



Mint!

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You might enjoy the refreshing flavor and aroma of peppermint or spearmint-flavored foods and beverages. Other mint varieties, such as chocolate, apple and pineapple mint, are available in some locations. Try growing and preserving mint at home and have this fresh herb available to use in your kitchen.

Growing

Mint can be grown from seed, or small plants are available for purchase at many garden centers. Peppermint is hardy in North Dakota but most other mints will die unless brought indoors or mulched during the winter.

Mint will thrive in a rich, moist soil that receives full to partial sun. Add an inch or two of compost, peat moss or rotted manure before planting.

Keep in mind that mint can grow aggressively and spread easily in a gardening space. To contain the spread of mint, some gardening experts prefer planting mint in containers. Remove flowers and pinch back stems to keep the plants bushy.

Water the mint plants regularly, but do not overwater because overwatering can promote diseases. If you choose to fertilize, follow the directions carefully; most of the time a single application of a slow-release fertilizer is enough for the season.

You can share your mint plants with others by taking a cutting and placing it in a container of water until roots appear. Cuttings also will root easily in sand or potting soil.

Cooking Tips

Mint is a frequent accompaniment to pork or lamb. In England, roasted lamb often is accompanied by mint sauce. Mint is used in Middle Eastern dishes, such as the tabbouleh salad recipe featured in this handout. Mint also is used to make cold and hot beverages. To enjoy mint tea, add several mint leaves to boiling water, then allow to steep for up to five minutes. Add sweetener if desired.

Harvest and Storage

Mint leaves or sprigs can be harvested throughout the season and stored in a glass of water or wrapped in plastic in the refrigerator for up to one week. Harvest mint when its oils reach their peak of flavor late in the morning on dry, sunny days.

The youngest, smallest leaves tend to be the most flavorful. After harvest, be sure to rinse the herbs and stems thoroughly and pat dry with paper toweling.

Preservation

Mint can be used fresh or can be dried for longer-term storage.

- **Air-drying:** Tie the stems to create a small bundle. Place the bundle inside a brown paper bag. The bag will protect the plant from dust and other contaminants. Additionally, the bag helps prevent the drying leaves from falling onto the ground. Put the bag in a cool, dark room for approximately two weeks. The plant will fall apart easily once fully dried. After drying, remove the leaves from the stems and crush, if desired. Place in a container, such as a glass jar with a lid. Keep in a cool, dark place.
- **Oven-drying or dehydrator-drying:** Cover a baking sheet with parchment paper and place the herbs on top of the pan. Put the herbs in a conventional oven set at 100 F and bake until the plant is brittle and crumbles easily. Be sure to check the herb often while heating to prevent burning. Follow the manufacturer's directions if you use a food dehydrator.
- **Freezing:** Like other herbs, mint can be frozen in air-tight freezer bags. Rinse, drain and pat dry, then remove the leaves from the stems, spread in a single layer on a cookie sheet and freeze for 30 minutes. Then place in freezer bags labeled with the contents and date. Alternatively, chop the herb and place in an ice cube tray. Cover with water and freeze. Place the cubes in freezer bags labeled with the contents and date.



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Recipes

Key to abbreviations

c. = cup	g = gram	kg = kilogram
tsp. = teaspoon	mg = milligram	oz. = ounce
Tbsp. = tablespoon		



Mint Lemonade

- 5-6 large lemons for 1 c. of juice
- 1/3 c. mint leaves
- 3/4 c. sugar
- 8 c. water

Cut lemons and squeeze juice over strainer into liquid measuring cup. Add mint leaves and 1/4 cup sugar to pitcher and mash together with wooden spoon. Once mashed, add the lemon juice to the pitcher and stir until sugar is dissolved. Pour in water. Add remaining sugar and stir until dissolved. Refrigerate for at least two hours. Strain before serving if desired.

Makes nine (1-cup) servings. Each serving has 70 calories, 0 g fat, 0 g protein, 19 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber and 10 mg sodium.



Mint Jelly

- 1 3/4 c. mint juice (1 1/2 cups firmly packed fresh mint and 2 1/4 cups water)
- 3 1/2 c. sugar
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 (3-oz.) pouch liquid pectin

If you never have canned, see www.ag.ndsu.edu/food and review the handout about water-bath canning.

Sterilize canning jars and prepare two-piece canning lids according to manufacturer's directions.

To prepare mint juice, wash mint, crush leaves and stems or finely chop. Place in saucepan, add water and bring quickly to a boil. Remove from heat, cover and let stand 10 minutes. (A few drops of green food coloring can be added if desired.) Strain to remove mint. Discard mint.

To make jelly, measure 1 3/4 cups mint juice into a large saucepot. Stir in the sugar and lemon juice. Place on high heat, stir constantly and bring to a full boil that cannot be stirred down. Add the liquid pectin and heat again to a full rolling boil. Boil hard for one minute. Remove from heat; quickly skim off foam. Pour hot jelly immediately into hot, sterile jars, leaving 1/4 inch head space. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel; adjust two-piece metal canning lids.

Process in a boiling water-bath canner for five minutes at elevations up to 1,000 feet, 10 minutes from 1,001 to 6,000 feet or 15 minutes at altitudes above 6,000 feet.

Yield: About 3 or 4 half-pint jars

Serve with roasted lamb or chicken, or as a dessert topping for chocolate or vanilla ice cream. Try topping cream cheese with mint jelly and serving with crackers.

Recipe source: So Easy to Preserve, 6th ed. 2014. Bulletin 989, Cooperative Extension Service, the University of Georgia, Athens.



Lemon-Mint Tabbouleh

- 1/4 c. olive oil
- 1/4 c. lemon juice
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 c. bulgur (cracked wheat)
- 1 c. boiling water
- 1 c. cherry tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- 1/2 c. parsley, chopped
- 1/2 c. green onions, chopped
- 2 1/2 Tbsp. chopped fresh mint

Whisk oil, lemon juice and garlic in small bowl to blend; set aside. Place bulgur in large bowl and mix in boiling water. Let stand until bulgur is tender and water is absorbed, about 15 minutes. Mix in tomatoes, parsley, green onions and mint. Add oil mixture; toss to blend. Season with salt and pepper. Let stand at least 30 minutes to blend flavors.

Makes 10 (1/2-cup) servings. Each serving has 100 calories, 6 g fat, 2 g protein, 12 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber and 5 mg sodium.

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