

Fluvanna County Public Library

Spice of the Month Club

Oregano Leaves

Flavor Profile: Sweet/Spicy, bold and earthy with a slight bitterness

Also known as wild marjoram and *Origanum vulgare* (meaning “joy of the mountain” in Greek), oregano is a fragrant culinary and medicinal herb that has been used for thousands of years. Even though it’s super popular today, it actually wasn’t widely used in the U.S. until GIs returned from Italy during World War II.

Belonging to the mint family, or Lamiaceae, oregano is known for its earthy flavor that makes it a great addition to a wide variety of dishes, from light salads to hefty Italian sauces. Oregano’s flavor and strength vary widely according to the climate and region where it is grown. The hot and dry Mediterranean climate yields a robust, full flavor with a slightly bitter and peppery taste. The cooler regions of Europe and North American yield a more delicate aroma and sweeter taste.

Thanks to its subtly sweet, herbaceous flavor, oregano has become one of the most popular cooking herbs in the world, featured prominently in Italian, Turkish, Mexican, and Greek cuisine. Unlike most herbs, oregano is most commonly sold and used in its dry form, as the aromas of fresh oregano are highly pungent and can easily overpower a dish.

Varieties of Oregano

- Mediterranean Oregano (aka Greek oregano, common oregano) – The most common form of the herb – it has a milder taste and bold aroma.
- Mexican Oregano – A flavorful variety of oregano that is popular in Mexican cooking thanks to its strong peppery notes that pair well with chilies.
- Italian Oregano – A combination between oregano and marjoram, this hybrid herb has a sweeter flavor that’s ideal for seasoning pasta and pizza sauces.
- Cretan Oregano (aka Turkish Oregano, pot marjoram) – A species of oregano grown throughout Greece, Turkey and Italy with a similar flavor profile to common oregano.

Some of the most common uses of oregano include tomato-centric recipes, like pizza and pasta sauce, as well as olive oil-based dishes. Oregano is commonly combined with olive oil to create flavorful oregano oil, Italian vinaigrettes, and marinades for lamb, chicken and beef dishes. Other ingredients that pair well with oregano include garlic, basil, onion, and thyme.

Health Benefits of Oregano

In addition to being packed with vitamins A, C, and K, and minerals like iron, calcium, and manganese, oregano is also rich in dietary fiber. This leafy herb is also packed with essential oils like carvacrol and thymol, which have antibacterial, antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory powers that help to fight harmful free radicals and prevent illness.

NOTE: 1 tsp. dried Oregano leaves – 2 tsp. chopped fresh oregano

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Mediterranean Spiced Popcorn (4 servings)

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. basil leaves
- 1 tsp. oregano leaves
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- ¼ tsp. sea salt
- 12 cups plain popped popcorn

Mix oil and seasonings in large bowl. Add popcorn; toss to coat evenly.

<https://www.mccormick.com/recipes/appetizer/mediterranean-spiced-popcorn>



Spicy Chicken Quesadillas (12 servings)

- 2 cups chopped cooked chicken
- 1 ½ cups shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 cup chopped tomato
- 2 green onions, finely chopped
- 1 ½ tsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. garlic salt
- ½ tsp. oregano leaves
- 8 flour tortillas (8-inch)

1. Preheat oven to 350F. Mix chicken, cheese, tomato, onions, chili powder, cumin, garlic salt, and oregano.
2. Place 4 of the tortillas on ungreased baking sheet. Spread ¼ of the chicken mixture evenly on each tortilla. Top with remaining tortillas. Lightly brush with oil.
3. Bake 5 to 10 minutes or just until cheese is melted. Cut into 3-inch wedges. Serve warm.

<https://www.mccormick.com/recipes/appetizer/spicy-chicken-quesadillas>



Spicy Black Bean Dip (12 servings)

- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, undrained
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- ¼ garlic salt
- ¼ tsp. oregano leaves
- 1/8 tsp. cayenne red pepper (optional)
- 1 cup chopped tomatoes

1. Drain beans, reserving 2 tablespoons liquid. Rinse and drain beans. Mix beans, reserved liquid, chili powder, cumin, garlic salt, oregano and red pepper in blender or food processor; cover. Process until beans are coarsely chopped. Transfer mixture to small saucepan.
2. Cook on medium-low heat 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add tomatoes; cook 5 minutes.
3. Serve with tortilla chips or cut-up fresh vegetables.



<https://www.mccormick.com/recipes/appetizer/spicy-black-bean-dip>

Easy Homemade Pizza (6 servings)

- 1 prepared pizza crust (12-inch)
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ¾ cup sliced zucchini
- ¾ cup red bell pepper strips
- ½ cup sliced mushrooms
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- ½ tsp. basil leaves
- ½ tsp. oregano leaves
- ¼ tsp. garlic powder
- ¼ tsp. crushed red pepper
- ¼ cup sliced black olives

1. Preheat oven to 450F. Place pizza crust on large baking sheet. Mix mozzarella and Parmesan cheese in small bowl. Spread ½ of the cheese mixture over crust.
2. Toss vegetables, oil, basil, oregano, garlic powder, and crushed red pepper in medium bowl. Spread mixture evenly over crust. Top with remaining cheese mixture and olives.
3. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Cut into slices to serve. Sprinkle with additional crushed red pepper, if desired.



<https://www.mccormick.com/recipes/main-dishes/easy-homemade-pizza>

Herbed Turkey Meatballs (4 servings)

- ¼ cup plain bread crumbs
- 1 ½ tsp. basil leaves
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. oregano leaves
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- 1 pound ground turkey
- 1 egg, lightly beaten

1. Preheat oven to 400F. Mix bread crumbs and seasonings in large bowl. Add turkey and egg; mix well. Form mixture into 1-inch meatballs (about 30). Place on foil-line baking pan.
2. Bake 15 to 20 minutes or until cooked through. Drain well. Serve over cooked pasta with your favorite pasta sauce, if desired.



<https://www.mccormick.com/recipes/main-dishes/herbed-turkey-meatballs>

Chipotle Chicken Tacos (6 servings)

- ¼ cup oil
- 3 Tbsp. white vinegar
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 ½ tsp. minced garlic
- 1 tsp. chili pepper
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. minced onions
- ¾ tsp. oregano leaves
- 1 pound boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into thin strips
- 1 medium red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 medium red bell pepper, cut into thin strips
- 1 medium zucchini, cut into thin strips
- 6 flour tortillas, 8-inch



1. Mix oil, vinegar, salt and all of the seasonings in bowl until well blended. Place chicken and vegetables in 2 separate large resealable plastic bags. Pour ½ of the marinade into each bag; turn to coat well.
2. Heat large skillet on medium-high heat. Add chicken; cook and stir 5 minutes. Add vegetables; cook and stir 2 to 3 minutes or until vegetables are tender-crisp and chicken is cooked through.
3. Serve chicken and vegetables in warm tortillas. Serve with sour cream and lime wedges, if desired.

<https://www.mccormick.com/recipes/main-dishes/chipotle-chicken-tacos>

Mediterranean Couscous Salad

- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 (15-oz.) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 cup pearl couscous
- 1 English cucumber, chopped
- 2 cups halved cherry tomatoes
- ¼ cup red peppers, chopped
- ¼ cup sliced Kalamata olives
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste



1. Preheat the oven to 350F.
2. Arrange the chickpeas on a baking sheet. Toss them with the vegetable oil and garlic powder. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Bake the chickpeas until they begin to crisp, about 20 to 25 minutes.
3. While the chickpeas are baking, in a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, mustard, and oregano. Season the vinaigrette with salt and pepper to taste. Set it aside.

4. Cook the couscous according to package directions. Once cooked, transfer it into a large bowl. Add the cucumber, tomatoes, roasted red peppers, olives and chickpeas. Stir in the vinaigrette and parsley.
5. Serve the salad immediately or store in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

<https://www.healthymealplans.com/recipe-details/mediterranean-couscous-salad>

Oregano Grilled Cheese Sandwich (Serves 4)

- 4 slices multigrain bread, lightly toasted
- 8 slices part-skim mozzarella cheese (1 ounce each)
- 2 plum tomatoes, cut into 16 thin slices
- 1 tsp. oregano leaves

1. Top each bread slice with 2 cheese slices, 4 tomato slices and ¼ tsp. of oregano
2. Broil 4 to 5 minutes or until cheese is melted.
3. NOTE: Feel free to include other vegetables.



<https://www.mccormick.com/recipes/main-dishes/oregano-grilled-cheese-sandwich>

Vegetarian Spaghetti Squash Casserole

- 1 spaghetti squash (about 4.5 pounds)
- 1 white onion (chopped)
- 3 cloves garlic (minced)
- 1 tsp. oregano
- 1 tsp. basil
- ½ tsp. thyme
- 1 (28-ounce) can petite diced tomatoes (drained)
- 1 cup ricotta
- 1 cup grated parmesan (plus ¼-cup for topping)
- 1 cup seasoned bread crumbs
- ¼ cup chopped parsley
- Salt and pepper (to taste)

1. Preheat oven to 375F.
2. Sliced squash in half and scoop out seeds.
3. Bake squash face down, on parchment lined baking sheet for 45-60 minutes.
4. Let cool slightly and scoop out insides.
5. While squash bakes, in a large skillet sauté the onions and garlic with oregano, basil, thyme and a pinch of salt and pepper. Once softened, add tomatoes.
6. Cook until most of the liquid evaporates, 5-6 minutes.
7. Combine insides of squash with tomato mixture, ricotta, 1 cup Parmesan, breadcrumbs, and parsley in a large baking dish. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
8. Sprinkle with remaining Parmesan cheese and bake for 30 minutes, uncovered.



<https://www.platingsandpairings.com/spaghetti-squash-casserole-15/>

Pocket-sized Pizza Buns (Serves 6)

- 12 whole garlic dinner rolls
- 20 slices pepperoni
- 1 cup marinara sauce
- 4 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ tsp. dried oregano
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

1. Preheat your oven to 400F. You can prepare the baking sheet by lining it with foil.
2. Cut the store-bought garlic dinner rolls in half, lengthwise. Place the bottom halves on the baking sheet.
3. Spread the marinara sauce equally over the cut sides of the bottom halves. Arrange the pepperoni slices on top of the sauce, followed by the shredded Mozzarella cheese.
4. Sprinkle the grated Parmesan cheese and dried oregano evenly across the cheese. Put the top halves of the rolls on.
5. Bake in your preheated oven for 10-12 minutes or until the rolls are golden brown and the cheese is bubbling and melted.
6. Remove the pocket-sized pizza buns from the oven and serve immediately. Caution: filling will be hot!



<https://cooklist.com/recipe/pocket-sized-pizza-buns-2713556>

Garlic White Bean Soup with Kale (3-4 servings)

- 1 cup dry navy beans
- 4 cups of water
- 1 quart of chicken stock
- 2 cups water (to thin as necessary)
- 2 garlic cloves, smashed
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 cup kale, chopped
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced (about 1 Tbsp.)
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 Tbsp. tomato paste

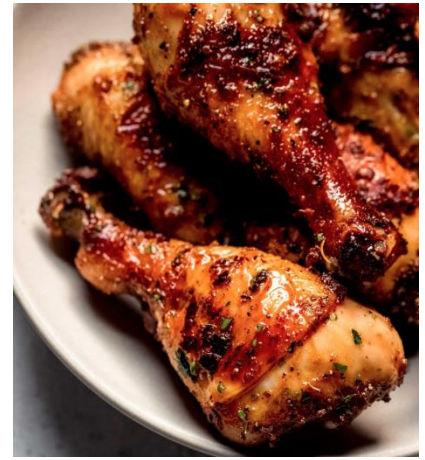
1. In a medium stockpot, combine dry beans with 4 cups of water. Bring just to a boil, then turn off the stove and cover. Let the beans soak overnight or until you're ready to cook dinner.
2. For dinner, drain and rinse the beans 3 times. Place the beans back into the same stockpot and add chicken stock, smashed garlic cloves and bay leaf. Turn the heat on a low simmer and cook the beans until they're al dente, about 1 ½-2 hours. Add additional water 1 cup at a time if necessary.
3. During the last 30 minutes of cooking, combine olive oil, butter, garlic, oregano and tomato paste in a small pot. Heat over the lowest heat possible so the garlic and tomato paste permeate the oil and butter for 15 minutes.
4. Add the flavored butter/garlic and the kale to the beans and stir well. Let the soup continue to cook for about 15 minutes so the kale can wilt. Season generously with salt and pepper and serve.



<https://donthwastethecrumbs.com/garlic-white-bean-soup-kale/>

Oven Baked Chicken Legs

- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 8 chicken drumsticks (about 2 ½ pounds)
- 2 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. oregano
- 2 tsp. paprika
- 2 tsp. black pepper
- 2 tsp. garlic powder

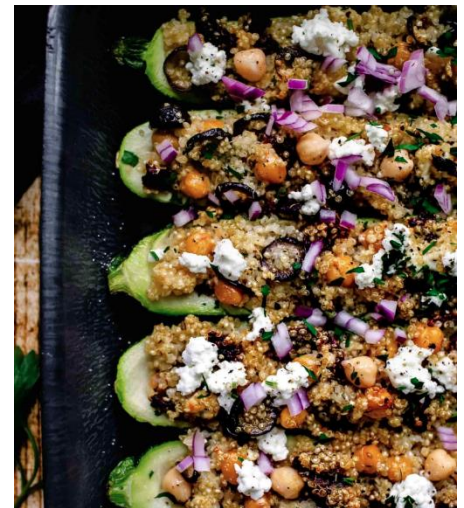


1. Preheat the oven to 425F.
2. In a small bowl combine the salt and spices with oil to create a paste. Coat chicken drumsticks with the paste.
3. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and lightly spray with cooking spray.
4. Arrange the chicken on the baking sheet and bake for 40-45 minutes, flipping halfway through, until the internal temperature reaches 165-degrees.

<https://www.platingsandpairings.com/oven-baked-chicken-legs/>

Greek Stuffed Zucchini

- ½ cup quinoa
- 1 cup water
- 4 medium zucchini
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. dried oregano
- ½ red pepper (diced)
- ¼ cup diced red onion
- 2 Tbsp. sliced olives
- ½ cup chickpeas drained and rinsed
- ¼ cup feta cheese or more
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- Zest of one lemon
- Salt (to taste)
- Pepper (to taste)
- Fresh parsley (for garnish)



1. Rinse quinoa under cold water and drain. Place quinoa and water in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, cover and cook 10 minutes, or until water is absorbed. Transfer to a large bowl to cool slightly.
2. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 400F.
3. Cut each zucchini in half horizontally, then scoop out the seeds. If they don't lie flat, trim a thin strip from the bottom. Place them on a baking sheet or in a 9 x 13 casserole dish.
4. Combine cooked quinoa with garlic powder, oregano, red pepper, red onion, olives, chickpeas, feta, olive oil, lemon juice and lemon zest. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.

5. Bake until the zucchini is tender, about 12-18 minutes. Serve immediately, garnished with chopped parsley, if desired.

<https://www.platingsandpairings.com/greek-stuffed-zucchini-boats-30-minute-recipe/>

Kale and Feta Turkey Burgers (Makes 12 burgers)



- 8 ounces Tuscan kale
 - 4 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
 - 1 small yellow onion, grated
 - 5 garlic gloves, minced
 - 2 pounds ground dark turkey meat
 - 2/3 cup crumbled feta cheese
 - 2 tsp. oregano
 - 1 tsp. kosher salt
 - ½ tsp. freshly cracked black pepper
1. Place a large skillet, cast-iron preferred, over medium heat.
 2. Remove and discard the kale stems and finely chop the leaves. Add 2 tablespoons of the olive oil to the pan and once hot, add the onion and garlic. Cook, stirring, for 2 to 3 minutes until lightly browned. Add the kale and cook until it is wilted. Remove from the heat and let cool slightly before making the burgers.
 3. In a large bowl, combine the ground turkey, feta, oregano, salt and pepper. Mix gently with your hands or a rubber spatula just until combined.
 4. Add the kale mixture to the turkey mixture and gently toss to distribute throughout. Spray your hands with a little cooking spray and form the mixture into 1/3 cup patties.
 5. Heat the pan back up to medium heat.
 6. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil and, working in batches so as not to overcrowd the pan, pan-fry the patties for 3 to 4 minutes per side until well browned and cooked through (a meat thermometer should register a 160F internal temperature).
 7. Serve on buns, bunless with rice and vegetables, or with a simply dressed arugula salad.

<https://www.splendidtable.org/story/2024/01/31/kale-and-feta-turkey-burgers>

Library Resources

Essential Spices and Herbs by Christina Nichol – 641.6383 NIC

Giada's Italy by Giada De Laurentiis – 641.5945 DEL

Herbs & Spices by Jillian Norman – 641.6383 NOR

Lidia's a Pot, a Pan, and a Bowl by Lidia Bastianich – 641.82 BAS

Mastering Spice by Lior Lev Sercarz – 641.6383 SER

The Pasta Queen by Nadia Caterina Munno – 641.822 MUN

The Science of Spice by Stuart Farrimond – 641.3383 FAR

Simple Pasta by Odette Williams – 641.822 WIL

Unbelievable Vegan by Charity Morgan – 641.5636 MOR