

Spice It Up

Herbs and spices can be used to add extra flavor to food without adding salt or calories. Get started and spice it up!

What's the difference between herbs and spices?

Herbs are leaves of plants that can be used fresh or dried. Dried forms may be whole, crushed, or ground. Examples are parsley, chives, marjoram, thyme, basil, caraway, dill, oregano, rosemary, savory, sage, and celery leaves.

Spices come from the bark (cinnamon), root (ginger, onion, garlic), buds (cloves, saffron), seeds (yellow mustard, poppy, sesame), berry (black pepper), or the fruit (allspice, paprika) of tropical plants and trees.

Many **dehydrated vegetable seasonings** are available. These include onion, garlic, and shallots.

Seasoning blends are mixtures of **spices** and **herbs**.

Spices and herbs can help enhance and retain flavor in your foods while cutting back on dietary sugar, sodium/salt, and fat.

Reduce or eliminate sugar by using sweet-tasting spices such as:

Allspice	Cloves	Cinnamon	Mace
Anise	Ginger	Cardamom	Nutmeg



In place of salt, use savory flavors and those with a “bite.” These are the most effective in replacing the taste of salt. Try:

Black pepper	Garlic powder	Curry powder	Cumin
Dill seeds	Onion	Ginger	Coriander

- Omit salt when cooking pasta and flavor with basil, oregano, parsley, and pepper, or use an Italian seasoning blend.
- Use garlic or onion powder rather than garlic or onion salt. Use half as much of the powdered form. Avoid spices with added salt. Check the labels.

Removing fat can reduce calories. Reducing fat by just 1 tablespoon removes about 100 calories, which would yield a 10-pound weight loss in 1 year. The calories in herbs and spices are far less than using fat for flavor in breading, batter, gravy, sauces, and fried food.

Get Started Seasoning

When you start adding flavors to your foods with herbs and spices, you may be surprised at what you’ve been missing. Try the following food and flavor combinations to enhance a meal.

For meat, poultry, and fish, try one or more of these combinations:

- **Beef:** Bay leaf, marjoram, nutmeg, onion, pepper, sage, thyme
- **Lamb:** Curry powder, garlic, rosemary, mint



- **Pork:** Garlic, onion, sage, pepper, oregano
- **Veal:** Bay leaf, curry powder, ginger, marjoram, oregano
- **Fish:** Curry powder, dill, dry mustard, marjoram, paprika, pepper, turmeric
- **Chicken:** Ginger, marjoram, oregano, paprika, poultry seasoning, rosemary, sage, tarragon, thyme, anise seeds

For vegetables, experiment with one or more of these combinations:

- **Carrots:** Cinnamon, cloves, dill, ginger, marjoram, nutmeg, rosemary, sage
- **Corn:** Cumin, curry powder, onion, paprika, parsley
- **Green Beans:** Dill, curry powder, marjoram, oregano, tarragon, thyme
- **Greens:** Onion, pepper
- **Potatoes:** Dill, garlic, onion, paprika, parsley, sage
- **Summer Squash:** Cloves, curry powder, marjoram, nutmeg, rosemary, sage, allspice
- **Winter Squash:** Cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, onion
- **Tomatoes:** Basil, bay leaf, dill, marjoram, onion, oregano, parsley, pepper



General Guidance

- If possible, start with a tested recipe from a reliable source.
- Begin with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of ground spices or ground dried herb, and adjust to taste.
- For cayenne pepper and garlic powder, start with $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon, and adjust to taste.
- Red pepper intensifies in flavor during cooking; add it in small increments.
- Keep in mind that 1 tablespoon of fresh herb = 1 teaspoon of dried herb.
- If you are creating your own recipe, begin by trying one or two spices or herbs. The amount to add varies with the type of spice or herb, type of recipe, and preference.
- When doubling a recipe, do not double spices and herbs only increase by $1\frac{1}{2}$ times. Always taste and adjust by preference.

There are many, many varieties of spices and herbs. Begin to experiment and find new flavors.

Mix, Match, Blend, and Enjoy!

