



HERBS AND SPICES

Cooking with herbs and spices may be a little intimidating at first, but once you learn more about them, you will find they can be fun to experiment with and a simple way to add flavor to your favorite foods without adding extra salt.



Storing Herbs and Spices

To maintain the most fresh herbs and spices, they need to be stored properly.

- ◆ Fresh herbs should be wrapped in a paper towel and stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.
- ◆ Dried herbs should be stored in a dark, cool, dry place, so not above the stove. Don't shake bottles directly over food you are cooking because moisture from the steam may enter the bottle and cause the herbs to go stale faster.
- ◆ When stored for too long, dried herbs and spices can lose potency. Next time you open your dried herb or spice jar and don't smell anything, it is time to replace the bottle. Another sign to look for is if the dried herbs are a faded color. Try crushing a few leaves to see if there is still an aroma.
- ◆ The shelf life of spices is dependent on the specific spice, climate, and size of the spice. The larger and more whole a spice is, the longer it will hold its flavor.

Fresh Versus Dried Herbs

No need to fret when a recipe calls for fresh parsley and all you have is dried. The simple substitution ratio of fresh to dry is 3 to 1. Since dried herbs are more potent, less is needed. For example, when a recipe calls for 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, substitute 1 teaspoon dry parsley since there are 3 teaspoons in a tablespoon.

How Much to Add

Spices and herbs are meant to compliment foods. Well tested recipes have exact amounts of herbs and spices to add which will compliment the dish. If you are feeling brave and experimenting on your own, start small, and adjust seasonings to your personal preference and taste. A good rule to follow is 1/4 teaspoon dried herbs and spices per 4 servings, pound of meat, or 2 cups sauce or soup. Use only 1/8 teaspoon for cayenne pepper and garlic powder. Red pepper increases in intensity during cooking, so start with small amounts and allow time for the flavor to intensify. Then, adjust flavors as necessary.

When to Add

Dried herbs should be added during cooking because they need time to release their flavors and infuse the dish. Fresh herbs are best when used at the end of the cooking to finish off the dish.

Herb and Spice Blends

Herb and spice blends make it simple and are a good choice when you are unsure of what herb spice combination to add to a certain food or dish. Sometimes these blends can be deceptive because they contain a large amount of salt. Look for sodium-free blends that will add a lot of flavor without the extra salt.



Spices to Try

Next time you are cooking dinner, try some of these herbs and spices that go well with your favorite foods.

Beef: bay leaf, chili powder, cumin, garlic, marjoram, nutmeg, onion, pepper, sage, thyme

Lamb: curry powder, garlic, rosemary, mint

Pork: cumin, coriander, garlic, onion, sage, pepper, oregano, thyme

Chicken: ginger, Italian seasoning, marjoram, oregano, paprika, poultry seasoning, rosemary, sage, tarragon, thyme

Fish: curry powder, dill, dry mustard, marjoram, paprika, pepper

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

Leafy Greens: dry mustard, garlic, lemon, onion, pepper

Potatoes: dill, garlic, onion, paprika, parsley, rosemary, sage

Summer Squash: cloves, cumin, curry powder, marjoram, nutmeg, rosemary, sage

Winter Squash: cinnamon, garlic, ginger, nutmeg, onion

Tomatoes: basil, bay leaf, dill, Italian seasoning, marjoram, onion, oregano, parsley, pepper

Cucumbers: chives, dill, garlic, pepper

Peas: garlic, mint, onion, parsley, pepper

Rice: cilantro, chives, curry, lime, onion, paprika, parsley, pepper



Ethnic Herbs and Spices

Chinese: bean paste, garlic, ginger, green onions, hot red peppers, sesame seeds, soy sauce

Indian: black pepper, cardamom, chilies, cilantro, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, cumin, curry powder, garlic, ginger, mint, mustard seeds, nutmeg, saffron, sesame seeds, turmeric

Italian: basil, bay leaves, fennel, garlic, marjoram, onion, oregano, parsley, red pepper, rosemary

Mediterranean: cinnamon, dill, garlic, lemon, mint, nutmeg, oregano

Mexican: chilies, cilantro, cinnamon, coriander, cumin, garlic, lime, onion, oregano, vanilla

Perfect Poultry Rub

1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
2 teaspoons smoked paprika
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1/2 teaspoon cumin
1/4 teaspoon cayenne (optional)

Combine all ingredients. Makes about 3 tablespoons, enough to season a 4-pound whole chicken or 8 bone-in or boneless breasts.

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