



Using Spearmint

“The smell rejoiceth the heart of man,” said Turner of spearmint in his Herbal of 1568. If you love the scent and/or taste of spearmint, you’ll find all kinds of opportunities to use it fresh or dried.

For example, you might:

- Add it to sauces and gravies, particularly those served with hearty foods such as meats or tempeh.
- Sprinkle it on cooked vegetables, especially green peas, cabbage, and new potatoes.
- Include it in dressings for green or fruit salads, potato salads, and tabouli.
- Add it to sandwich spreads, such as hummus or pimento spread.
- Use it to make flavored vinegar (simply infuse in cold vinegar for a couple of weeks).
- Mix it into cold, puréed soups (such as cucumber soup).
- Include it in bean purées.
- Treat yourself to an after-dinner mint in the form of a cup of spearmint tea.
- Add the dried herb to potpourris and sachets for an herbal component.



- Use an infusion of spearmint as an herbal face rinse or as a mouthwash.
- Make a refreshing foot soak by adding a strong spearmint tea to warm water.

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herb savvy

Spearmint

Recipes for ...

» Minty Floral Bath Blend

» Tea for Two

... and more!



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Q&A

Are peppermint and spearmint interchangeable?

The two mints are closely related and can often be used in place of one another. (Peppermint is actually a hybrid of spearmint.) Both are fresh, cool, and herbal. They do look and taste different, though.

Spearmint is a more compact plant than peppermint, with smaller leaves. Peppermint, *Mentha piperita*, has a stronger, almost biting taste, while spearmint has a gentler flavor.

Because it's not overpowering, spearmint combines well with many other flavors, especially other seasonings like basil and fresh foods like lemon. Because peppermint is stronger, you'll want to use it more sparingly than spearmint.

By the way, there are many other mints, including pineapple mint, chocolate mint, ginger mint, and bergamot mint.

How is spearmint essential oil used?

Mint essential oil is used commercially in soaps, dental preparations, chewing gums, and candies. One pound of mint essential oil can flavor between 1,000 and 1,500 tubes of toothpaste or 40,000 sticks of chewing gum! In aromatherapy, spearmint essential oil is used to uplift and refresh. It's also often combined with lavender essential oil for bath blends. As with the fresh herb, spearmint is sometimes used when a less potent affect than peppermint's is desired. (Spearmint oil contains less menthol than peppermint oil.)

To read more about spearmint, find more spearmint recipes, and purchase spearmint (including organic spearmint), visit www.frontiercoop.com.



Spearmint

Familiar and friendly, it's hard to imagine that spearmint was born of a fit of jealousy. But according to myth, Persephone, wife of Pluto, turned a beautiful young water nymph named Menthe into a plant. Pluto wasn't unable to undo his wife's wrath, so instead he made his mistress plant smell wonderful! Today, that lovely aroma -- and fresh flavor -- contributes to cooking, body care, and home care, too.

A prolific, hardy perennial, *Mentha spicata* grows well in sun or partial shade and sports bright green, toothed and sharply pointed leaves. Like other mints, it has a square stem. The flowers arrive in long, slender, pink or white spikes from June through August.

Spearmint has been identified growing wild in almost every country in the world. The common name spearmint is sometimes attributed to the fact that it was found at the monastery at St. Pierre, France. (It's also attributed to the pointy shape of the plant's leaves.) Other common names for the plant include garden mint, green mint, lady's mint, mackerel mint, and hoja de hierbabuena. In America, spearmint was first cultivated -- and used in cooking and medicinally -- by the colonists.

You'll find spearmint flavor and scent in toothpastes and mouthwashes, lip balm, lozenges, and chewing gum. It's also occasionally added to lotions and creams. The most common cooking mint, spearmint's a signature ingredient in candies, ice creams, mint apple jelly and mixed drinks such as mint julep and mojito. Spearmint tea -- naturally caffeine free -- is calming when served warm and refreshing when iced. The fresh or dried leaves are also often added to sauces, dressings, and gravies (especially a traditional gravy for serving with lamb).



Minty Floral Bath Blend

Here's a bath blend that's refreshing and aromatic.

- 1 teaspoon dried spearmint leaf
- 1 tablespoon dried lavender flowers
- 1 tablespoon dried red clover blossoms
- 1 tablespoon dried lemon balm leaf

Crush the herbs gently with your fingers, then place in a muslin bag. Hang the bag on the tub faucet and allow the water to pour through the herbs as you draw your bath. (Another method is to make a strong tea using the herbs, strain, and add to your bathwater.)

Simple Sachet

Hang this sachet in your kitchen or bathroom for round-the-clock freshness.

- ½ cup dried spearmint leaf
- ½ cup lemon verbena leaf
- 1 tablespoon orris root powder

Using your hands, mix all ingredients together, crushing the herbs a bit as you mix. Use the mixture to fill a muslin bag or sew into a small piece of cotton fabric (making a tiny pillowcase). Use wherever you'll enjoy a perky aroma. (For added strength, add a drop or two of spearmint essential oil now and then, as the aroma fades.)

Tea for Two

This recipe makes two cups of tea that can be enjoyed hot or cold.

- 1 teaspoon dried spearmint leaf
- 1 teaspoon dried chamomile flowers
- 1 teaspoon green tea (such as Sencha, Gunpowder or Bancha)

Place mint leaves in a tea infuser or tea strainer in a small teapot. Pour two cups of boiling water over the leaves. Steep for about three minutes. Remove leaves and enjoy both the aroma and flavor.

