

Herbs & Spices: A pinch of flavor with big benefits

Herbs and spices have always added a pleasurable experience to eating, but research has recently confirmed the additional healthy benefits of herbs and spices beyond culinary. A small amount of an herb or spice provides phytonutrient rich antioxidants. Listed below are some of the big contenders.

Oregano

Oregano has more antioxidant power than any other herb. It contains *quercetin*, a strong antioxidant being studied for its role in cancer prevention, specifically for breast, ovarian, & endometrial cancers.

Rosemary

Rosemary also has benefits as a cancer prevention agent. Rosemary extract added to meat before grilling blocks cancer compounds from forming. Rosemary is also an anti-inflammatory agent and aids digestion.

Turmeric

Turmeric contains the phytochemical, *curcumin*, which provides its color. Turmeric may also have potential in treating cancer by promoting cancer cell death. It is a potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant. Curry powder also contains turmeric.

Red Pepper (Cayenne, Paprika)

Red pepper contains *capsaicin*, which may cause cancer cells to self-destruct while leaving normal cells unharmed. Red pepper also boosts circulation, fights infection and aids in digestion. Cayenne, ground red pepper & paprika should be stored in the refrigerator to retain their color, freshness and beneficial activity.

Ginger

Ginger can be helpful in relieving nausea. Ginger also has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

Garlic

Garlic contains antioxidants and potentially can lower cholesterol and blood pressure. Garlic is being studied as a potential cancer fighter.

Cinnamon

Diabetics who took approximately one quarter tsp of cinnamon a day decreased their blood glucose, cholesterol and blood fats by 30%. Cinnamon can also relieve indigestion, bloating, and flatulence.

Some of you may still have fresh herbs from the garden. For those of you who do not—no problem! Both fresh and dried herbs & spices have health benefits. If you don't have experience cooking with herbs and spices, the following tips may be helpful:

Turmeric:

- Add flavor and color to steamed rice or couscous with a sprinkle of curry powder.
- For a new twist to chicken salad, add a dash of curry powder along with nuts, fruit, or chopped apples.
- Lightly dust hot popcorn or snack mixes with curry powder for a new taste sensation.
- Turn tomato soup from dull to delicious. Add ½ teaspoon curry powder to 2 cups tomato soup.

Cinnamon:

- Perk up your morning coffee with ground cinnamon. Sprinkle ½ teaspoon over ground coffee before brewing.
- Next time you make French toast, pancakes, waffles or muffins, try adding ½ to 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon to the batter.
- Give lunchbox sandwiches an unexpected flavor boost. Add a sprinkle of ground cinnamon to peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Also tastes great on peanut butter and banana sandwiches!

Ginger:

- For a fresh fruit pick-me-up, try a light sprinkling of ground ginger on peaches, pears, cantaloupe, pineapple or honeydew melon.
- Add a hint of spice to frozen yogurt. Stir ½ teaspoon ground ginger into a softened pint of frozen vanilla yogurt. Refreeze for 30 minutes before serving.
- Quench your thirst with ginger lemonade. Add ½ teaspoon ground ginger to 1 quart freshly squeezed lemonade.

Red Pepper

- Sprinkle hummus or guacamole with paprika. Or, add a kick by stirring in ¼ teaspoon ground red pepper or crushed red pepper.
- Mix up your own spiced salt by mixing 2 tablespoons sea salt, 2 teaspoons paprika, ½ teaspoon ground cumin and a pinch of ground red pepper. Sprinkle over grilled or roasted meat, fish and poultry.
- Serve bread with olive oil like it's done in an Italian restaurant. Mix ¼ cup olive oil, 1 teaspoon grated Parmesan cheese, ½ teaspoon garlic powder, 1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper and sea salt to taste in small shallow dish.

Oregano:

- Add oregano leaves at the end of cooking your favorite spaghetti sauce.
- Sprinkle oregano on your pizza right when it comes out of the oven.

Rosemary

- Add sprigs and 1 tbsp olive oil to diced or wedged potatoes and roast on a cookie sheet in the oven @ 450F for 20 minutes.
- Throw rosemary sprigs onto hot coals while grilling fish or chicken

- Make rosemary lemonade: Boil water, sugar and rosemary together until sugar is dissolved. Strain out the rosemary leaves. Add to lemonade concentrate and chill.

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