



*Let's Cook  
with Lavender—*

A 24-PAGE RECIPE SAMPLER

Nancy Baggett

## Let's Get Cooking with Lavender!

Start by making sure you're cooking with real culinary lavender—not all lavenders taste good or are edible. Look for a product labeled culinary lavender, or “English” lavender, or *Lavandula angustifolia*, aka “true” lavender. True lavenders have a chameleon-like spicy, citrusy, piney character that can magically brighten up all sorts of both savory and sweet ingredients and dishes. Ironically, except for one variety called ‘Provence,’ French lavenders, aka lavandin or *x intermedia* lavenders, are too pungent and camphorous for cooking and can lend a soapy taste. Varieties labeled “Spanish,” or *stoechas* lavenders are not tasty or suitable for cooking either. For the freshest, best-quality culinary lavender seek out North American-grown buds or bunches from small, family-run lavender farms. Buy online or at farmers’ markets, or for an unforgettable treat purchase your lavender during a visit to a farm when the fields are in bloom.

### Cooking Tips

>In contrast to most herbs, the lavender blooms—called buds—are the edible parts, not the leaves. Dried buds are slightly more potent and concentrated than fresh, so be a little more generous if using fresh buds.

>Avoid lengthy boiling of lavender or long exposure to high heat; this turns its flavor harsh.

>Lavender is a potent, assertive herb, so if you're a newbie use a light hand. (Some recipes suggest a quantity range, such as 1 to 1 1/2 teaspoons to guide you.)

>Never cook with lavender essential oil; it is too potent to consume, plus the distillation process often makes it taste unpleasant.

>Try subbing culinary lavender in recipes calling for rosemary or thyme, or use it along with them. It has a somewhat similar scent and pungency, yet is a nice change of pace.

>Many recipes call for steeping lavender buds in water, then straining them out, or grinding them with sugar and sifting out any remaining bits. So, have on hand a very fine mesh sieve (or better yet a small and large one).

>Like most herbs, lavender becomes stale with long storage. If your supply smells musty-dusty, it's time to restock.

>Culinary lavenders can be white, pale pink, blue to deep purple, and all can be equally tasty. Just be sure you're cooking with culinary lavender buds.

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## Beverages

### Easy, Breezy Lavender-Berry (or Fruit) Sparkling Soda

There are loads of great ways to use a batch of homemade lavender-berry or lavender-fruit syrup, but none is more tempting than this sparkling soda: A light, quick, quenching cooler that offers up all natural flavor and color, and that literally takes only a minute or two to prepare.

1 to 2 cups chilled fruit-flavored or plain sparkling water or seltzer water  
1 to 2 tablespoons lavender-berry or lavender-fruit syrup (see recipe in the Basic Recipes section), to taste  
A few squeezes fresh lemon or lime juice, to taste  
A fresh berry or fruit slice for garnish, optional



Lavender-Berry Sparkling Soda

Fill a large glass with ice chips, crushed ice, or small ice cubes. Pour the sparkling water over the ice. Immediately add the lavender-fruit syrup and lemon or lime juice to the glass. With a muddler, iced tea spoon, or other long-handled spoon, gently stir to blend. Garnish the glass with the appropriate berry or fruit slice, if desired. Serve immediately. Makes 1 generous serving.

### Lavender Lemonade

One of the first recipes lavender growers usually suggest newbie lavender cooks try is lemonade. For one thing, everybody likes it. For another, if you start with a quart of ready-to-serve lemonade from a dairy case, or prepare a quart using a can of frozen lemonade concentrate mixed with water, it's a breeze to make. (Some cooks start with a powdered lemonade mix, but I think it needs doctoring with the juice and a few slices of a fresh lemon to boost the natural lemon flavor a bit.) Note that the infusion prepared from bright blue or purplish lavender buds will lend a noticeable pinkish, not purple, tint to the finished lemonade; it's because their natural color pigments turn reddish from the acid in the lemon juice. Pale-colored culinary lavender buds will taste equally good, they just won't impart much color.

1 quart lemonade  
1 tablespoon dried culinary lavender buds  
Fresh lemon slices and fresh or dried lavender spikes for garnish, optional

Stir together 1/4 cup lemonade and the lavender buds in a 2-cup microwave-safe glass measure and microwave on 50 percent power for 1 minute.

Stop and stir, then microwave on 50 percent power 30 seconds longer. Let stand to steep and cool in the microwave oven for 3 minutes. Strain the steeped liquid through a fine mesh sieve into the rest of the lemonade, pressing down firmly to force through as much liquid as possible. Stir well, then serve over ice, garnishing the servings with fresh lemon slices and lavender spikes, if desired.

## Lavender-Apple Spice Tea

Lavender-apple spice tea is a simple, truly delightful way to answer the question, “I have some culinary lavender buds, what can I do with them?” Readied quickly in a microwave oven, the recipe makes a smallish pot of tea (2 cups). But you can double or triple it, if desired.

- 1 cup apple juice
- 1 Chai-flavored (regular or decaf) commercial tea bag
- 1 heaping teaspoon dried culinary lavender buds
- Clover or other mild honey (or other preferred sweetener), to taste

Combine 1 cup water, the apple juice, tea bag and lavender buds in a microwave-safe tea pot (or substitute a 4-cup glass measure). If the pot has a strainer insert, put the lavender in the insert; otherwise just stir it into the water. In a microwave on full power, heat the tea just until it barely comes to a boil, 2 to 4 minutes depending on your oven; watch carefully after 2 minutes and immediately stop when you see signs of boiling. To avoid any chance of a boil-over, let the tea stand in the microwave 4 minutes to steep and cool slightly. Then, remove the strainer inset and pour the tea into cups (or

lacking an insert, pour the tea through a fine mesh sieve into cups to strain out the lavender first). Stir in honey to taste. Makes 2 1-cup servings.



Lavender-Apple Spice Tea

## Lavender-Peach-Berry Smoothie

If you like smoothies you really should try this recipe—for breakfast, lunch, or as a gratifying snack. The fruit and berry flavor blend is outstanding, especially if you include the pomegranate juice. To keep preparations super quick always have a bag of ready-to-use frozen peach slices stashed in the freezer and a bottle of lavender syrup available in the refrigerator.

- 1 cup peeled fresh or frozen (partially thawed) peach slices
- 1.5.3 ounce carton full-fat or low-fat Greekstyle strawberry or blueberry