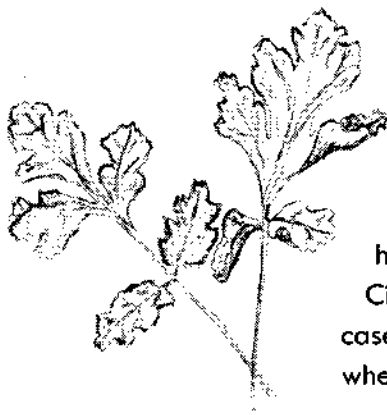


# CILANTRO



**CILANTRO** is an herb used in many different ethnic cuisines although it has its origins in the Mediterranean. On the same plant, cilantro is the name of the leaf and coriander is the name of the seed. Ground coriander has a milder flavor and it can substitute for cilantro if necessary. Cilantro, due to its strong flavor, cannot substitute for coriander in most cases. Cilantro is available in the Northeast during the hot summer months when vegetables such as tomatoes and peppers are also locally available.

## STORAGE

- ◆ **Cilantro is best when used fresh** but it can also be frozen. It does not retain its flavor when it is dried.
- ◆ **For short-term storage**, wrap unwashed cilantro in a damp towel or stand it upright in a container with an inch of water and refrigerate.
- ◆ There are two methods **for freezing cilantro**: 1) Wash, rinse and pat it dry and then put it in a plastic zip-lock bag. Remember to remove the air from the bag before sealing. 2) Break the leaves off of the stem and pack them into an ice cube tray. Fill the tray with water or olive oil and freeze it. You can add a frozen cilantro cube to a soup, stir fry, chili or other cooked dish!

## PREPARATION

- ◆ Wash the herb by holding the stem and running the leaves under cool water.
- ◆ Remove any larger, tough stems and you can **use the smaller stems** and/or leaves whole or chopped to the desired size.
- ◆ **Chopping the herb will draw out more of its flavor.**
- ◆ Although cilantro is most well known for its flavor in salsas, it is also excellent when used in soups, stews, stir-fries, salads and pasta dishes.
- ◆ In some areas of the world, cilantro is used frequently. It gives many **Mexican, Indian** and **Asian dishes** their characteristic flavors.

### **Nutritional Information**

Cilantro contains Vitamin A. Vitamin A is important in vision, growth and development, skin health, immune function and reproduction.

# Cilantro Recipes

## Cilantro Pesto

- 1 1/2 cups firmly packed fresh cilantro, washed and dried
- 1/2 cup firmly packed fresh parsley, washed and dried
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
- 1/2 cup oil (1/4 cup canola or sunflower oil and 1/4 cup olive oil is a good combination)
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 cloves garlic (or more to taste)
- 1/4 cup pine nuts (or sunflower seeds, walnuts or almonds)
- 1 pound pasta



Put all the ingredients in a food processor or blender pulse until well blended. Cook 1 pound of pasta and reserve 3 tablespoons of its cooking water to mix in with the pesto. This will give the sauce a good consistency before you toss it with the pasta.

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## Green Rice

- 2 cups water
- 1/2 cup chopped parsley
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Dash pepper
- 2 cloves garlic, cut into quarters
- 2 Poblano chilies, seeded and coarsely chopped
- 1 small onion, cut into fourths
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup uncooked rice (brown or white)



In a blender or food processor, combine water, parsley, cilantro, salt, pepper, garlic, chilies and onion. Mix at medium-high speed until it becomes a smooth mixture (about 90 seconds). Reserving both liquid and herbs and spices, pour mixture through a strainer. In a 2 quart saucepan, heat oil and stir in rice until rice is well coated (about 1 minute). Pour the reserved liquid over the rice, heat until boiling then reduce heat. Cover and simmer (45 minutes for brown rice, 15 minutes for quick white). Remove from heat and fluff the rice with a fork. Garnish with the reserved spice mixture and serve!

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## Tomato Salsa

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- chili pepper to taste
- 1 Tablespoon honey
- salt to taste
- 1 3/4 pounds peeled fresh tomatoes



Process all ingredients except tomatoes in a food processor. Add peeled tomatoes. Process again and serve. It will keep in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. Do not freeze. Makes about 2 cups.

Recipe adapted from From Asparagus to Zucchini: A Guide to Farm Fresh Seasonal Produce. Copyright by the Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition, 1996.