

ROSEMARY- A CULINARY HERB WITH HEALTH BENEFITS

By Mary Jo Kurtz

Every year during the holidays I search for a small rosemary tree for my kitchen. Did you know that rosemary is an herb often associated with Christmas time? Known as the “Holy Herb,” it is thought to be one of the herbs found in the manger with Baby Jesus. It is long known as the herb of remembrance and a symbol of loyalty and friendship. This evergreen shrub is native to the Mediterranean and has fragrant silver-green needle-like leaves. It has numerous culinary uses, can serve as a decoration and is often an ingredient in fragrances and medicines thought to cure many ills. Its pungent flavor is a cross between lemon, pepper and pine.

For cooking purposes the leaves may be used fresh or dried. It is a popular flavoring herb used in traditional Mediterranean cuisine. It makes an excellent seasoning and marinade for all types of meat. It also lends wonderful flavor to potatoes, bread, rolls, cheese and butter. For the best flavor of rosemary, crush or mince a small amount of the fresh leaves in your hands prior to use in cooking.

While a staple in cooking, its health benefits make it even more attractive. It contains the antioxidant carnosol that has shown to aid in numerous health conditions. Throughout history there are stories from around the world of rosemary curing the most serious of ills. In addition to using it fresh or dried there are rosemary extracts and essential oils that can be used. Its benefits include:

- ✓ stimulates and enhances memory functions thereby reducing the effects of Alzheimer’s disease
- ✓ calms nerves
- ✓ combats hair loss, as it stimulates growth of hair follicles and promotes blood circulation of the scalp
- ✓ protects the capillaries which aids in lessening hardening of the arteries, cataracts and heart disease
- ✓ decreases digestive problems
- ✓ reduces headaches, depression and fatigue
- ✓ eases muscular pain, neuralgia, rheumatism, gout, and sciatica
- ✓ aids in illnesses related to the gall bladder and liver
- ✓ heals mouth ulcers and canker sores
- ✓ aids in treatment of colds and flu

With so many uses you can see why this plant has become more than just a holiday tradition in my family. I love to give it as a gift and share it with those I care about so they can reap the benefits all year long too.