

According to ancient Roman legend, the mythical Phoenix gathered the finest spices from around the world to construct a funeral pyre (eventually emerging from its ashes). Luckily for all of us in present-day Phoenix, we don't have to roam the world for herbs and spices; many of our wonderful local vendors and educators have already done that for us.

SPICE UP YOUR LIFE!

BUYING HERBS AND SPICES

Fresh herbs (and sometimes herb plants) are available at local farmers' markets. Purchase your dried herbs and spices at stores with a high turnover, as freshness is key.

Anthony Spices, local manufacturer of chile spice blends; www.anthonyspices.com

Herb Box, 6990 East Shea Boulevard, Suite 116, Scottsdale; (480) 998-8355

India Plaza, 1874 Apache Boulevard, Tempe; 1820 W. Thunderbird Suite 7, Phoenix; 1041 E. Lemon Street, Tempe

Penzeys, 3310 Hayden Road, Scottsdale; (480) 990-7709

THE HERB LADY

To experiment with unfamiliar herbs, The Herb Lady recommends putting a tiny bit of herb in the palm of your hand. Rub the herb and then sniff it. If it is pleasing to you, add another one to complement it, rub the two together and sniff again. If you like the aroma, you will probably like the taste in your food. For beginners, she suggests sticking to two or three herbs in combination.

Familiarity with the families of herbs will help with substitutions. The Herb Lady advises substituting lavender, epazote or juniper berries for some or all of the rosemary in a recipe. Thyme, savory, oregano and bay leaves all share at least one essential oil, making them suitable for substitution.

Catherine Crowley, aka The Herb Lady, teaches classes, contributes to local radio shows and can sometimes be found at local markets when she's not working in her extensive private herb garden. She's the author of 101 Uses for Herbs and Spices and provides additional recipes on her website, www.herbs2u.net.



HERB EDUCATION AND EVENTS

Phoenix will host the 2007 Educational Conference and Annual Meeting for members of the Herb Society of America from May 3 to 5, 2007. The conference is also open to nonmembers. www.herbsociety.org/confer.php

Desert Botanical Garden's Herb Garden Grand Opening will be held on March 10 and 11. This exciting new exhibit, designed by landscape architect Steve Martino, was created to showcase ideas for local gardeners who are interested in growing herbs at home. A Sensory Garden, Tea Garden and Picante Garden are three of the themes. www.dbg.org; (480) 941-1225

Boyce Thompson Arboretum Herb Day will be celebrated on April 7 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Enjoy live music, the fragrant and colorful Wing Memorial Herb Garden, culinary demonstrations and a variety of Arizona herbalists. <http://arboretum.ag.arizona.edu/>; (520) 689-2811

The Arizona Herb Association is a nonprofit organization established as an educational forum to help its members and the public easily obtain, share and utilize information about the uses, culture, history and lore of herbs. Members maintain interests in culinary, cosmetic, medicinal, ornamental, dye and ethnic herbs. All other interests in herbs are encouraged and welcomed. www.azherb.org

Garden Territory is a source for herb plants, gardening and cooking classes and is located at the Farm at South Mountain. Try their special herb and spice sugars and blends. www.gardenterritory.com; (602) 268-1962

Thyme in the Garden offers classes in both cooking and body care using herbs at the Agritopia Clubhouse in Gilbert. Call (480) 332-9910 to be added to the e-mail list.

Southwest Institute of Healing Arts offers a diploma in Western Herbalism for those seeking a career as a professional herbalist. www.swiha.com; (480) 994-9244.

SPICE RUBS

Rubs are herb and spice mixtures you can rub onto poultry, fish, meats and vegetables. Prepare your favorite rub combination in advance and keep it handy to perk up your basic weeknight dishes. Both of these rubs can be altered with the addition of fresh lemon, orange or lime zest, especially the wine-friendly "Cheers to You" rub.

"GET WID IT" RUB

2 Tbsp. granulated onion	1 tsp. ground allspice
2 Tbsp. granulated garlic	1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
2 Tbsp. brown sugar	2 Tbsp. smoked paprika
1 Tbsp. Aleppo pepper	2 Tbsp. coarse sea salt
1 tsp. ground cinnamon	

"CHEERS TO YOU" RUB

2 Tbsp. dry thyme	2 Tbsp. rosemary
2 Tbsp. dry oregano	1 Tbsp. summer savory
4 Tbsp. French lavender	1 Tbsp. fennel seed
2 Tbsp. toasted mustard seed	1 Tbsp. Spanish paprika
1 Tbsp. toasted onion	1 Tbsp. ground bay leaf
1 tsp. celery seed	1 Tbsp. ground white pepper
2 Tbsp. sage leaves	2 Tbsp. coarse sea salt
2 Tbsp. marjoram	

Recipes compliments of Chef Ed Walsh, local hotel and restaurant consultant and educator.

