaves in the palm of your hand as you want to use them. Leaving the leaves largely whole and *then* crumbling right before cooking helps to yield their fullest, freshest flavor.

Which Fresh Herbs Should I Dry and How Long Will They Last?

I am usually a strong advocate for buying new commercially dried herbs every 6-12 months, but home-dried herbs are so good and so flavorful, that I have found them to be perfectly good even 2 years later. However, do remember to date your containers so you know exactly when the batch was dried. In theory, you can dry whatever herbs you want; however I find that the best candidates for drying are the heartier herbs like sage, thyme, oregano, rosemary, and believe it or not, [tarragon](#).

Are There Other Methods for Drying Herbs at Home?

Just as an added FYI, some people have great success drying herbs between 2 sheets of paper towels in the [microwave](#); heating first for 2-3 minutes, and then in short 15-second bursts until crumbly. I have never cared for the flavor of microwaved herbs, but this route is certainly faster and you may have more success with it than I.

Others, who have the space for a [food dehydrator](#), absolutely swear by them. Personally, I really like the look of drying herbs hanging from all available places, so I'm going to stick with that! But if you have a bountiful herb garden, you should try a couple of methods and see what works best for you. Just remember — these freshly dried herbs will be **a lot** more potent than grocery store dried herbs, so use sparingly until you get a sense for the level of flavor you want.