



By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

The French have their King of Herbs and it is estragon—in English, tarragon. The traditional *fines herbes* (feen-ZERB) is a blend of fragrant herbs that usually includes parsley, chives, and chervil; and always includes tarragon. Fines herbes is used extensively in French cooking to season mild flavored chicken, fish, and egg dishes. Additionally, tarragon is an essential ingredient in béarnaise, hollandaise, and other French sauces.

Even if we had kings in the US, tarragon wouldn't be crowned. No, the reigning herb in the US is basil with cilantro, thyme, parsley, oregano, and dill filling the royal court (herb garden). Could we make room for tarragon? As more people garden and work edibles into their landscape plantings, tarragon with its fragrant long narrow leaves may find a place.

Tarragon's unique bittersweet and peppery flavor, reminiscent of anise, is best in spring and early summer. Hot weather causes the plant to bolt (to flower then go to seed) and turn bitter. But, it's still fragrant and looks pretty in the heat of the summer. If the temperatures have been warm, taste it before using.

While fresh tarragon is not so easy to find here in the US, substituting dried tarragon for fresh is not a good idea. Like so many herbs, drying diminishes its fresh, soft flavor and it ends up tasting grassy or like nothing at all.

If you find a source of fresh tarragon, you can preserve its flavor by making tarragon butter or vinegar. Be sure to snip the leaves early in the season. To make tarragon butter: combine ½ c. softened unsalted butter, ¼ c. Dijon mustard, 2 t. chopped fresh tarragon leaves, plus salt and pepper to taste. Herb butter keeps in the fridge for 2 or 3 days and freezes well. To make [tarragon vinegar](#), place tarragon leaves in white wine vinegar and let it steep for 2 to 3 weeks.

Consider adding fresh tarragon to some of your culinary creations. You may learn to love this herb as much as the French do!

RECIPE for health

MARCH 2019

featured food:
TARRAGON

Trout Tarragon

By Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski, Residential Dining Services
Serves 4

- 4 T. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 4 (3 oz. each) filets of trout
- ½ c. sliced shallots or red onion
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ c. white wine
- 2 T. chopped walnuts
- ½ c. diced tomatoes
- ¼ t. hot red pepper flakes
- 3 T. chopped fresh tarragon
- 6 T. cold butter, cut in chunks
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ¼ c. shaved Parmesan cheese

Heat 3 tablespoons of oil in sauté pan over medium heat and cook each piece of fish for 4 minutes on the flesh side. Turn and continue cooking for 1 minute on the other side. Remove from pan and keep warm.

Heat 1 tablespoon of oil; add shallots and sauté for 2-3 minutes. Add garlic and sauté for an additional minute.

With the pan still over medium heat, deglaze the pan with white wine. Add walnuts and tomatoes. Let wine reduce by half. Then add pepper flakes into the sauce and remove from the heat. Add the tarragon and then slowly add chunks of the butter stirring to incorporate the butter until the sauce looks creamy. Taste and adjust salt and pepper as desired.

Place the fish filets on a platter. Pour the pan sauce evenly over each piece. Garnish with parmesan cheese. Serve and enjoy.