PRACTICAL KITCHEN PANTRY EDITION

The Everyday 6-Herb Kitchen Pantry Starter Guide

Stock 6 versatile culinary dried herbs for $32–$44 locally, brew smooth teas with exact water temperatures, and build a shelf you actually use every week—without dusty tea bags or 300-herb overwhelm.

6 Herbs	$32–$44	5 Min
EVERYDAY CULINARY CORE	LOCAL BULK STARTER LIST	HANDS-ON MUG PREP

Inside This 6-Page Kitchen Handbook

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Exact 2–4 oz bag sizes, realistic retail prices ($32–$44 locally), storage tips, and basic gear.

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Exact 195°F steep rules, ginger simmering chart, and the 10-min Honey-Ginger Pantry Jar (ready in 2 weeks).

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Page 5 — Printable Cabinet Sheet & Labels
Single scissor-cut layout: tape the top half inside your cupboard, cut out 6 jar labels below.

Page 6 — Safety Check & Next Steps
Plain-English herb-medication cautions, zero-foraging rule, and vetted shelf references.

Simple Everyday Kitchen Gear
Regular 8–12 oz mug, small saucer lid, and fine-mesh strainer for leaves/flowers; small saucepan for ginger root.

3 Rules That Fix 90% of Bitter or Weak Loose-Leaf Tea

- **Cover your mug while steeping:** Place a small saucer on top of your mug. Steam carries away the aromatic volatile oils in peppermint, chamomile, and lemon balm if left uncovered.
- **Use the right water heat:** Steep delicate leaves and flowers at **195°F** (let boiling water rest 90 seconds off the heat). Simmer dense dried ginger root covered in a small saucepan for 15 minutes.
- **Buy small 2–4 oz bags, not 1-pound sacks:** Dried herbs stay most fragrant for **6–12 months** (6m lemon balm; 9m leaves/flowers; 12m dried roots & hibiscus) when kept cool and dark.

Educational & Safety Notice: This guide is strictly for traditional culinary, aromatic, and educational reference. It is not medical advice and does not diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. Consult a qualified healthcare provider before adding herbs to your routine, especially if you are pregnant, nursing, or taking prescription medications. Never wild-forage unfamiliar plants; use only clearly labeled food-grade culinary herbs.

Your Core 6-Herb Kitchen Pantry List ($32–$44 Locally)

Skip giant 50-herb bundles that turn to dust in a drawer. These 6 classic culinary dried herbs cover gentle evening cups, crisp afternoon refreshers, and warming pantry infusions. Prices reflect typical unit costs at grocery bulk bins or organic suppliers (allow ~$8–$12 extra for online shipping).

Herb (Botanical)	Part & Cut	Starter Bag	Est. Retail	Flavor Profile & Best Everyday Kitchen Use
German Chamomile *Matricaria recutita*	Whole dried flowers	2 oz (57 g) (~40 single cups)	$5.50–$7.50	Soft apple-blossom sweetness. Anchors calm caffeine-free evening blends.
Peppermint *Mentha × piperita*	Cut & sifted leaf	2 oz (57 g) (~35 single cups)	$4.50–$6.50	Crisp, cooling menthol aroma. Great after meals or chilled over ice in afternoon cups.
Dried Ginger Root *Zingiber officinale*	Cut & sifted root	4 oz (113 g) (~55 single cups)	$5.50–$7.50	Warming citrus-spice bite. Ideal for gentle simmered teas and weekend honey jars.
Lemon Balm *Melissa officinalis*	Cut & sifted leaf	2 oz (57 g) (~35 single cups)	$6.00–$8.00	Bright, mild lemon-mint note without tartness. Pairs effortlessly with chamomile or ginger.
Culinary Thyme *Thymus vulgaris*	Dried whole leaf	2 oz (57 g) (~45 single cups)	$4.50–$6.50	Savory, earthy garden aroma. Traditional warming mug with honey and lemon zest on cool nights.
Hibiscus Petals *Hibiscus sabdariffa*	Cut dried calyces	4 oz (113 g) (~60 single cups)	$6.00–$8.00	Vibrant ruby-red cranberry tartness. Makes instant caffeine-free iced tea or bright afternoon cups.
6-Herb Shelf Total	**6 labeled bags**	**16 oz (454 g)**	**$32–$44** (excl. shipping)	**~270 single-herb cups (~135–180 blended mugs; ~$0.18–$0.32/blended mug vs. $0.45+ boxed bags)**

Minimum Kitchen Gear (Under $15 if Needed)

- **Regular 8–12 oz ceramic mug** + a small saucer or coaster as a steam lid.
- **Fine-mesh basket infuser** (wide baskets let leaves expand better than cramped tea balls).
- **Small covered saucepan** (1–2 qt, which you already own) for simmering dried ginger root.
- **6 small glass jars (8 oz mason or amber)**—reuse clean jam or spice jars first before buying new ones.

Storage Rules for 6–12 Month Aroma

- **Keep away from stove & dishwasher steam:** Heat and humidity fade aroma faster than time. Pick an upper cool cabinet.
- **Block direct sunlight:** Clear jars work well inside a dark cupboard; use amber glass if kept on an open counter.
- **Date every jar:** Refresh lemon balm at 6m; chamomile, peppermint & thyme at 9m; ginger & hibiscus at 12m.

Smart Buying Tip: Choose **cut & sifted (C/S)** leaves and roots rather than fine powders. Powders slip through mesh strainers and turn murky; cut-and-sifted herbs strain clean and retain aroma longer. (Note: Making 1 Page 3 Honey-Ginger Jar uses ~3 tbsp / ~10 cups from your 4 oz ginger bag.)

Exact Steep Ratios & Water Temperature Chart

Different plant parts extract differently. Fluffy dried leaves weigh less per teaspoon than dense roots; delicate flowers turn bitter if boiled hard, while dried ginger root needs a gentle covered simmer.

Plant Part	Dry Herb per Mug	Water Temp	Steep Time	Method & Lid Rule
Aromatic Leaves (Peppermint, Lemon Balm)	**1–2 level tsp** / 8 oz (~1–2 g; 1 tsp in blends)	**195°F** (rest 90s off boil)	**7–10 min**	Pour over herb in mug; **cover tightly** with saucer to trap aromatic oils.
Savory Leaf (Culinary Thyme)	**1/2–1 level tsp** / 8 oz (~0.5–1 g)	**195°F** (rest 90s off boil)	**7 min**	Cover mug. Shorter 7-min steep keeps thyme savory and smooth, not sharp.
Whole Fluffy Flowers (German Chamomile)	**1–2 level tsp** / 8 oz (up to 1 tbsp to taste)	**195°F** (never rolling boil)	**7–10 min**	Cover mug. Over-steeping past 12 min brings out bitter floral notes.
Tart Petals / Calyces (Hibiscus)	**1 level tsp** hot (**1.5 tsp** iced / 8 oz)	**195°F–205°F** (or cold steep)	**8 min** (4–6 hr cold)	Hot steep for ruby tea, or cold-steep in fridge pitcher for zero bitterness.
Dense Dried Root (Cut Ginger Root)	**1 level tsp** (in **10 oz** water)	**205°F–212°F** (gentle simmer)	**15 min**	Simmer in a **covered small saucepan** on low heat (10 oz offsets steam loss); strain.

Mixing Roots + Leaves in One Cup (The 2-Stage Pour)

When a blend combines dried ginger root with peppermint, lemon balm, or hibiscus: **first** simmer ginger root covered in 10 oz water for 15 minutes, **turn off the heat**, let the pot rest 1 minute, **then** stir in the delicate leaves or petals and steep covered 7 minutes before straining.

10-Minute Weekend Prep: Dry-Herb Honey-Ginger Jar

Hands-on mixing takes 10 minutes; then it infuses quietly for 2 weeks in a cool cupboard. Stir 1 teaspoon into warm water, chamomile, or thyme mugs for up to 3–6 months.

Ingredients & Supplies

- 1 clean, **completely dry** 8 oz glass jar with tight lid
- 3 tbsp **dried** cut-and-sifted ginger root (bone-dry only)
- 1 tbsp **bone-dry commercial** dried lemon peel or thyme (optional)
- **~6 fl oz (~3/4 cup)** raw liquid honey (submerges herbs fully)

4-Step Kitchen Method

- **1.** Place dried ginger in the completely dry glass jar.
- **2.** Pour honey slowly over ginger; stir with a dry chopstick to release bubbles.
- **3.** Cap, label date, and flip jar every 2 days for 2 weeks in a cool dark cupboard.
- **4.** Always scoop with a **clean, bone-dry spoon**; use within 3–6 months.

Critical Food-Safety Rules: Use strictly **bone-dry** herbs and a dry spoon—moisture introduced into honey can trigger fermentation or spoilage. Discard immediately if you ever see mold, off-odors, or unexpected fizzing/bulging. If mixing *fresh* grated ginger with honey, store strictly refrigerated (≤40°F) and use within **5 days max**. **Never give honey to infants under 12 months old.**

6 Everyday Kitchen Blends (100% Caffeine-Free)

3 quick-steep mug cups (under 5 min hands-on prep), 2 stove-simmered ginger cups, and 1 cold-brew pitcher. Recipes #1–#5 make one 8–10 oz mug; Recipe #6 makes a 4-cup fridge pitcher.

QUICK MUG STEEP • EVENING #1

1. Orchard Evening Cup

195°F • Covered 8 min • Soft floral-citrus

- 1 level tsp whole German chamomile flowers
- 1 level tsp dried lemon balm leaf
- Optional: 1/2 tsp raw honey after straining

Taste note: Smooth apple-blossom and mild lemon aroma. Zero grassy bitterness when kept under 10 minutes.

QUICK MUG STEEP • AFTERNOON #1

2. Ruby Crisp Iced Refresher

195°F • Covered 8 min (pour over ice) • Tart & cool

- 1.5 level tsp dried hibiscus petals (stronger for ice)
- 1 level tsp dried peppermint leaf
- Optional: splash of cold sparkling water

Taste note: Deep cranberry color with a clean mint finish. Replaces afternoon soda or sweet bottled drinks.

2-STAGE SAUCEPAN • EVENING #2

3. After-Dinner Mint & Ginger

Simmer root 15m (10 oz) → steep leaf 7m • Warming

- 1 level tsp dried cut ginger root (simmered covered)
- 1 level tsp dried peppermint leaf (added off-heat)
- Optional: thin slice of fresh lemon

Taste note: Crisp peppermint upfront followed by cozy kitchen spice. Great after a hearty evening meal.

2-STAGE SAUCEPAN • AFTERNOON #2

4. Sunny Lemon-Ginger Cup

Simmer root 15m (10 oz) → steep leaf 7m • Lively

- 1 level tsp dried cut ginger root (simmered covered)
- 1 level tsp dried lemon balm leaf (added off-heat)
- Optional: 1/2 tsp hibiscus petals (add off-heat only)

Taste note: Bright citrus aroma with gentle warmth. Never simmer hibiscus—stir it in off-heat with lemon balm.

QUICK MUG STEEP • EVENING #3

5. Hearthside Thyme & Honey

195°F • Covered 7 min • Savory & cozy

- 1/2 level tsp culinary dried thyme leaf
- 1 level tsp whole German chamomile flowers
- 1 tsp Page 3 Honey-Ginger Jar *(or 1 tsp plain raw honey + tiny pinch lemon zest tonight)*

Taste note: Aromatic, comforting old-world kitchen steam cup on chilly or rainy evenings.

FRIDGE COLD-STEEP • 4-CUP PITCHER

6. Pitcher Cold-Steep Ruby Mint

Cold filtered water • Fridge 4–6 hrs • 4 servings

- 2 tbsp dried hibiscus petals
- 1 tbsp dried peppermint leaf + 1 tbsp lemon balm
- 4 cups cold filtered water in a quart glass jar

Taste note: Ultra-smooth, never astringent. Refrigerate (never sun-steep), strain clean, and enjoy within 48 hours.

Habit Tip for Unused Drawers: Do not try all 6 blends in one week. Circle **1 afternoon recipe** and **1 evening recipe** above, keep only those jars beside your electric kettle, and brew them 4 days in a row until the ratio becomes automatic.

Printable Cabinet Quick-Sheet & 6 Cut-Out Jar Labels

Print this single page on regular paper or cardstock. Make one horizontal cut along the dashed amber line: tape the top cabinet chart inside your tea cupboard, then cut out the 6 glass jar labels below.

Stock	Starter Herb	Single-Cup Ratio	Temp & Method	Steep Time	Top Pairing
[ ]	**German Chamomile**	1–2 level tsp / 8 oz	195°F covered	7–10 min	Lemon Balm / Honey
[ ]	**Peppermint Leaf**	1–2 level tsp / 8 oz	195°F covered	7–10 min	Hibiscus / Ginger
[ ]	**Dried Ginger Root**	1 level tsp / 10 oz	Gentle simmer	15 min	Lemon Balm / Mint
[ ]	**Lemon Balm Leaf**	1–2 level tsp / 8 oz	195°F covered	7–10 min	Chamomile / Ginger
[ ]	**Culinary Thyme**	1/2–1 level tsp / 8 oz	195°F covered	7 min	Honey / Lemon Zest
[ ]	**Hibiscus Petals**	1 tsp hot / 1.5 tsp iced	195°F or Cold	8m / 4h cold	Peppermint / Ice

My 2 Go-To Kettle Blends This Month (Stays on Cabinet Sheet)

Afternoon Cup: _____
Ratio & steep note: _____

Evening Cup: _____
Ratio & steep note: _____

✂ CUT HERE ONCE — TAPE TOP HALF INSIDE CUPBOARD • CUT 6 JAR LABELS BELOW

German Chamomile — WHOLE FLOWERS

Brew: 1–2 tsp / 8 oz • 195°F covered • 7–10 min
Note: Evening blend base (Asteraceae family)
Opened: ____/____ Refresh (9m): ____/____

Peppermint — CUT LEAF

Brew: 1–2 tsp / 8 oz • 195°F covered • 7–10 min
Note: Crisp after-meal or iced refresher
Opened: ____/____ Refresh (9m): ____/____

Dried Ginger Root — CUT ROOT

Brew: 1 level tsp / 10 oz • Simmer covered • 15 min
Note: Add delicate leaves off-heat after simmer
Opened: ____/____ Refresh (12m): ____/____

Lemon Balm — CUT LEAF

Brew: 1–2 tsp / 8 oz • 195°F covered • 7–10 min
Note: Bright mild citrus-mint aroma
Opened: ____/____ Refresh (6m): ____/____

Culinary Thyme — WHOLE LEAF

Brew: 1/2–1 tsp / 8 oz • 195°F covered • 7 min
Note: Savory warming tea with honey & lemon
Opened: ____/____ Refresh (9m): ____/____

Hibiscus Petals — DRIED CALYCES

Brew: 1 tsp hot / 1.5 tsp iced • 195°F (8m) or Cold (4h)
Note: Tart ruby-red iced & hot cups
Opened: ____/____ Refresh (12m): ____/____

Plain-English Kitchen Herbal Safety & Medication Check

Culinary herbs are gentle for most healthy adults in occasional teacup amounts, yet "natural" never means interaction-free. Review this plain-English herb & medication safety table before starting a daily tea routine.

Starter Herb	Key Sensitivities, Medication Interactions & Practical Cautions
German Chamomile	Asteraceae (daisy/ragweed) family—avoid with ragweed or marigold allergies. Check with a pharmacist if taking blood thinners (warfarin), sedatives, or transplant meds (cyclosporine/tacrolimus); pause daily use 1–2 weeks before surgery.
Peppermint Leaf	Menthol can relax the lower esophageal valve and worsen acid reflux (GERD) or heartburn. Use caution with gallstones or bile duct obstruction, and separate from iron supplements (polyphenols can lower non-heme iron absorption).
Dried Ginger Root	Check with a clinician if taking blood thinners, diabetes/blood-sugar medications, or if you have a bleeding disorder or gallstones. Pause concentrated daily use 1–2 weeks before surgery. **Pregnancy note:** 1 tsp dried ginger ≈ 2 g—check with your OB before exceeding 1 g/day.
Lemon Balm	Check with a healthcare provider before regular daily use if you take thyroid hormone medication (e.g., levothyroxine) or prescription sedatives.
Culinary Thyme	Normal culinary tea amounts are widely enjoyed, but avoid concentrated medicinal doses or thyme essential oil internally—especially during pregnancy. Check with a clinician if taking blood thinners/antiplatelets or before scheduled surgery.
Hibiscus Petals	**Avoid during pregnancy.** May interact with blood-pressure medications, diuretics, diabetes medications, or acetaminophen clearance; use caution with low baseline blood pressure. Rinse mouth with plain water after drinking to protect tooth enamel.

3 Non-Negotiable Safety Habits: (1) **Never wild-forage** unless trained in person by a qualified botanist—always buy food-grade, clearly labeled culinary herbs. (2) **Introduce one new herb at a time** with a half-cup test so you notice any sensitivity immediately. (3) **Never use essential oils in tea**—they do not dissolve in water and can irritate internal tissue.

Ready Later to Expand Beyond Your 6 Starter Herbs?

Once your 6-jar kitchen shelf feels effortless, these two curated next-step references help you build out your pantry:

- **Illustrated Reference Manual — *The Forgotten Home Apothecary*:** 250+ illustrated traditional kitchen teas, syrups, salves, and infused oils in one indexed shelf book. `mywellnessnow.org/go/home-apothecary`
  Vetting note: Includes broad folk-herbal and wild-plant chapters—stick strictly to labeled culinary herbs, never wild-forage unidentified plants, and treat all content as traditional educational reference.
- **Quality Organic Bulk Herbs (2–4 oz bags):** Reputable cut-and-sifted culinary dried herbs & amber glass jars. `mywellnessnow.org/go/bulk-herbs`

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