**Sage Presentation**

**I. What is Sage?**

A. The herb Sage is a member of the mint and rosemary family. It is commonly known as “Garden Sage” or “True Sage.” Its scientific name is Salvia *officinalis*, derived from the Latin word “salveo,” which means “to save or heal.” It can grow up to 2 feet high and 3 feet wide.

 B. This fast-growing, perennial plant has grayish-green long leaves with a distinctive fuzzy feeling to them. Before the leaves are harvested for use in the kitchen, you will see flower blooms of mauve, rose-purple, or white colors. You can plant this in containers, garden and flower beds, or can be used in borders.

 C. There are several varieties besides the common sage plant. There is a Berggarten sage plant that is found to be more flavorful, a golden sage, a purple sage, and a tricolor sage, plus many more.

 D. Besides being fresh, it is available as dried leaves, liquid extracts and sprays, and essential oils. It can add a smoky, earthy, stimulating flavor and aroma to a wide variety of dishes.

 E. The most popular use of sage these days is in stuffing at Thanksgiving. However, this herb is too good just to be saved for holidays and can also be used in common dishes such beans, potatoes, risotto, cheeses, and tomato sauces.

**II. History of Sage**

 A. Sage is native to countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea and has been used for nutritional and medicinal purposes for thousands and thousands of years.

 B. The Greeks and Romans thought this was a sacred herb and created a special ceremony just for the gathering of sage. A special non-metallic knife was used to avoid interaction with the compounds in sage with the iron in common knives during that time period.

 C. The Romans considered sage to have healing properties and was officially deemed a part of their medicine practices. These civilizations discovered that sage could help reduce spoilage due to its antioxidant content so it was used as a preserve for meat. This tradition continued until refrigeration came about.

 D. In 812 A.D. sage was one of the plants considered to be so important that Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, ordered it planted on German imperial farms. During the 17th century, the Chinese exchanged three or four pounds of their tea with Dutch traders for only one pound of European sage leaves. It was in very high demand during this time period!

 E. People have been cooking with sage for thousands of years and recipes for sage pancakes have been dated to the 5th century B.C.!

**III. Nutrition and Health Benefits of Sage**

 A. By eating fresh herbs, you will maximize the nutrient content that may be lost to heat in the drying process. However, dried herbs contain more nutrients per ounce compared to fresh because they are concentrated.

 B. In general, use half as much dried herbs for seasoning as the amount of fresh herbs called for in a recipe.

 C. Sage does keep its flavor compounds after the drying process which is why it’s a good herb to use in moist dishes cooked at least 20 minutes such as soups, stews, and braised meats.

 D. Dried sage leaves may be used in teas and are best mixed with mint, lemongrass, chamomile, or other herbs to balance the strong flavor.

 E. Sage works especially well with fatty meats such as pork, sausage, goose, and lamb. It can easily overpower a dish, so it use if carefully if first experimenting with it.

 F. Other flavors that work well with sage include onion, thyme, oregano, parsley, bay leaf, and rosemary. If you ran out of sage you can substitute it with thyme or some sort of poultry seasoning.

 G. Sage contains Vitamin K and in 2 tsp you can receive 30% of the recommended daily intake of vitamin K. But let’s face it…you aren’t likely to consume two full teaspoons in a year yet alone in a single serving.

 H. According to the National Institute of Health, studies have found that extracts of sage improved participant’s immediate memory recall and learning ability in older adults with mild to moderate Alzheimer’s disease. The compounds in sage may inhibit the enzyme that is associated with forming the plaques on the brain linked to Alzheimer’s Disease.

 I. Sage is considered safe according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, but when used in excess there can be side effects. Some spices of sage contain thujone, which can affect the nervous system causing restlessness, vomiting, vertigo, rapid heart rate, tremors, seizures, and kidney damage. Ingesting 12 drops or more of the essential oil is considered a toxic dose.

**IV. Selection, Preparation, and Storage of Sage**

 A. Sage is available fresh, or in a dried ground or powder form from your local grocery store.

 1. Fresh sage leaves should be aromatic and should have no soft sports or dry edges.

 2. Dried sage comes in whole leaf, rubbed, and ground form. Rubbed sage has a light, velvety texture and ground sage is more of a free-flowing powder.

 B. Fresh sage leaves can be wrapped in slightly damp paper towels and stored in a resealable plastic bag in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator. These should be used within 4 to 5 days. They also may be covered in olive oil and stored up to 3 weeks.

 C. As with all dried herbs, dried sage should be stored in a closed container in a cool, dry place away from sunlight. For best flavor it should be used within 6 months.

 D. Dry your own sage by simply using a microwave by removing the stems and placing the leaves between two paper towels and drying them on the lowest setting for two to three minutes. Or use an oven by placing them on a single baking sheet and heating at 100 degrees F for several hours with the door slightly open.

 E. You can freeze sage up to one year by packing the cleaned, fresh sage loosely in freezer bags. Freezing will intensify the flavor of the herb, so adjust accordingly when you are cooking with it.

**V. Fun Facts**

 A. Over 2 million ounces of sage are sold in the U.S. each year.

 B. Grow sage in your garden to keep the deer away as the animal finds the plant unpleasant.

 C. Of all the herbs, sage has one of the longest histories of medicinal use and was believed that it stimulated the brain, therefore, increasing powers of concentration, memory, and reasoning. This is why sage took on another meaning in the dictionary meaning – “wise person”.

 D. In 2001, the International Herb Association awarded sage the title of “Herb of the Year.”

 E. “Why should anyone die who has sage in their garden?” – An Old English Proverb

 F. Sage was rubbed on the teeth to make them whiter in 19th century America.

 G. Laboratory studies suggest that essential oils from sage may have antimicrobial properties.

 H. Sage is not just used for nutritional purposes, it has been known to be an ingredient in cosmetic lines, perfumes, and soaps. Some naturalists even rub it on their skin as insect repellent!

 H. Other unique uses for sage include freezing fresh sage in ice cubes to add to summer drinks, using dried sage in your own tea creations, and using the bright sage blooms to decorate around the house!

**VI. Activity Ideas**

 A. Create your own dry rub by combining different dried herbs including sage.

 B. Demonstrate how to dry sage by starting with fresh and showing the consequent steps.

 C. Taste test recipes; a recipe with fresh vs. dried sage.

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