

Fluvanna County Public Library

Spice of the Month Club

Thyme

Flavor Profile: Subtle and dry with a hint of mint

Thyme (pronounced “time”) is an herb in the mint family. It is a small, hardy, evergreen shrub with small, aromatic leaves, indigenous to the Mediterranean basin. It grows wild on the hot, arid hillsides of its native region, where it has infinitely more flavor than it ever achieves in cooler regions. Wild thyme tends to be woody and straggly. Cultivated varieties have more tender stems and a bushy form; there are hundreds of them, each with slightly different aroma, and they have a tendency to cross-breed as well.



Common thyme and lemon thyme are the varieties most often used in cooking. Lemon thyme looks similar to common thyme but offers a distinctive lemon aroma and flavor. You may also encounter woolly thyme, creeping thyme, wild thyme, and elfin thyme – all of which are better suited for rock garden filler than culinary use.

The origins of thyme can be traced back to ancient societies throughout the Mediterranean, though it’s now grown and cooked with all over the world. Its uses have not always been purely culinary, however. There is evidence of ancient Egyptians utilizing thyme’s powerful antiseptic properties in embalming rituals. The Romans considered the herb a symbol of bravery and strength – particularly with regards to military prowess – and would exchange it among themselves, pin sprigs to their garments before battle, and burn bunches of it to purify the air in homes and places of worship.

During the Black Death in the Middle Ages, thyme’s active antiseptic compound, thymol, was thought to protect from infection and was used to treat skin lesions cause by the disease. Later, thyme was considered an indication of the presence of mythical fairies. Throughout its documented history, thyme has been incorporated into food preservation methods, owing to its pleasant herbal flavor and antibacterial properties.

Fresh vs. Dried

While dried thyme possesses a nearly identical profile to its fresh counterpart, it typically needs to be rehydrated – whether on its own or during the cooking process (i.e. adding to a braised dish or bread dough) – in order to display its full range. Dried thyme leaves can be substituted for fresh in any application, but use one-third as much dried thyme as you would use fresh.

Culinary Uses

Dried thyme is an herb that is commonly added to meats, marinades, and most any dish in need of seasoning. Fresh thyme and dried thyme can usually be used interchangeably, albeit in different proportions. Dried thyme can be homemade from fresh sprigs.

Thyme is a staple of many European and North African foods. It is an herb indigenous to the Mediterranean region, from Spain to Greece and from Morocco to Tunisia. Thyme typically has a long growing season in these

warmer climates, but it is not perennial. Drying thyme in the summer allows it to be saved and stored for the winter, making cooking with thyme into a year-round possibility.

Buy packaged fresh thyme in the refrigerated produce section year-round and dried leaves in the spice aisle.

Essential to most bouquets garnis.

Good with cabbage, carrots, corn, eggplant, lamb, leeks, legumes, onions, potatoes, rabbit, tomatoes, , wild mushrooms.

Combines well with: allspice, basil, bay, chili, clove, garlic, lavender, marjoram, nutmeg, oregano, paprika, parsley, rosemary, savory.

Health Benefits

- While more research needs to be conducted in order to confirm many of the suspected medicinal benefits of thyme, the herb is commonly used in the following ways to improve health
- Immunity Booster – Thyme is packed with vitamins and other nutrients, including Vitamin C, Vitamin A, Vitamin B-6, iron, calcium, magnesium, and manganese. These all help to boost the immune system and prevent colds, flus, and other illnesses and increasing your thyme intake can improve the function of your immune system.
- Cough & Sore Throat Remedy – The essential oils in thyme can help to alleviate coughs and sore throats caused by bronchitis, cold, and flu. The best way to use thyme as a cough and sore throat remedy is to brew it into a tea. Steep fresh or dried thyme leaves in boiling water for a few minutes-add peppermint leaves if you don't like the taste of thyme on its own-and sip to soothe a scratchy throat or nagging cough.
- Reduce Inflammation & Aid Healing – Thyme has anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and antiseptic properties, which is why it has long been used to help heal cuts, bruises, and scrapes. Products that contain thyme can be applied topically to help speed along the healing process, and consuming thyme helps reduce inflammation in the body.
- Add more thyme to your diet by brewing it into tea, using it to season meat and vegetable dishes, adding it as a garnish to your favorite drinks and taking thyme supplements in capsule form.
- Allergy to thyme oil is also common, especially in people sensitive to plants in the mint family (including oregano, lavender, and sage).

Homemade Italian Salad Dressing (2 cups)

- ½ Tablespoon garlic powder
- ½ Tablespoon onion powder
- 1 Tablespoon dried oregano
- ½ Tablespoon dried parsley
- 1 Tablespoon salt
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- ¼ tsp. dried thyme
- ½ tsp. dried basil
- 2 Tablespoons water
- 1 cup vinegar
- 1 ½ cups olive oil



Combine everything above in a jar or container capable of holding at least 2 ½ cups. Cover and shake well. Recipe makes just scant of two cups of dressing.

<https://dontwastethecrumbs.com/italian-dressing-recipe/>

Scalloped Vegetable Bake (Serves 6)

- 2 medium zucchinis, washed
- 3 medium potatoes, washed and peeled
- 5 medium carrots, washed and peeled
- 4 medium eggs
- 1/3 cup butter, melted
- 2/3 cup milk
- 1/8 tsp. nutmeg
- ½ tsp. dried basil
- ½ tsp. dried thyme
- Salt & pepper, to taste
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ cups shredded cheddar cheese



1. Preheat the oven to 350F. Line a 10-inch springform pan with parchment paper.
2. Carefully slice the zucchini, potatoes, and carrots very thinly with a mandolin or a sharp knife. Watch your fingers!
3. In a large bowl, combine the eggs, melted butter, and milk, and whisk until combined.
4. Add the nutmeg, basil, thyme, salt, pepper, and flour, and whisk well.
5. Add the sliced veggies to the batter and stir well until the slices are well-coated.
6. Add half of the vegetable slices to the prepared pan and flatten with a spoon.
7. Sprinkle cheese over the vegetables.
8. Top with the rest of the vegetables and cover the pan with aluminum foil.
9. Bake for about 1 ½ hours, until the vegetables are fully cooked and tender.
10. Let cool for at least 10 minutes, and release the springform, slice and serve.

<https://tasty.co/recipe/scalloped-vegetable-bake>

Savory Dip - Blend pinch of dry mustard and ¼ tsp salt with 4 oz cream cheese. Mix in ½ cup sour cream, 2 Tbsp mayo, 2 Tbsp lemon Juice, ¼ cup chopped green olives, ¼ tsp thyme, dash of tabasco, parsley or chives. Chill. If too thick, thin with a little mayo, milk or sour cream. (from Ellen Mayoue's kitchen – staff member)

Parmesan Zucchini and Corn (Serves 4)

- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 zucchinis, diced
- 1 cup corn kernels, frozen, canned or roasted
- ¼ tsp. dried basil
- ¼ tsp. dried oregano
- ¼ tsp. dried thyme
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Juice of 1 lime
- 2 Tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro or parsley (optional)
- ½ cup shaved Parmesan



1. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium high heat. Add garlic, and cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 1 minute.
2. Stir in zucchini, corn, basil, oregano, and thyme. Cook, stirring occasionally, until zucchini is tender and cooked through, about 4-5 minutes; season with salt and pepper, to taste. Stir in lime juice and cilantro/parsley.
3. Serve immediately, topped with Parmesan.

<https://damndelicious.net/2014/07/12/parmesan-zucchini-corn/>

Cheese Garlic Spaghetti Squash (Serves 4)

- 1 spaghetti squash (medium)
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 ½ cups Italian four cheese blend (divided)
- ¼ cup half and half
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- 3 garlic cloves (minced)
- ½ tsp. ground pepper
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 Tablespoon chives (chopped)



1. Preheat oven to 400F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Using a sharp knife, cut the top off of the squash then microwave for 3-4 minutes to slightly soften the squash. Cut in half lengthwise.
3. Scoop the seeds out of the inside. Sprinkle with salt & pepper (1/4 tsp each) and drizzle with olive oil. Place face down on the lined baking sheet. Bake for 40-45 min.
4. While the squash is baking mix: 1 cup of the cheese, half & half, thyme, garlic, salt and pepper (1/2 tsp. each) in a large mixing bowl.
5. When the squash is done baking; let it cool for about 15 minutes. Then using fork scrape the squash lengthwise to form the spaghetti strands. Add the squash to the cheese mixture and mix well until everything is combined.

6. Scoop the mixture back into the squash. Depending on the size of the squash and your preference, you may be able to get all of it into one half of the squash. Return the squash to the baking sheet and sprinkle with the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ of cheese. Bake for an additional 15 minutes. Top with chives and serve immediately.

<https://www.yummly.com/recipe/Cheesy-Garlic-Spaghetti-Squash-2632143?epik=dj0yJnU9LS16eXNEanNZdWNsSUpnWnk2MDVXcmdqRGJLMWNMdvEmcD0wJm49dVowMzB5TE1NZ3p5MzVEUEJSaXh5QSZ0PUFBQUFBR09rbGlw#directions>

Pasta with Fresh Tomatoes (Serves 2)

- $\frac{1}{2}$ pound dried rotini or other spiral pasta
- 3 small tomatoes (Roma)
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ Tablespoons finely chopped fresh thyme leaves OR 1 tsp. dried thyme
- 1 to 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup crumbled ricotta salata or feta



Fill a 4-quart pot three fourths full with salted water and bring to a boil for rotini. Coarsely chop tomatoes and mince garlic. In a large bowl toss together tomatoes, garlic thyme, vinegar, oil, and salt and pepper to taste. Marinate tomatoes 20 minutes. Cook rotini in boiling water until al dente and drain well in a colander. Add pasta to tomatoes and toss. Serve pasta sprinkled with ricotta salata.

<https://nesfp.nutrition.tufts.edu/world-peas-food-hub/world-peas-csa/produce-recipes/pasta-fresh-tomatoes-and-thyme>

Creamy Lemon Chicken with Thyme (4 servings)

- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 4 chicken breasts boneless skinless
- 1 tsp. garlic, minced
- 1 Tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tsp. salt (divided)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. pepper
- 1 Tablespoon butter
- 1 tsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. lemon zest
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. dried thyme or 1 tsp. fresh Thyme leaves



1. Rub the chicken breasts with garlic, lemon juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt and pepper and set aside for 15-20 minutes.
2. Heat olive oil in a large skillet and add chicken breasts. Cook the breasts for 5-6 minutes on each side until cooked through and not pink from inside. Once cooked, take the chicken breasts out of the pan and set them aside on a plate. Cover the plate with foil to keep the breasts warm.
3. In the same pan heat butter and add the flour. Stir the flour for a minute and slowly start whisking in the milk until all the milk is incorporated and there are no lumps.

4. Simmer the sauce while stirring occasionally till the sauce thickens slightly. Add the remaining salt, lemon zest and thyme and mix. Add the chicken back to the pan and simmer for two more minutes. Serve immediately.

<https://www.spendwithpennies.com/creamy-lemon-thyme-chicken/>

Ridiculously Easy Lemon Thyme Shortbread

- 1 cup very soft butter
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- Zest from one medium size lemon
- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. dried thyme leaves
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 2 Tablespoons sanding sugar Demerara, Turbinado or regular granulated sugar
- Fresh thyme leaves for garnish, if desired



1. Preheat oven to 325F. Lightly grease and then line an 8 or 9-inch cake pan (round or square) with parchment paper. Line a sheet pan with foil. Set both pans aside.
2. Combine soft butter, sugar, lemon zest and juice and vanilla in a medium large bowl. Stir for about 30 seconds until nice and creamy.
3. Add the flour, dried thyme and salt. Stir just until all the flour is incorporated. The dough will be crumbly. Press the dough firmly into the prepared pan to create an even surface. Be sure there are no loose crumbs around the edges of the pan. Sprinkle with the sugar.
4. Place the cake pan on top of the foil lined sheet pan. Bake for 35-45 minutes until the top is a nice golden brown. (The smaller your pan is, the thicker your shortbread will be and the longer it will take to bake.)
5. Invert the shortbread onto a flat plate. Place another plate on top and invert again so the sugared side is up.
6. Slide the shortbread onto a cutting board and sprinkle with a bit more sugar, if desired. With a long, sharp knife, cut it into serving size pieces. Transfer pieces to a wire rack to cool completely. Store in an airtight container.
7. Garnish when serving with a few fresh thyme leaves, if desired.

<https://thecafesucrefarine.com/ridiculously-easy-lemon-thyme-shortbread/>

Easy Oven Roasted Beets (Serves 4)

- 3 large beets (or 4 medium or 5 small beets)
- 1 Tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp. dried thyme
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp. orange zest



1. Preheat oven to 400F.
2. Remove the tops and the roots of the beets and peel each one with a vegetable peeler.
3. Cut the beets into 1 ½ inch chunks. (Small beets can be halved, medium ones cut in quarters and large beets cut into eighths.)
4. Place the cut beets on foil-lined baking sheet and toss with olive oil, thyme, salt and pepper. Roast for 35-40 minutes, turning once or twice with a spatula, until the beets are tender. Remove from the oven and immediately toss with orange zest. Season with salt and pepper as needed. Serve warm.

<https://www.spoonfulofflavor.com/easy-oven-roasted-beets/>

Spanish Garlic Chicken (Serves 4)

- 1 whole chicken (about 3 pounds) OR cut up chicken about 3 pounds
- 6 plump cloves of garlic
- 1 bunch of fresh flat leaf parsley
- 1 tsp. dried thyme (or 2-3 sprigs of fresh thyme)
- 1 Large whole lemon
- 1 small glass of dry sherry (or a good dry wine will do)
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and black pepper to taste



1. Cut the chicken into ten even bone-in pieces.
2. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper, and leave for 5 minutes to rest.
3. Brown the chicken in two tablespoons of olive oil, in a large non-stick frypan – medium high heat.
4. Turn heat down and cook covered with lid for 15 minutes.
5. Meanwhile – skin and bash your garlic with the blade of a large kitchen knife, then chop finely.
6. Chop a good handful of parsley and squeeze your lemon.
7. Remove the cooked chicken pieces to an earthenware and keep warm in a low-oven, retaining the juices in the pan.
8. Add the garlic to the pan juices and cook gently for about 10 minutes – being careful not to burn.
9. Now add the sherry and thyme – turn up the heat and let the sauce reduce to about half while you stir.
10. Pour off any excess oil, add the lemon juice and about ¾ of the chopped parsley and reduce slightly again.
11. Take the chicken from the oven – pour over the sauce – sprinkle the rest of the chopped parsley over the top – and serve.

<https://www.cutting-edge-mediterranean-recipes.com/garlic-chicken.html>

Vegetarian Red Bean and Rice (Yield 4 to 6)

- 2 cups cooked brown rice
- 1 yellow onion
- 4 stalks celery
- ½ green pepper
- 4 cloves garlic
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1 (14 oz.) can diced tomatoes
- 2 (15 oz.) cans red kidney beans (3 cups cooked)



- 1 cup vegetable broth
- ½ tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- Black pepper
- ¼ cup chopped parsley, to garnish
- Hot sauce, to garnish

1. Cook the rice according to package instructions.
2. Dice the onion and celery. Dice the pepper. Mince the garlic.
3. In a large saucepan (or Dutch oven), warm the olive oil over medium heat. Sauté the onion, celery, and pepper for 8 to 10 minutes over medium heat until softened. Add the minced garlic and cook for about 2 minutes more; watch the pan to avoid burning the garlic.
4. Meanwhile, drain and rinse the red beans., When the vegetables are ready, add the beans, diced tomatoes with their liquid, and vegetable broth. Stir in the cayenne pepper, paprika, oregano, thyme, 2 bay leaves, kosher salt and a few grinds of pepper.
5. Simmer over low heat for 20 minutes, until the sauce thickens. Meanwhile, roughly chop the parsley leaves.
6. When simmering is complete, remove the bay leaves and serve the beans over rice. Garnish with chopped parsley and hot sauce.

<https://www.acouplecooks.com/red-beans-and-rice/>

Library Resources

50 Beautiful Deer-Resistant Plants by Ruth Rogers Clausen – 635.9 CLA

Beat Bobby Flay by Bobby Flay – 641.6 FLA

The Diva Runs Out of Thyme by Krista Davis – PB MYS DAVIS

Easy Everyday Keto by America's Test Kitchen – 641.56383 AME

Essential Spices and Herbs by Christina Nichol – 641.6383 NIC

Healthy Air Fryer by America's Test Kitchen – 641.77 AME

Moosewood Restaurant Cooks at Home – 641.5 MOO

Vegetable Literacy by Deborah Madison – 641.65 MAD

Wild Mountain Thyme by Rosamunde Pilcher – LP F PIL

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