



# Cilantro!

Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D., Food and Nutrition Specialist  
McKenzie Schaffer, Dietetic Intern

Cilantro is a bright green leafy plant characterized by a strong aroma and perishability. Cilantro is used widely in many ethnic cuisines, including Mexican, Chinese, South American and Vietnamese.

Depending on the use, cilantro and coriander refer to the same plant. When grown for foliage, it is referred to as cilantro. When grown for the seeds, cilantro often is referred to as coriander. Cilantro is an herb that commonly is used in salsa, soup, salads and potato dishes.

## Growing

Cilantro grows annually, indoors or outdoors, in a full-sun setting with moist, well-drained soil. The plant thrives in 50- to 80-degree temperatures, doing best in the early spring or fall.

Plant cilantro about ¼ inch deep into the soil and water daily. The herb will self-seed and should be sowed every three to four weeks to ensure a consistent amount of fresh leaves.

If the intended purpose of the plant is for the leafy greens, cut the plant once it reaches approximately 6 inches tall. Alternatively, allow the flower head of the plant to turn brown before harvesting the coriander, also known as seeds.

## Storing

The fresh leaves can be wrapped loosely in a slightly damp paper towel and then again in a plastic storage bag and refrigerated.

The seeds and dried leaves should be stored in an airtight container. Be sure to label the container with the contents and date. Use the herb within one year of storage for best flavor.

## Cooking Tips

For best flavor, add the fresh herb near the end of cooking to preserve the enriched flavor. In a cold dish, add the herb several hours ahead of time to allow the flavors to blend. One tablespoon fresh = 1 teaspoon dried.

## Preservation

The flavor of cilantro is best when the plant is fresh. The flavor decreases when it is exposed to heat or dried. Before any sort of preservation, be sure to rinse the herb under running water and pat dry with paper towels.

- **Air-drying:** Cut the cilantro plant when it is about 6 inches tall. Tie the stems to create a small bundle. Place the bundle inside a brown paper bag. The bag will protect the plant from dust and other irritants. Additionally, the bag helps prevent any herb from falling onto the ground. Put the bag in a cool, dark room for approximately two weeks. The plant will fall apart easily once fully dried. Store in an air-tight container.
- **Oven-drying:** Cover a baking sheet with parchment paper and place the herbs on top of the pan. Put the herbs in a conventional oven set at 100 degrees and bake until the plant is brittle and crumbles easily. Be sure to check the herb often while heating to prevent burning.
- **Microwave drying:** Place the cilantro between two microwave-safe paper towels and microwave on high for about one to three minutes, testing every 30 seconds. Allow time to cool and be sure to check if the plant is dry and brittle. Continue microwaving in 30-second increments until the plant becomes brittle.
- **Freezing:** Place the cilantro in an air-tight freezer bag and freeze. Alternatively, chop the herb and place in an ice cube tray. Cover with water and freeze. Put the cubes in a labeled plastic freezer bag for use in soups or stews.



NDSU

EXTENSION

# Recipes

## Key to abbreviations

c. = cup  
tsp. = teaspoon  
Tbsp. = tablespoon  
g = gram  
mg = milligram  
kg = kilogram

## Pineapple Pico de Gallo

2 c. tomatoes, finely chopped  
1 c. pineapple, finely chopped  
½ c. sweet onion, finely diced  
¼ c. jalapeno, finely diced  
¼ Tbsp. lime juice fresh  
⅓ c. cilantro, chopped  
Salt to taste



Combine all ingredients in a large bowl. Toss to combine.  
Serve with tortilla chips.

Makes 16 (¼ cup) servings. Each serving has 20 calories, 0 g fat, 1 g protein, 4 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber and 40 mg sodium.

## Parmesan Cilantro Corn

2 Tbsp. butter  
4 c. frozen corn (or freshly cut from cob)  
1 garlic clove, minced  
1 Tbsp. lime juice  
1 tsp. cumin  
¼ tsp. cayenne pepper  
⅓ c. grated Parmesan cheese  
3 Tbsp. Greek yogurt  
3 Tbsp. milk  
½ tsp. salt  
¼ tsp. black pepper  
½ c. cilantro, chopped



In a large skillet over medium-high heat, melt butter. When butter is melted, add the garlic and corn, stirring to coat with butter. Cook, stirring frequently, for two minutes. Add lime juice, cumin and cayenne pepper and cook for two more minutes. Stir in cheese, Greek yogurt and milk. Add additional milk or yogurt as needed to make a creamy texture. Continue to stir so corn doesn't stick to the pan. Add salt and pepper. Cook corn until most of the cream has been absorbed, about five minutes more. Remove from heat, stir in cilantro and serve hot.

Makes eight (½ cup) servings. Each serving has 120 calories, 4.5 g fat, 4 g protein, 18 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber and 210 mg sodium.



## Cilantro Lime Steak Fajitas

### Cilantro Lime Marinade

1 c. cilantro, chopped  
1 Tbsp. garlic, minced  
2 Tbsp. olive oil  
2 tsp. dried onions  
3 limes, zest and juice

### Seasoning for Vegetables

2 Tbsp. olive oil  
½ tsp. garlic powder  
½ tsp. onion powder  
½ tsp. chili powder  
½ tsp. cumin  
½ tsp. smoked paprika

### Fajitas

1½ lb. flank steak, trimmed  
1 medium red onion, sliced  
3 bell peppers, sliced

To make the marinade, add cilantro, garlic, onions and olive oil to a bowl. Zest the limes, squeeze juice into mix and whisk together. Add the steak to a zip-top plastic bag, pour the cilantro mix over the steak and seal the bag. Turn the bag repeatedly to make sure the steak is covered evenly with marinade. Place in refrigerator to marinate for at least an hour.

Preheat oven to 450 F. Take meat out of refrigerator 30 minutes prior to cooking. Slice onions and pepper and add to a bowl with all the vegetable seasoning; mix well. Using a large sheet pan, lay the steak in the middle and spread vegetables around the beef. Cook for 13 minutes, then broil on high for two minutes. After broiling, remove from oven and allow to rest for five minutes before slicing. When slicing, cut against the grain.

Serve with whole-grain tortillas and your favorite fajita toppings.

Makes six servings. Each serving has 350 calories, 19 g fat, 33 g protein, 10 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber and 75 mg sodium.

Funding for this publication was made possible by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service through grant AM170100XXXXG005. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA.

The NDSU Extension Service does not endorse commercial products or companies even though reference may be made to tradenames, trademarks or service names. NDSU encourages you to use and share this content, but please do so under the conditions of our Creative Commons license. You may copy, distribute, transmit and adapt this work as long as you give full attribution, don't use the work for commercial purposes and share your resulting work similarly. For more information, visit [www.ag.ndsu.edu/agcomm/creative-commons](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/agcomm/creative-commons).

For more information on this and other topics, see [www.ndsu.edu/extension](http://www.ndsu.edu/extension)

County commissions, North Dakota State University and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. NDSU does not discriminate in its programs and activities on the basis of age, color, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, participation in lawful off-campus activity, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, spousal relationship to current employee, or veteran status, as applicable. Direct inquiries to Vice Provost for Title IX/ADA Coordinator, Old Main 201, NDSU Main Campus, 701-231-7708, [ndsuoaa@ndsu.edu](mailto:ndsuoaa@ndsu.edu). This publication will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities upon request, 701-231-7881. 2.5M-1-20