

Garden Herbs – A Healthy Option, by John Kevin Beasley

The use of fresh garden herbs has health benefits beyond the great flavor profiles they produce. In my own garden, we grow fresh herbs year-round. At least one or more are used in daily recipes to help promote healthy living and boost immunity. Thyme, rosemary, garlic chives, dill, and mint all grow in the loamy riverbed soil of the Elizabeth River (average pH 6.3). Herbs grow best in soil with a pH between 6.0 – 7.5. At least twice a year, we harvest large portions and dry them for later use. This article will focus on two of these herbs and their health benefits in the kitchen.



The use of fresh Rosemary, from the Latin word *ros marinus* meaning “dew of the sea”, and a member of the mint family *Lamiaceae*, and Thyme, from the Latin word *Thymum*, also a member of the mint family *Lamiaceae*, date back to ancient Egyptian history when these herbs were used as a part of mummification. Moving forward in history, the Romans thought that eating thyme before or during a meal would cure poisons, making it especially popular among Roman emperors.

Today fresh Rosemary is known to be a source of antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds. These compounds also help boost the immune system and improve blood circulation. Rosemary can also be dried for use later in certain recipes. Rosemary is considered a cognitive stimulant; it helps with alertness, stimulates intelligent thought, and provokes memory performance.

Using fresh Thyme helps to lower blood pressure, boost immunity, increase moods, works as an excellent cough remedy when used in tea, or a home diffuser, and the smell helps to dispel odors. Dried Thyme can be mixed with dried Rosemary, Basil, and Oregano to make a blend suitable for any recipe calling for Italian spices.

The addition of fresh herbs from my garden has allowed me to alter recipe ingredients, reduce sodium and potassium content during and after the cooking process, and has helped lower blood pressure for members of my family. When we reach for fresh herbs, we know where they came from and depend on the health benefits. Fresh is always a better option.

Below is a simple 15-minute recipe using fresh herbs, Brussel sprouts, and homemade bacon w/o nitrates and nitrites; no salt added.

Brussels sprouts are considered a super food because of the numerous nutritional qualities. They are high in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Brussel sprouts have been shown to reduce inflammation and improve blood sugar control.

(cont.)

Brussel Sprouts with Bacon and Fresh Herbs (created by J.K. Beasley)



2lbs Brussel Sprouts, washed/trimmed/halved
½lb Homemade peppered bacon, cut into small pieces
2-4 cloves minced fresh garlic
Fresh Thyme and Rosemary – 1-2 sprigs each
s/p to taste – no salt added during the cooking process
Balsamic glaze (1/2c Balsamic Vinegar, 2 Tbsp Honey)

Place Brussel sprouts, garlic, Herbs, and bacon in cooker and cook over med heat until bacon is done, about 10 mins, stir occasionally.

Transfer to platter and glaze.
S/P to taste

Photo Credit: John Kevin Beasley

References:

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