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Welcome

Welcome to the February installment of my newsletter.

It surely took a while, even for one not fully accustomed to New Zealand seasons, for summer to come into its own this year. Now though, it seems to have settled in with a vengeance! And despite the drizzle over the past week, we're in for a long, hot and slightly dry summer according to Met-Service's Weather Outlook...although the nights are just slightly chilly again!

Besides looking at garden-

ing in a hot February, this newsletter will also look at another summer Kiwi favourite - the BBQ, and specifically focus on ways to add herbs to your next outdoor gathering. Enjoy!

In the Garden

February is often the hottest and driest month in Auckland, and although most gardens seem to have slipped over their "pretty" peak, with many plants growing straggly while going to seed now, the productive gardening part of summer is far from over. There is still many warm weeks ahead

in which new crops can be established before the cooler autumn weather sets in.

Sow chives, fennel, oregano, marjoram, and parsley in the garden. Chilies can still be started in seed trays to be transplanted in a few weeks' time.

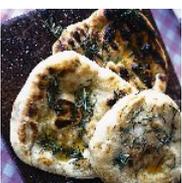
Other than harvesting your summer bounty, saving seeds and cultivating newly opened patches of soil for winter plantings, the biggest gardening task in February is watering. Water regularly, especially potted herbs, but remember to be water wise!



"Thrill of the Grill" - Herbs for a BBQ

Although schools are back and the last bit of the festive mood from the holidays is starting to dissipate, there is still plenty of light left till late for summery good times to be had, and what better way to celebrate than with firing up the BBQ?!

There are almost never-ending possibilities of bringing herbs to a BBQ party - from dry rubs and seasonings on prime cuts, or herb marinades for vegetarian options, to fly and mosquito repellents and herb themed country-style decor. Following are just a few thoughts on how to bring the bounty of your herb garden to shine when you get a few friends of family members over for a barbie.



<http://www.jamieoliver.com/>



<http://www.lifeproof.com>



<http://www.celebrations.com/>

Points of interest:

- Barbeque (or barbecue) traces back to Haiti where the word *barabicu* or *barbecoa* translates to *framework of sticks set upon posts*.
- Almost every country and culture in the world has their own tradition of grilling food, from the Afrikaans 'braai' to the Chinese 'chuan'.

Herbs for the BBQ

Dry Rubs & Seasonings

Everyone has a favourite shake-it-on or rub-it-in blend of salt, spices and herbs.. Ranging from simple flavoured salts to elaborate mixes, some blends are handed down from generation to generation while others are made up on the fly with whatever is at hand.

Best BBQ seasoning

Combine 1/3 cup salt, 1/3 cup paprika, 1/4 cup dried onion flakes, 1 teaspoon garlic powder, 1 teaspoon black pepper, 1 tablespoon cumin, 2 tablespoons chili (hot or not), 1 tablespoon dried thyme or oregano.

Rub meat liberally before grilling.



Thyme & Lemon Zest Salt Blend

Blend 1/4 cup coarse salt with 2 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme and 1 tablespoon lemon zest. Can be kept refrigerated for 1 week. Season chicken or fish.

Fresh Herbs

Dry is good, especially for spices, but if you have a few culinary herbs growing in your garden, chances are that they'd be perfect for the barbeque! Just look at these amazing BBQ ideas with fresh herbs:

- If you use a coal/wood BBQ, fresh herbs like rosemary, thyme, sage or oregano can be put right on the coals.

- herbs can be made into basting brushes—twine a bunch of woody herbs (rosemary, thyme or sage) to the end of a wooden spoon.



- partially stripped rosemary twigs makes great skewers!
- herbs can be added to foil packets for flavour (e.g. lemon, garlic and dill with fish).
- herbs can be made into amazingly flavourful marinades and oils, mustards, sauces and dressings.

Wine and Herb Marinade for Red Meat

Mix together: and marinate meat for at least four hours or overnight:

- ◇ 1/3 cup red wine
- ◇ 3 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- ◇ 2 Tbsp minced shallots
- ◇ 1 Tbsp olive oil
- ◇ 1 Tbsp sugar
- ◇ 1 Tbsp minced garlic
- ◇ 1 Tbsp dry mustard
- ◇ 3 tsp chopped fresh herbs such as basil, oregano, marjoram or thyme
- ◇ 3/4 tsp salt
- ◇ 1/4 tsp pepper

Meat Free BBQ

Whether bread, cheese and vegetables make a side to your meat, or account for your whole meal, there is plenty of amazing herb recipes for all of them on the BBQ:

- add herbs to your BBQ flat breads or focaccias—rosemary and sea salt is a great combination for bread.
- grill mixed vegetable skewers that have rested in a Mediterranean inspired marinade
- add a selection of leafy green herbs (Good King Henry, Salad Burnet, Chicory, Chervil, Parcel, Mitsuba etc) and edible flowers to your next mixed salad
- sprinkle your buttered BBQ corn-on-the-cob with chili, cilantro and a squirt of lime juice
- make a salad dressing using fresh herbs
- create delectable home-made



saucers and mustards to add to the condiments selection (e.g. thyme and

beer wholegrain mustard, herb pesto, and the culinary treat that is Chimichurri)



- compound butters are all the craze for breads, topping steaks or melting into vegetables. Garlic butter is an old

Herbs for the BBQ

- favourite, but why not experiment with different herb pairings to excite your palate— (e.g. chives, thyme, sage and rosemary; or chili for a bite!)
- cheese on the BBQ? Of course! Halloumi cheese is a good choice, drizzled with olive oil, lemon juice and fresh Mediterranean herbs. Or what about making a grilled camembert or brie drizzled with honey, rosemary and figs...

Traditional Chimichurri

- ◇ ¼ cup chopped parsley
- ◇ 3 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- ◇ 4 large garlic cloves, minced
- ◇ 2 Tbsp oregano leaves
- ◇ 2 tsp crushed red pepper
- ◇ Kosher salt and ground pepper
- ◇ ½ cup extra_virgin olive oil

Blend in a food processor. Refrigerate until use, let come to room temperature before serving.

Drinks

Arguably beer is made from hops (a herb) and barley (a herb again), so cracking open a cold one could be seen as ‘partaking herbally’! But there are other great herbal treats to put out on the drinks table:

- lemonade spruced up with lavender, mint or berries.
- flavoured ginger beer
- mojitos or mint juleps
- herbal iced teas (lemon balm + pineapple sage; rooibos + lemon verbena; hibiscus +

honey, strawberry + basil)

- infused water (apple + cinnamon; cucumber + mint)
- or how about these ideas:
 - * Pear and thyme mimosa
 - * Blackberry and sage cooler
 - * Figtini with vanilla and cardamom



Stylewithinreach @ Sarah Culver

Desserts

Oh the boundless possibilities! All manner of cakes, tarts and sweet treats can be created with herbs. Currently a favourite of mine in this hot weather is herb and spice ice creams! You can find some amazing recipes for herb inspired ice creams, granitas, sorbets.

Citrus Tarragon Sorbet

Created by Diana Yen for Cherry Bombe - www.cherrybombe.com.

- ◇ 1 cup water
- ◇ 1 cup sugar
- ◇ 1 small bunch tarragon (about 10 sprigs)
- ◇ Zest of half a grapefruit
- ◇ 2 cups fresh pink grapefruit juice
- ◇ ½ cup fresh tangerine juice
- ◇ 2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice



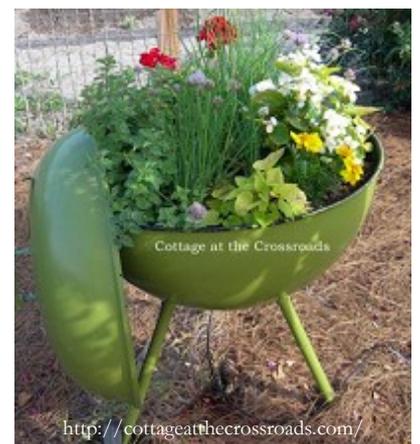
Combine the water, sugar, tarragon and grapefruit zest in a small saucepan over moderate heat. Stir until the sugar has dissolved. Remove from the heat and set aside to steep for 5 minutes. Add the grapefruit juice, tangerine juice and lemon juice to the sugar mixture. Strain with a fine sieve into a bowl, discarding the pulp and herbs. Let the mixture cool, then transfer into a container. Cover and freeze overnight. Let soften at room temperature before scooping.

Keeping the bugs away

If you are trying to live a more natural and organic life with fewer chemicals and synthetic pesticides, you can look at the following herbs that have all been listed as effective (to a degree): basil, bay, mint, catnip, bee balm, citronella, lemongrass, tansy, sweet woodruff, rue and Artemisia.

A BBQ Garden

If the time has come to retire the old BBQ, why not convert it into a beautiful herb garden?



<http://cottageatthecrossroads.com/>