

Thyme

Definition: [TIME] There are several varieties of this mint-family member, a perennial herb native to southern Europe and the Mediterranean. Garden thyme, the most often used variety, is a bush with gray-green leaves giving off a pungent, minty, light-lemon aroma. Subvarieties include the narrow-leafed French thyme and broad-leafed English thyme. The most well-known subvariety of wild thyme--a thick ground cover--is lemon thyme, an herb with a more pronounced lemon aroma than garden thyme. Whatever the variety, thyme is widely used in cooking to add flavor to vegetables, meat, poultry and fish dishes, soups and cream sauces. It's a basic herb of French cuisine and integral to bouquet garni. Fresh thyme is available in some specialty produce shops and supermarkets during the summer months. Dried thyme--both leaf and powder form--is available year-round. As with all herbs, thyme should be stored in a cool, dark place for no more than 6 months.