

Epicurious

Jenny Garing, linguist, traveller, gourmet, teacher, and the creative force behind Lyttelton's Ground Culinary Centre (destroyed in the February 2011 earthquake) provides answers for Zest readers' culinary question.

Q. I'd like to use more fresh herbs in my cooking. Can you please categorise for me the type of dish I would use parsley in? And chervil, sorrel, rosemary and mint. And do you have a good recipe for sorrel other than soup?

Margaret King, Christchurch

JENNY GARING: Parsley complements most flavours, without seeming to dominate, yet still makes its presence felt. The stalks have the most flavour. They are great for flavouring soups and stocks (coriander roots are used the same way in Asian soups and stews). Parsley leaves add a clean, crisp flavour and are good with white fish, white meats, potatoes, sauces and stuffings. The herb is an essential ingredient in tabouleh and in French or Italian dishes containing capers or garlic.

Fresh parsley has the added bonus of neutralising the odour of onion or garlic.

Chervil has a slight aniseed flavour and can be used like tarragon. Use it with egg dishes, as a garnish on vegetables, and in vegetable soups. Like tarragon, it has an affinity with chicken, or in butter sauces with white fish.

Often considered "upmarket parsley", it can be added to all salads to give them a lift. Because of its delicate nature chervil should never be cooked for long (less than

10 minutes).

The astringent, fresh taste of **rosemary** complements starchy foods, so add it to potatoes, breads and scones. It also counters the richness in fatty meats such as pork, lamb and duck. It goes surprisingly well with courgettes, eggplant, Brussels sprouts or cabbage, and is excellent in a tomato sauce for pasta.

Mint is the one of the few herbs I use dried. In Turkish and other Middle Eastern dishes, dried mint is essential. Fresh mint chopped through fruit salad is refreshing. It adds a fresh note to white meats and potatoes, and of course it complements peas,

Rosemary complements starchy foods

tomatoes and eggplant if used sparingly. Added to yoghurt, it makes a refreshing sauce for hot foods – both Indian and Middle Eastern.

Sorrel has a strong taste as it contains oxalic acid. I personally don't like sorrel soup, but the fresh citrus-like flavour of sorrel does make a good sauce.

Try Yotom Ottolenghi's version (it's a good keeper, in the fridge). Put 90g washed sorrel leaves, 90g Greek-style yoghurt, 1 clove crushed garlic, ½ tsp Dijon mustard, pinch salt and 2 Tbsp olive oil into a blender or processor and blitz until you have a smooth bright green sauce.

Q. American cookbooks confuse me. What on earth is a "stick of butter"?

A. A stick of butter was sold originally as a quarter of a pound; 4 sticks making up a pound of butter. Technically, that means a stick is around 113g of butter, but

Ground's sorrel salad

This is a recipe we sometimes serve at the Lyttelton Farmers Market. It makes a nutritious salad, or you can re-heat it and use it as the base for a chicken or sausage meal.

- 2 cans of cannellini or butter beans
- 60g butter
- 4 Tbsp of olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 4 spring onions, sliced lengthways into strips
- 1 red chilli, finely chopped (optional)
- ½ tsp salt
- 1½ Tbsp lemon juice
- 150g feta, broken into pieces
- 2 tsp sumac
- 200g sorrel cut into thin strips, plus extra for garnish

Rinse and drain the beans and leave until they are very dry. Lightly fry them in batches so that you don't crowd the pan. To do this, add some of the butter and oil to a hot fry pan. Add only enough beans to cover the bottom of the pan and cook on medium heat for a couple of minutes on each side. Put in a bowl and fry the next batch. When cooking the last batch, as soon as the beans are almost done, add the spring onion, garlic, sorrel and chilli (if using) and saute briefly. Add the rest of the beans to the pan and season with salt. Put on to a serving dish and sprinkle with the lemon juice, scatter the feta over the top and a sprinkling of sumac. Finish with a sprinkling of finely chopped sorrel and some olive oil.

it is usually converted as 110g for convenience sake.
website: ground.co.nz

■ We welcome culinary questions. Please email them to zest@press.co.nz with epicurious in the subject line.



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