

Activity: Food/Cooking Goal: Social Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Herb Salt

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will make herb salt for themselves or others.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Expand knowledge about nutrition, herbs & salt

Physical: Lengthen time & attention to task at hand

Psychological/Emotional: Improve self-esteem by demonstrating interest in others – making gifts for example

Sensory: Utilize gustatory, olfactory & vision senses

Social: Improve social dynamics

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Prep:** Leader preheats oven to 140 F & dries the herbs.
2. Facilitator begins session by participants touching, smelling & tasting fresh samples of the herbs that will be used (not the ones being dried).
3. Participants blend the dried herbs with the salt, taking turns spreading the blended mixture in a single layer onto a cookie sheet. Be sure to remove any clumps in the mixture by breaking them up.
4. The facilitator should put the cookie sheets in the oven for about 45 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes.
5. As the salt cooks & cools have a group discussion on nutrition & benefits of fresh produce like herbs & vegetables, human need for salt, balanced diets & health conditions where too much intake of salt or other food causes problems. Decorate jars if desired.
6. When the salt has cooled participants put the mixture into small jars (which can be decorated), sealed and stored out of direct sunlight.
7. Enjoy the salt in place of regular salt or give it as a gift.

Materials

3 cups finely chopped mixed dry herbs - oregano, basil, thyme, rosemary, dill, chives, tarragon

2 cups sea salt

1 or 2 baking sheet(s) & 1 large bowl

Oven mitts, paper towels

Cutting boards & safety scissors to cut up herbs

Disposable gloves, wipes

8 small jars (1/2 cup each) with lids or plastic sealable containers (can be used as gifts)

Labels & raffia for decorating jars

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Most populations will find this therapeutic horticulture activity interesting and informative. It can be combined with other activities that may be more active or fill the session's length of time. Making herb salt as a therapeutic horticulture activity offers several different focuses depending on goals and challenges relevant for the population. For example, students and wellness populations may seek to expand their knowledge about nutrition while investigating salt, considered a health issue when over-consumed. Individuals with chronic health issues like diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure who are already familiar with why restricting salt in their diets is important may choose to make gifts for others using fresh grown herbs, focusing on social dynamics within a group that shares common health concerns. This may also support self-esteem where their gifts and consideration of others is put ahead of their own needs in this way. Working towards lengthening time and staying

focused on the task at hand may be relevant for people experiencing hypervigilance, ADD, mental health challenges or sensory processing issues where calming themselves, being aware of their lack of tolerance for non-preferred activities causes problems and difficulty staying focused can be addressed.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Allergies, contraindications with medication or dietary considerations/restrictions for salt should be identified prior to session. Not all participants will be able to verbalize or identify such issues. Participants should wear gloves and be advised of safe food handling practices.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: With sufficient lead time, herbs can be grown for this session and harvested as sequential activities. Options of making salt-free herbal seasoning or herbal sugar can provide additional or substitute activities where necessary.

Understanding the facts about salt can be beneficial for all populations. Salt, also known as sodium chloride flavors foods in all cultures. It is used as a binder, stabilizer and a preservative (Harvard, 2023). The human body requires small amounts of sodium for physiological balance, contracting and relaxing muscles, conducting nerve impulses and other vital functions. Too much salt can lead to stroke, heart disease and high blood pressure. Kidneys have difficulty dealing with excess amounts of sodium with evidence that it may also damage the heart and bones.

Mild Herb Blend

2 teaspoons garlic powder
1 teaspoon dried basil
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon dried lemon rind
Mix ingredients &
place in plastic or glass jar

Zesty Herb Blend

3 tablespoons dried basil
3 tablespoons dried marjoram
3 tablespoons dried thyme
3 tablespoons dried tarragon
1 tablespoon dried lemon peel
1 tablespoon whole oregano
Mix ingredients & place in plastic or glass jar

Related activities, available in THAD include *Harvesting Herbs Grown for Leaves & Fring Frang Acadian Potato Dish*.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Food Wishes. (2000). *Herb Salt Holiday Gift Idea – How to Make Gourmet Herb Salt*. [YouTube].
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fZLD3BZD_U
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. (2023). Salt and sodium.
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/salt-and-sodium/>
Nourish Nova Scotia. (2023). Recipes. <https://www.nourishns.ca/recipes>

Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2023.

TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2023.