

Mint



Interesting Facts

- With its fresh scent hard to miss, mint was no doubt **one of the earliest** herbs discovered.
- One drum of oil (weighing about 400 pounds) can be used to flavor approximately **5 million sticks** of chewing gum or **400,000 tubes** of toothpaste.
- The early Romans believed eating mint would **increase intelligence**.
- The United States produces more than **70%** of the world's supply of peppermint and spearmint.
- Wisconsin ranks **5th** in the nation in production of mint oil.

Uses of Mint

- Flavoring for **gum**.
- Flavoring for **toothpaste**.
- Flavoring agents in a variety of **confectionery**, **pharmaceutical** and **liquor** flavoring trades.

How Mint is Grown and Harvested

Mint is a **perennial** crop planted in late March and early April by taking the roots or underground runners from one field and establishing them in another.

During the growing season, which requires **60 inches of rainfall** for optimum performance, the plant reacts with sunlight and produces oil. The oil is stored in glands on the underside of the peppermint and spearmint leaves.

In **July, August** and **September**, mature mint fields are mowed with a machine called a windrower once in a growing season. The cut mint is then dried for **48 to 72 hours**.

The cut mint is then **chopped** with a forage harvester and blown into an enclosed mint tub, a specially designed wagon to transport to the **on-farm distiller**, for processing into mint oil.

Mint Processing

After mint is harvested and put into the mint tubs, mint **oil is extracted** from the leaves by steam pipes in the floor of the wagon connected to boilers. Steam rises through the mint leaves **vaporizing the oil** and is then collected in a hose at the top of the tub.

From there the vapors are piped to **water-cooled condensers** where they are returned to their liquid state. In the separator, the oil rises to the top and is drawn into **55-gallon drums** to be shipped to mint buyers.