

Freezing herbs

Freezing softens the leaf tissues, but doesn't alter flavor.

Because some herbs discolor when frozen, some directions call for blanching and then quick-cooling before freezing.

But color hardly matters when herbs are used in cooking, so the easiest method is simply to wash the fresh herbs and shake them dry, remove the leaves from the stems, and pack them in freezer bags. Squeeze out the air until you have a flat layer of herbs, then seal the bags tightly and label them.

For cooking, use the leaves directly from the freezer. Just break off as much as you need.

With larger-leafed herbs, you may want to chop the leaves before freezing them.

Some herb savers puree fresh herbs with water or oil, then pour the puree into ice cube trays. When the cubes are solid, move them to labeled freezer bags. Herb cubes are easy to use—just toss them into soups or stews.

Chervil, dill, fennel, marjoram, mint, parsley, and tarragon freeze very well. Herb growers report mixed results with coriander and chives. Basil retains the best quality when frozen in an olive oil puree.