

# HERBS AND VINEGARS

## QUICK HERB SPREADS

Try easy spreads to serve with crackers, melba toast, thin slices of baguette or cut up raw vegetables. Coat low fat or fat free cream cheese or a blend of equal parts ricotta cheese and cottage cheese with a chopped fresh herb mixture, or blend the herbs into the cheese. Try one of these combos, or create your own:

Chopped fresh basil and sun-dried tomatoes, packed in oil, drained and chopped  
Chopped fresh parsley and grated lemon zest  
Ground black pepper and chopped fresh oregano  
Chopped fresh sage and chopped, pitted, oil-cured black olives  
Chopped roasted garlic and finely chopped fresh thyme

### Herb/Vegetable Combinations from A to Z

Asparagus:	chives, dill, lemon balm, tarragon
Brussels Sprouts:	dill, sage, savory
Cabbage:	borage, caraway, dill seed, marjoram, mint, parsley, sage, savory, sweet basil, thyme
Carrots:	chervil, mint, parsley
Cauliflower:	chives, dill leaf and seed, fennel, rosemary
Green Beans:	dill, marjoram, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, tarragon, thyme
Lentils:	garlic, mint, parsley, savory, sorrel
Mushrooms:	basil, dill, lemon balm, marjoram, parsley, rosemary, salad burnet, savory, tarragon, thyme
Onions:	basil, marjoram in soup, oregano, sage, tarragon, thyme
Peas:	basil, chervil, marjoram in soup, oregano, sage, tarragon, thyme
Potatoes:	basil, bay, chives, dill, lovage, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, rosemary, savory, thyme
Sauerkraut:	dill, fennel seed, lovage, savory, tarragon, thyme
Spinach:	borage, chervil, marjoram, mint, rosemary for soup, sage, sorrel, tarragon
Tomatoes:	basil, bay, chervil, Chinese chives, chives, dill seed, garlic, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, sage, savory, tarragon
Turnips:	dill seed, marjoram, savory
Zucchini:	basil, dill, marjoram, rosemary, tarragon

## HERB GROWING

NAME	TYPE	PLANTING LOCATION
Rosemary	Perennial	Full/Part Sun
Sage	Perennial	Full Sun
Mints	Perennial	Full/Part Sun
Marjoram	Perennial	Full Sun
Oregano	Perennial	Full Sun (Replace when woody)
Parsley	Biennial	Full/Part Sun
Caraway	Biennial	Full Sun/Light Shade
Chives	Perennial (bulb)	Full Sun
Dill	Hardy Annual	Full Sun
Lavender	Perennial	Full Sun
Thyme	Perennial	Full/Part Sun
Tarragon	Perennial	Full/Part Sun

## JUDGING HERB VINEGARS

### Preparation:

- a.) Collect and read information about the category you will be judging.
- b.) Actually do what you will be judging so you know the category from A to Z.
- c.) Do not eat onions or other foods prior to judging that would weaken your sense of taste and smell.

### Arrival:

- a.) Familiarize yourself with the people in charge of the show.
- b.) Look over your classes.
- c.) Read the premium book for guidelines and rules.

### Dress Professionally

Have the tools needed to judge with you (ruler, magnifier, knife, reference books, listings of new cultivars in the category you are judging, etc.).

### Actual Judging Criteria

1. Must have a sparkling clean container
2. Vinegar must be crystal clear
3. Vinegars should be labeled as to ingredients
4. Labels should be dated
5. A ribbon seal is nice
6. Decorative bottles are nice
7. Vinegar should have a clean aroma, not strong, and a pleasing full taste
8. Herbs in the vinegar should look fresh without imperfect leaves (diseased or insect damaged)
9. Absolutely no insects in the container
10. Should be several samples of the herb in the container
11. Look for market value - would you purchase the sample if it was for sale

### Problems Seen In Exhibits

1. Sediment in bottom of container
2. Liquid not clear - cloudy
3. Not properly labeled or dated
4. Wrong herb listed on the label
5. Using other than glass container
6. Incorrect lids - should be cork, plastic or glass
7. Molds on the surface of the vinegar

## GENERAL RULES FOR HERB JUDGING

1. Check the appropriate premium book for rules and regulations of the show or fair. Request a premium book when you agree to judge.
2. Acquaint yourself with information on the classes you will be judging. Get catalogs with examples of what is available on the market. Use resource materials at hand to answer your own questions and as a reference to reinforce your judging decisions.
3. Become familiar with show's geographic location in order to determine the herb's growing culture and locally available varieties.
4. Arrive early at the site and preview the classes. Now that the basics are covered, you begin to judge the herbs as exhibited.
5. You will be looking for:

cleanliness and freshness - look at stem, leaves, etc.  
insect damage  
diseases  
greening - sunburn or shade  
over mature  
immature  
not true to variety  
poor general appearance  
mold  
too many/too few stems (specimens)  
not labeled/labeled with botanical and common name  
entered in correct class  
container presentation - leaves removed below water level

**Showmanship is that something extra in presentation that makes the difference between a Champion and a Grand Champion.**











Photo Courtesy of Wikipedia

Stevia  
*Stevia rebaudiana*

#### MOST CUT HERBS

THAT ARE  
DISPLAYED FOR  
THEIR LEAVES  
AND STEMS  
SHOULD HAVE  
VERY FEW, IF  
ANY, FLOWERS



Photo courtesy of Mountain Valley Growers

Egyptian mint,  
*Mentha niliaca*

## Judging Herbs and Vinegars

### Cut Herbs

- The herb(s) must be owned and grown by the exhibitor for a set minimum amount of time before they are cut. *Cilantro might be a possible exception*
- Correct or appropriate number and length of stems
- Appropriate maturity level. Consistency in size, shape, and length in multiple stems; and balance in multiple varieties
- Cut herbs should be healthy, well grown, clean, and fresh.
- No pests. Discuss this with the supervisor and make a note on the entry card. ***Parsley worms are especially voracious and need to be removed***
- No embellishments
- Well-groomed entry: includes container presentation — leaves removed below water level
- Most cut herbs that are displayed for their leaves and stems should have very few, if any, flowers. This includes cilantro, mint, and oregano

### Dried Herbs

- Produced by the exhibitor
- Dried herbs should have consistency in size in stems and leaves
- Well preserved
- Container should be of an appropriate size and style. Glass is best. It should be clean, clear, and colorless
- Lids should be clean and free of rust
- Correct or appropriate quantity of herbs
- Well-groomed entry, includes container presentation. There should be no debris in the container

### Criteria for Judging Flavored Vinegars

- **DO NOT SHAKE THE CONTAINER.** Carefully check for clarity of the vinegar. There should be no sediment on the bottom of the container.
- Correct class
- Approved container and closure
- Well groomed entry — includes no sleeve on the bottle neck and no dispenser in the bottle opening
- Correct fill line
- Flavored vinegar should be accurately labeled as to the ingredients and the production date
- The only ingredients allowed in flavored vinegar are vinegar, herbs, spices (inc. hot peppers and onion), edible flowers, and fruits
- There should be no salt, sugar, artificial sweeteners, flavor extracts, food coloring, etc.

### Criteria for Judging Flavored Vinegars, cont.

- The flavors should be well blended
- The original ingredients used to flavor and color the vinegar should have been strained from the product
- It is **OPTIONAL** to add small amounts of fresh ingredients to the flavored vinegar at the time it is bottled. Herbs and edible flowers in the vinegar should be clean and fresh, and be free of air bubbles and damage
- *If the fair or Health Department*

*does not allow vinegar containers to be opened, then extra weight must be placed on all other criteria*

#### CAUTION:

1. Excessive amounts of herbs, spices, and so forth in the finished vinegar adversely affect the product, and
2. Flavored vinegars should be kept cool — preferably refrigerated — before being entered in a fair. This is especially important for flavored vinegars made from rice and wine vinegars



Photo Courtesy of Wikipedia

HERBS AND EDIBLE FLOWERS IN THE VINEGAR SHOULD BE CLEAN AND FRESH, AND BE FREE OF AIR BUBBLES AND DAMAGE

### Containers and Closures for Flavored Vinegars

All fairs require any flavored vinegar entry to be in an approved, sparkling clean, sealable glass container. NO cruet, mayonnaise jar, etc.

The size and type of a container for flavored vinegar might be indicated in the fair book, but if not, look for the following:

- The container should provide a good presentation. It should be made of **clear glass** that is colorless or that has a very pale tint. There should be no chips or cracks in it

- It should be easy to see through the glass to check the fill line as well as to check the clarity of the vinegar and to see any other ingredients
- Approved closures include:
  1. New air-tight plastic wine tasting stopper
  2. Vacu Vin™ stopper
  3. New food grade cork
  4. Plastic storage lid
  5. Rust-free metal lid — either a one-piece or a two-piece lid for canning jars

#### THE CONTAINER

SHOULD PROVIDE A GOOD PRESENTATION

### There are Many Types of Bottles and Jars

The following containers work well for flavored vinegars:

- Wine bottles in various shapes, 375 mL, 500 mL and 750 mL sizes
- Vinegar bottles, 500 mL size

- Selected canning jars, 16 oz., 24 oz., and tall 1L sizes  
[Note: Flavored vinegars are neither water bath canned nor pressure canned]

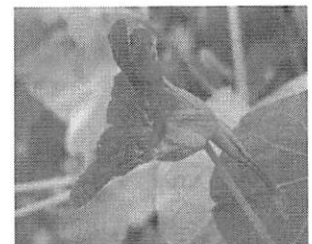


Photo Courtesy of Wikipedia

NASTURTIUM  
TROPAEOLUM MAJUS

THE FLOWERS CAN BE USED TO ADD COLOR TO FLAVORED VINEGAR