

**JANUARY 2005**  
**HERB OF THE MONTH**  
**Educational material compiled by Arlene Kestner**

**Common Name:** Chervil

**Botanic Name:** *Anthriscus cerefolium*

**General Description:** Chervil is a low growing, light green, lacy, fernlike leaf annual culinary herb of the carrot family. It derives its name from the Latin *chaerophyllum* which means "festive herb" or "herb of joy."

**Cultivation:** Chervil grows well in pots or in the garden: all it needs is moderately rich soil, moisture, good drainage, and a sunny situation. It is an annual that bolts easily, so it is probably wise to start new plants fairly often (chervil matures quickly--in 6 weeks under ideal conditions).

In south Louisiana, sow seeds on the soil surface in late fall, leaving them uncovered (or perhaps under a trace of sifted soil). Keep the soil moist, though not wet. Germination takes place in 10-14 days. It is best to direct-seed where you want it, because chervil does not take to being transplanted. Note that chervil seed has a life expectancy of a year or so at most: don't try to save leftovers from season to season.

**History/Region of Origin:** Chervil is native to Eastern Europe and western Asia. It was introduced to France and England by the Romans more than 2,000 years ago

**Hardiness Rating-** Chervil can tolerate some frost.

**Parts Used** – leaf

**Nutritional Value:** Chervil contains vitamin C, carotene, iron and magnesium.

**Taste and Aroma**

The leaves of this aromatic and sweet herb bear a slight resemblance to parsley; however, the flavor is more distinctive with a trace of anise.

**Folk Uses:** Pliny thought that hiccups could be stopped by drinking vinegar containing the seed of chervil and that it was good for stomach disorders. During the time of the plague, chervil roots were boiled and eaten as a preventative. Poultices of chervil leaves have been laid on boils, bruises, and other skin afflictions by the ancient Arabians, Greeks, Romans, and Europeans. The leaves were boiled in wine for urinary disorders and for use as a speedy diuretic. The juice pressed out of the fresh flowering herb has been used for scrofula, eczema, gall stones, abscesses, dropsy, and women's abdominal complaints.

**Culinary Uses:** Poultry, seafood including fish and oysters, vegetables (corn, peas, and carrots) and cream soups all benefit from the flavor of chervil. Use chervil as an ingredient in Béarnaise sauce. Chervil is an important flavor element in French and European cuisine and the spice blend of bouquet garni. Chervil is one of the classic components of the popular French herb blend, fines herbes along with parsley, chives and tarragon.

Chervil brings out the flavor of other herbs. Stir it into scrambled eggs or cheese and ham omelets. Chervil is useful for adding color and flavor to creamy dressings for pasta and potato salads. Add it to butter sautéed mushrooms, then serve over grilled steak or chicken breasts.

Bits of chervil should be snipped from the outside edge of the plant with scissors and used fresh. The leaves will quickly lose their flavor and should be added to a dish just before serving.

Because of the way its volatile oils react to heat, chervil should be added to soups, stews and sautés at the very last minute, to prevent it from turning bitter. Chervil tends to lose much of its flavor when dried. To preserve harvest of chervil, coarsely chop the herb and blend it with a small amount of vegetable oil. Freeze it in small glass jars. (Be sure to cover top of herb concentrate with a 'slip' of oil.) Or, make chervil butter, which also will keep well in the freezer.

## Recipes

### Classic Omelet

2-3 eggs  
Pinch of salt

1 tablespoon fresh chervil, parsley, chives and tarragon, finely minced  
1 tablespoon butter

Beat the eggs, salt and herbs for 20 to 30 seconds until the whites and yolks are just blended. Place the butter in a 7" omelet pan and set on high heat, turning the pan so that the butter coats the bottom and sides. When it stops foaming, but before it starts to brown, pour in the eggs. Slide the pan back and forth over the heat, spreading the eggs evenly around the pan. In a few seconds, they will become a light, broken custard. Tilt the pan at a 45-degree angle and, using a fork, gather the edges of the omelet from the sides of the pan to make sure they don't stick. Roll the upper edge of the omelet toward the downward edge of the pan. Turn the omelet onto a dish, dot the top with butter and garnish with a sprinkle of the fresh herbs.

### Herb Spread

1 8-oz package of cream cheese  
1/4 cup butter (or margarine)  
1-2 cloves fresh garlic, finely minced  
1/4 tsp. lemon-pepper seasoning

1 Tbsp. snipped fresh parsley  
2 tsp. snipped fresh chives  
2 tsp. snipped fresh chervil  
assorted crackers and crusty bread

Bring the cream cheese and butter to room temperature. In a mixing bowl combine the cheese and butter with a mixer on medium speed until they are mixed well. Blend in, by hand, the garlic, parsley, chives, chervil, and lemon-pepper seasoning. Cover and chill overnight or at least 3-4 hours. Serve with crackers and a nice crusty bread. Makes about 1 1/2 cups.

### Easy Herbed Breadsticks

1 package ready-made refrigerated breadsticks  
1/4 cup olive oil for brushing  
2 tablespoons chervil, chopped

2 tablespoons chives, chopped  
1 tablespoon parsley, chopped  
Coarsely ground salt

Preheat oven according to package directions. Separate dough into strips and brush with olive oil. Mix chervil, chives and parsley. Spoon a small amount of the fresh herb blend onto each breadstick. Twist the breadstick dough around the filling and place on a backing sheet. Drizzle with additional olive oil and sprinkle with coarse salt. Bake as directed on breadstick package.

### Resource materials

<http://hortweb.cas.psu.edu/extension/veg crops/herbs/chervil.html>

<http://www.mccormick.com>

[http://www.epicurious.com/e\\_eating/e08\\_dict/refguides/herbspice/chervil.html](http://www.epicurious.com/e_eating/e08_dict/refguides/herbspice/chervil.html) (herb chart for food uses)

<http://www.herbnet.com>