

# Florida Food Fare

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## Dill

**Description:** Thought by 1st century Romans to be a good luck symbol, and by ancient Greeks to be a sign of wealth, dill has been around for thousands of years. It is from the Norse word "dilla" meaning to lull, because tea made from dill seed was used as a remedy for colic and to lull babies to sleep. This feathery fern-like annual with deep green leaves grows two to three feet tall. Each part of the plant has its own characteristics and properties. The leaves or "dill weed" have a crisp, clean grassy taste, while the tan flat dill seeds have a stronger and more pungent favor similar to that of anise and celery.

**Availability:** Dill is native to southern Europe and Western Asia but grows anywhere there is full sun, good drainage and rich soil. In mild climates, its seeds can be sown in fall or winter to produce an early spring crop. In early spring it is used for its leaves and later in the fall for its seeds. Fresh and dried dill weed are available in the supermarket year round, though the fresh distinctive flavor of fresh dill in no way translates to its dried form. Dill seed is available in the spice section of the supermarket all year round.

**Nutritional Value:** Dill is rich in minerals, vitamin C, and flavanoids. One tablespoon of the seeds contains 100 mg calcium, 78.2 mg potassium, 1.3 mg vitamin C, 1 mg iron and 1.3 g dietary fiber. Five sprigs of dill weed contains 2 mg calcium, 7 mg potassium, 1.5 mcg folate and 77 IU vitamin A.

**Selection and Storage:** Fresh dill weed should be feathery, fern-like and deep green. Avoid leaves that are wet or wilted looking. Fresh dill can be kept in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for a few days. For longer storage chop finely and mix with water. Freeze in ice cube trays. Leaves may also be dried and stored in

an airtight container in a cool dark place. Dried dill has a shelf life of approximately 6 months.

**Preparation and Use:** Dill seed and dill weed are not good substitutions for each other. The seed is best known for its tart, slightly bitter flavor found in dill pickles. The leaves enhance rather than dominate the flavor of food and combine well with fish, mild cheeses, egg dishes, vegetable dishes, cream sauces cucumbers and potatoes. For best flavor, use fresh dill leaves. Since cooking diminishes the flavor of fresh dill, add just before serving. When mincing, preserve the flavor by snipping with scissors rather than cutting with a knife. Heating brings out the flavor of dill seed so it may be added before baking.

### Recipes:

#### Dill Dip

2/3 cup low fat sour cream	1 tablespoon dried minced onion
2/3 cup low fat mayonnaise	1 tablespoon dried dill weed
1/4 teaspoon dry mustard	1 tablespoon chopped parsley
	Dash Worcestershire sauce

Combine all ingredients. Mix well. Chill. Serves as a refreshing dip for a variety of fresh vegetables. Makes about 1 1/2 cups.

#### Low-fat Creamy Baked Salmon

2 pounds salmon fillets	1/4 teaspoon dill weed
3/4 cup non-fat sour cream	1 clove garlic minced
1/3 cup non-fat mayonnaise	paprika
2 tablespoons flour	salt and pepper to taste
2 tablespoons lemon juice	

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Wash salmon and pat dry. Grease a 9x13 inch baking pan. Arrange fillets, skin side down in a single layer. In a bowl, whisk sour cream, mayonnaise, flour, lemon juice, dill, and garlic until smooth. Spread over fish, sprinkle lightly with salt and pepper and paprika. Bake uncovered approximately 20 minutes or until salmon is opaque in thickest part. Serve immediately. Makes 4 servings.

#### Dilled Cucumbers

2 medium sized cucumbers (seedless if possible)	1/4 cup chopped fresh dill
1 tablespoon salt	salt and pepper to taste

1/2 cup low fat sour cream or plain non fat yogurt

Slice the cucumbers paper thin and place in colander. Sprinkle with salt and let sit for 30 minutes to 1 hour. Dry with paper towels removing as much moisture as possible. Combine the cucumbers with the remaining ingredients and serve chilled. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

### **Herb Biscuits**

1 (12 ounce) package refrigerated buttermilk biscuits	1 1/2 teaspoon dried parsley flakes
1/4 cup butter or margarine, melted	1/2 teaspoon dried dill weed
	1/4 teaspoon dried onion flakes

Cut biscuits into quarters. In a bowl, mix melted butter, with parsley, dill weed and onion flakes. Roll each biscuit quarter in herb butter. Place in an 8 inch cake pan with pieces touching. Pour remaining butter over biscuits. Bake in 425 degree F. oven for 12 minutes. Serve warm.