OREGANO

"Keep it light"

Oregano is a robust, strong herb and is best used sparingly and with strongly flavored foods and long-cooking dishes

- May be better to add a strong herb at the end of cooking to avoid bitterness
- In other cases, long cooking with other herbs, particularly bay and parsley helps to mellow flavors of all ingredients
- A traditional Mexican and Midwestern technique is to toast oregano in a dry skillet before using. Toasting yields a rich flavor and releases the true taste
- Flavor combines well with those of:
  - garlic, thyme, parsley, and olive oil
- Best known for appearance in tomato sauce has hot peppery flavor
- Enhances cheese and egg combinations including:
  - omelets, frittatas, quiches, and savory flans
- Adds dimension to:
  - yeast breads, marinated vegetables, roasted bell peppers, mushrooms, roasted and stewed beef pork, poultry, game, onions, black beans, zucchini, potatoes, eggplant and shellfish.
- By itself adds a dash to almost any buttered vegetable
- Pair with cilantro in:
  - guacamole, cooked or uncooked salsas, or in stuffings for large squashes
- Excellent in vegetarian salads of squash, corn, and jicama
- Ranks high as salt replacement - use in place of salt for: vegetables, chicken, eggplant, summer squash, peas, baked russet potatoes or sweet potatoes and on tomatoes.
- Add to meat loaf
- Sprinkle generously over beef, lamb or pork before roasting.
- Use in BBQ; as smoke producer, barbecue brush and in marinades
- Tender whole stems can be used to stuff cavity of:
  - chicken, turkey or duck before roasting or
- Stuff whole fish along with lemon or lime slices and onion.
- Stir chopped fresh oregano into steamed cabbage with some fresh lemon juice and unsalted butter.
- For moist and tasty pork chops, coat with wheat germ, sprinkle with oregano and bake
Baked Kasseri Cheese

1 pound plus 2 ounces Kasserl Cheese
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
2 teaspoons minced garlic
2 teaspoons minced fresh oregano
or
3/4 teaspoons dried
4 teaspoons clarified butter
buttered toast as an accompaniment

Chop the Kasserl cheese coarsely and divide among 4 individual gratin dishes, about 6 inches wide. Top it with the lemon juice, the garlic, the oregano, and the butter, and bake it in a preheated 400° F. oven for 7 to 10 minutes or until it is melted and bubbling. Serve the cheese with the buttered toast. Serves 4 as a first course.

Black Beans with Roasted Red Peppers and Oregano

The Cubans add a few tablespoons of dark rum to the black beans

The Brazilians mesh half the beans with garlic to form a sauce for the rest

1 cup dried black beans
3 whole cloves
1 large onion, peeled
2 cloves garlic, peeled
1 carrot
1 dried bay leaf
2 stalks celery
5 to 6 sprigs fresh parsley, tied with string
3 cups chicken stock
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1 1/2 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh oregano, divided
1/4 cup sour cream
1 large sweet red pepper, roasted and cut into 1/2-inch strips

Soak beans in 3 to 4 cups water overnight. Then drain and rinse beans. Put beans into a 5-quart Dutch oven. Insert cloves into onion, and add to beans along with garlic, carrot, bay leaf, celery, and parsley. Then add chicken stock, bring to a boil, cover, lower heat, and simmer for 1 1/2 hours, or until tender. During the last 20 minutes of cooking, remove cover, and check on the amount of liquid. If there is too much, keep the cover off for the remainder of the cooking time. If there is too little, add a bit of boiling water. When beans are cooked most of the liquid should be absorbed.

Remove all the vegetables and the bay leaf, and discard. Add olive oil and vinegar, and stir well. Then add 1 tablespoon of the oregano. Spoon beans onto a warm serving platter, add 2 dollops of sour cream, sprinkle with remaining oregano, and lay strips of roasted pepper over the top.