



Fresh herbs are leafy greens, too

Most people treat fresh herbs as a garnish, a few leaves scattered on top before serving, and leave it at that, which is a bit like buying concert tickets and only staying for the opening act.

Parsley, cilantro, mint, basil, and dill are leafy greens, and when used by the cup, they deliver the same category of protective compounds as kale, spinach, and chard, often in more concentrated form.

Fresh herbs are rich in vitamins K, C, and A, along with calcium, iron, and folate. Parsley has more vitamin C per gram than an orange and more calcium per gram than milk. Flavonoids, polyphenols, and volatile compounds like rosmarinic acid and luteolin are associated with antioxidant activity, reduced inflammation, and protective effects on cardiovascular and cognitive health.

Using more herbs is straightforward. Add a full cup of chopped parsley or cilantro to a grain bowl, a lentil soup, or a bean salad instead of just a tablespoon. Make a sauce that is mostly herb (like chimichurri, zhug, chermoula, or salsa verde), and use it as a dressing. Build a salad where the herbs are the base rather than the accent.

Here's what it looks like when herbs take center stage:

- **Tabbouleh (Lebanese):** mostly parsley and mint with a small amount of bulgur, tomato, cucumber, lemon, and olive oil.
- **Sabzi polo (Persian):** herb rice made with masses of fresh dill, parsley, cilantro, and fenugreek.
- **Chimichurri (Argentinian):** parsley, oregano, garlic, red pepper flakes, olive oil, and red wine vinegar, used generously over roasted vegetables or grilled tofu.
- **Zhug (Yemeni):** a green hot sauce of cilantro, parsley, green chili, garlic, and spices, used as a condiment or dressing over everything.

- **Salsa verde (Italian herb sauce, not to be confused with the Mexican tomatillo version):** parsley, capers, garlic, lemon, and olive oil, sharp and tangy, spooned over anything that needs a lift.
- **Chermoula (North African):** a marinade and sauce of cilantro, parsley, garlic, cumin, paprika, lemon, and olive oil, used on roasted vegetables, fish, or tofu.
- **Kuku sabzi (Iranian):** an egg dish that is more herb than egg, packed with parsley, cilantro, dill, and fenugreek, with walnuts and dried barberries.
- **Cold soba noodle salad (Japanese-inspired):** soba tossed with shredded cucumber, scallions, sesame, and enough mint, basil, and cilantro that the herbs are half the bowl.

Growing your own is the most budget-friendly move you can make. Fresh herbs at the grocery store are expensive relative to how much you get, and a pot on a windowsill or a few containers on a balcony will outproduce what you can buy for a fraction of the cost. The easiest herbs to grow at home, requiring minimal effort and forgiving of neglect:

Basil: needs sun and warmth, grows fast, pinch the flowers to keep it producing.

Mint: grows aggressively in almost any condition, best kept in its own container or it will take over.

Chives: virtually indestructible, come back every year, and look after themselves.

Parsley: slow to start but steady once established, grows well in partial shade.

Cilantro: bolts quickly in heat, so sow in batches every few weeks for a continuous supply.

Dill: tall, feathery, and easy, just give it sun and water.

Thyme and oregano: drought-tolerant, perennial in most climates, and almost impossible to kill.

All of them grow well in containers with basic potting soil, a sunny spot, and regular watering, no garden required!

Green Goddess Dressing, Sauce, and Marinade



Versatile enough to use all week, and delicious enough that you will.

Ingredients (~1 cup):

- 1 cup fresh herbs, any combination of parsley, basil, chives, tarragon, and mint
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 small clove garlic
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup plain Greek yogurt or silken tofu for a vegan version
- 2 tablespoons water, plus more to thin
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Combine everything in a blender or food processor and blend until smooth. Add water a tablespoon at a time until it reaches a pourable consistency. Taste and adjust for salt, lemon, and garlic.
2. As a dressing: Toss with grain bowls, green salads, or shredded cabbage slaws. Thin it slightly with water or lemon juice so it coats without clumping.
3. As a sauce: Spoon generously over roasted vegetables, baked tofu, falafel, or a bowl of lentils. It also works well dolloped onto flatbread with whatever vegetables you have around.
4. As a marinade: Toss tofu slabs, tempeh, or vegetables in a generous amount and let sit for at least 30 minutes before grilling or roasting. The yogurt or tofu base helps it cling and caramelize.

Notes: The dressing keeps refrigerated for up to 4 days. It will thicken as it sits, so thin with a splash of water before using. Avocado can replace the yogurt or tofu for a richer, creamier version.