



Create Herbal Salts

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Creating herbal salts is one way to dry herbs and while you are at it, extract their flavor into the salt itself. The practice is at least 3000 years old.

Once created, herbal salts can be used for so many things - grilling, soaking, scrubbing yourself or pots and pans, preparing exotic cocktails, and more. Charming gifts of herbal salts can be customized for occasions such as birthdays, or weddings.

Not all salt is created equal

The salt we are discussing today is primarily sodium chloride (NaCl). There may be other minerals or chemicals that lend it color and taste, depending on origin and intended use.

Salt is extracted from it's source by either mining or evaporation.

Extraction will affect its properties and flavor. After extraction it may be further processed, including milling or additives such as anti-caking agents or iodine.

Salt type by extraction method

mined salt

table salt, pickling salt, kosher-style salt, pink Himalayan salt

sea salt

sea salt, kosher salt, fleur de sel

Make your herbal salt

- 1) Place about 1/4 " deep layer of salt in a jar or bowl.
- 2) Add a thin, single layer, of fresh clean herbs (if for show, select non-browning ones).
- 3) Add another layer of salt. Repeat layers.
- 4) Allow herbs to dry 2-3 weeks.
- 5) Tip mixture out into a bowl.
- 6) Crumble the now dried herbs with the salt.
- 7) Place in air-tight container and label.
- 8) USE IT! Generally within 6 months is best.

If starting with already dried herbs start at step 5).

If using the salt for non-culinary use, you can add essential oils after step 6).

Which Herbs to Use

Which herbs depends on how you plan to use your salt, kitchen or bath. Some could even go for both, like lavender. Great for cooking, cocktails, and as an exfoliating scrub!

Single flavor or blend? Again depends on use. A blend of herbs commonly used together makes sense to create – think “Herbes de Provence” or Italian cooking, or what is good on fish. Go ahead and experiment! If you make a salt you don't like the flavor of, you can always use it for scrubbing out pots and pans. It gets things clean and is less harsh on your hands than powdered cleansers.

Herbes de Provence may include fennel seed, dried savory, thyme, marjoram, lavender flowers, parsley, oregano, tarragon, bay powder.

Za'atar is a blend of herbs popular in the eastern Mediterranean made from four different genera: *Origanum* (oregano, marjoram), *Calamintha* (calamint), *Thymus* (thyme) and *Satureja* (savory). Herbs are dried and mixed together with sesame seeds, dried sumac, and sea salt.

Herbs Discussed

All herbs will lose their bright colors, but some will turn brown if dried in salt. It doesn't affect flavor, but it sure affects appeal. This is not a comprehensive list because I am still experimenting, and welcome your feedback.

Color lost

rose, lavender, carnation, jasmine

Flavor reduced

cilantro, parsley, perilla

Still works

epazote (AKA Jesuit tea) works as an herbal “Bean-o” Wait until beans are cooked!

Herbs to blend or use as blends or single flavors

sage, dill, mint, oregano, thyme, rosemary, basil, savory, garlic chives, calendula

Lemon is nice!

lemon balm, lemon verbena, lemon peel, lemon grass, lemon basil, lemon thyme

Think outside the box

ginger, turmeric, chili pepper

Use your salt:

Do use it! Herbal oils and flavors break down with time. Some can become dangerous.

Kitchen

Serving – sprinkle on as you serve

Baking – think pretzels

Grilling – grilled veggie planks drizzled in oil and sprinkled with herb salt

Brining – soak meat up to 24 hours before cooking (turkey, brisket)

Cocktails – not just for margaritas!

Cleaning – cast-iron cookware is best cleaned with a salt scrub, not water which rusts it

Bath & Health

Soaking – salt soak is soothing, good for some skin conditions.

Exfoliant – gently scrub away those dead skin cells

Antiseptic – gently clean or soak bruises and abrasions



Jacqueline A. Soule is an award-winning garden writer. She has 12 published books, and she blogs, teaches classes, and has been a popular columnist for many years with weekly and monthly columns in a number of national, regional and local publications. Jacqueline has a Ph.D., but she doesn't flaunt her education, a trait that makes her a popular speaker with landscape professionals and garden clubs alike.

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