

ROSEMARY FOR CULINARY USE

Rosemary is a popular garden plant grown as a shrub, as a groundcover or in a container.

There are many questions about which variety of rosemary is the best for culinary use. Basically, all upright and trailing varieties can be used for cooking. There will be slight variations in flavor from plant to plant since the amount of essential oil in the leaves is dependent on the conditions in which the plant is grown. Plants grown in lean soils with minimal water and fertilization will tend to produce more essential oil and have a stronger, more pungent flavor than those grown in rich, heavily irrigated soils. In the final analysis, it comes down to personal choice as to the subtlety of the flavor you are looking for.

There are also some subtle differences between varieties. The smaller growing, more grey-leaved variety called 'Arp' has a more resinous, 'piney' character which is easily recognized by rubbing the leaves. Feel free to test leaves of different varieties to find the one most suited to your taste.

The one most often recommended for cooking is 'Tuscan Blue' as it is relatively mild and not too strong. Remember that a little bit goes a long way, so too much flavor can be as undesirable as too little. Fresh leaves will also be more pungent than dried leaves.

Rosemary grown indoors tends to be less flavorful unless grown under lights with a minimum of 12 hours a day.