

Spice It Up!

Using Herbs and Spices



The average American eats 3,400 milligrams of sodium (salt) daily! This is more the recommended daily amount (< 2,300 milligrams). Instead of using salt as a main seasoning, use different herbs and spices to flavor food. One of the fun aspects of using herbs and spices is to experiment with them to make memorable dishes that delight taste buds.

Here are herb and spice lists for different meats and vegetables. These lists are not extensive but should give you different seasoning ideas. Cookbooks are also wonderful tools to use when looking for seasoning ideas.

HERBS

Herbs are known to have an association with certain foods – rosemary and lamb; sage and pork; basil and tomatoes. When working with herbs, small amounts of dried herbs can produce a lot of flavor and aroma. Try to keep a variety of herbs in your home and not just a jar of herb mix. If you enjoy gardening, grow and dry your own herbs.

When drying herbs, follow these tips:

1. Pick them just before they bloom, or they will lose flavor.
2. Pick them on a dry, gray day and wash immediately.

3. For small-leaf herbs (e.g. tarragon, thyme):
 - Divide into bunches; tie loosely with string.
 - Hang the bunches in cheesecloth bags or spread on newspaper or a cloth over a rack.
 - Dry in a warm place (not in sunshine).
4. For large-leaf herbs (e.g. sage, mint, bay):
 - Tie loosely and dry in same manner as small-leaf herbs or dip into boiling water for a minute, shake dry, and dry to a crisp at very low temperature (warm or 200 degrees Fahrenheit) in oven.
5. Use a rolling pin or a spice grinder to crush the dried herbs for storage. Store in tightly sealed jars.
6. Delicate herbs (e.g. mint, dill, tarragon, basil) can be frozen. Store in airtight containers or bags.

Cooking With Herbs

1. Adding herbs and spices to your recipes is a great way to add a bit of pizzazz to your cooking! Be conservative in the amount of an herb used until you are familiar with the strength of it. You can always add more, but it is impossible to remove excess. A useful guide is: 1/4 teaspoon powdered = 1 teaspoon dried crumbled = 3 teaspoons fresh. If you are using dried herbs instead of fresh, the ratio is 1 to 3, so 1 teaspoon dried herbs = 1 tablespoon fresh herbs.
2. Add fresh herbs at the end of cooking to preserve their flavor.
3. The more delicate herbs, such as basil, chives, cilantro, dill weed, parsley, and marjoram, should be added just before serving.
4. The less delicate herbs, such as oregano, rosemary, tarragon, and thyme, can be added in the last 20 minutes of cooking.
5. Add dried whole herbs and spices at the start of cooking to get the full flavor. Removing whole herbs and spices, at the end of cooking, may be necessary.
6. Get more flavor from dried flaked herbs by crumbling them in your palm before adding them to your dish.
7. Hot red pepper gets hotter during cooking, so start with small amounts.
8. For cold foods (dips, dressings, etc.), add herbs several hours before serving.



SPICES

Spices have been used in cooking since the Middle Ages! When choosing spices, buy in small quantities and use whole spices when possible.

Grind or pound the whole spice when the recipe requires ground spices. A coffee grinder can be used (make sure not to use it for coffee, too) or a mortar and pestle. For garlic, fresh ginger, fresh cilantro leaves and chili peppers, a large mortar and pestle will make a great product.

Wondering which seasoning to use? Smell the fragrance of the seasoning. Can you imagine that “flavor” with a selected vegetable or meat? If you can, give it a try!

HERB AND SPICE COMBINATIONS FOR VEGETABLES

Use any one of the seasonings to complement the vegetable for which it is recommended.

Asparagus

Chives, garlic, sesame seed, tarragon

Beets

All-spice, bay leaf, anise, caraway seed, cloves, dill, ginger, mustard seed, savory, thyme

Broccoli

Caraway seed, dill, mustard seed, tarragon

Brussels sprouts

Basil, caraway seed, dill, mustard seed, sage, thyme

Cabbage

Caraway seed, celery seed, dill, mint, mustard seed, nutmeg, savory, tarragon

Carrots

Allspice, anise, bay leaf, caraway seed, cinnamon, cloves, mace, ginger, marjoram, mint, sage, tarragon

Cauliflower

Caraway seed, dill, mace, nutmeg, tarragon

Corn

Allspice, cayenne pepper, chili powder, curry, parsley, chives

Cucumbers

Basil, chives, dill, garlic, mint, tarragon

Eggplant

Marjoram, oregano

Green beans

Basil, caraway seed, chives, dill, marjoram, mint, nutmeg, oregano, rosemary, savory, thyme, tarragon

Onions

Caraway seed, mustard seed, nutmeg, oregano, sage, thyme

Peas

Allspice, basil, dill, marjoram, mint, fresh parsley, sage, savory, poppy seed, rosemary

Potatoes

Basil, bay leaf, caraway seed, celery seed, chives, paprika, parsley, thyme

Spinach

Basil, mace, marjoram, nutmeg, oregano

Squash

Allspice, basil, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, mace, mustard seed, nutmeg, rosemary

Sweet Potatoes

Allspice, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg

Tomatoes

Allspice, basil, bay leaves, black pepper, marjoram, oregano, sage, savory, tarragon, thyme

HERB AND SPICE COMBINATIONS FOR MEATS

Use any one of the seasonings to complement the meat for which it is recommended.

Beef

Allspice, bay leaf, black pepper, cayenne, cumin, curry powder, dry mustard, nutmeg, rosemary, sage, thyme

Eggs

Basil, chives, curry, dry mustard, paprika, parsley

Lamb

Basil, curry powder, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, sesame

Pork

Cinnamon, cloves, ginger, mint, marjoram, sage, savory

Poultry

Basil, bay leaf, cinnamon, curry powder, garlic, mace, marjoram, paprika, parsley, sage, saffron, savory, thyme, tarragon, ginger

Seafood

Allspice, basil, bay leaf, cayenne, curry powder, cumin, dry mustard powder, garlic, mace, marjoram, mint, paprika, saffron, sage, sesame, tarragon, thyme, turmeric

Veal

Bay leaf, black pepper, curry powder, ginger, marjoram, mint, oregano, saffron, sage, savory, tarragon

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MP-121.3R • April 2020

Revised April 2020

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Originally published September 2007

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Source: Conran, C., Conran, T., & S. Hopkinson (1997). *The Essential Cook Book*. The back-to-basic guide to selecting, preparing, cooking, and serving the very best of food. Stewart, Taboire, & Chang: New York.



Issued in furtherance of extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Kelly Crane, director, University of Wyoming Extension, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming 82071.

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