

# DRYING FRESH BASIL



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Dry basil has a more intense flavor when it is fresh but it degrades quickly. Dried herbs [2] are generally three to four times stronger than the fresh herb. The leaves have high moisture content and need to dry quickly to prevent molding. Air has to circulate freely around both sides of the leaf for the fastest drying. Drying fresh basil is an easy way to preserve the fresh lemony-anise to spicy-pepper flavor of the herb.

The first step in how to dry fresh basil is the harvesting. Herbs that are harvested for drying should be harvested in the morning just after the dew has air-dried the leaves. Cut the herbs from the plant before it gets too hot. Remove the stems back to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch above a growth node. This will allow more leaves to flush at the cut point. Harvest more than you would use when drying basil because the leaves will reduce in size by more than half.

There are two quick and effective methods of drying basil. You can cut stems around 6 inches long and bind them together in small bunches to hang dry. Place a paper bag around the bundles, which has holes punched in it. Hang the drying basil in a dimly lit to dark room with low humidity and warm temperatures. The bag will catch dry bits of the leaves as they fall off. You can also dry basil in a food dehydrator. Lay each leaf in a single layer on the racks and allow them to

dry in the machine until completely crisp.

A super fast method of drying basil uses the microwave. Use caution to prevent the herbs from scorching. Lay the leaves in a single layer on paper towels and microwave on low for up to 3 minutes. Check them every minute and remove any that are dry to prevent burning.

### Storing Dry Basil Leaves

Dried herbs will lose flavor over time and excess light increases this process. It is best to store them in a cupboard or dark pantry where light cannot penetrate. The container for storage must be dry and air tight. Remove stems and flowers if they were dried with the leaves. Crumble the leaves into containers so they are ready to use in recipes. A rule of thumb is to use one-quarter to one-third the amount of fresh basil leaves listed in a recipe.

Source and photo: Gardening know how

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/herbs/basil/drying-basil.htm>