



BETTER LIVING
FOR TEXANS
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Don't Sacrifice Flavor to Eat Healthier

Many of us have been involved in a conversation similar to this:

“We need to start eating healthier this year.”

“No way! Healthy foods don't have any flavor! I'm not going to eat food that tastes like cardboard.”

A common food perception is that the label *healthy food* means that flavor has been sacrificed. The reality is that you don't have to sacrifice flavor to eat healthier. One of the most effective ways to add flavor to healthy food options is to use fresh spices and herbs.

Spices and herbs are terms that are often used interchangeably, but they are distinct. Herbs come from aromatic plants grown in temperate climates while spices come from tropical plants. In most instances, the leaves of herbs are used for seasoning in dishes. Spices, however, come from the bark, berries, flower buds, roots, or seeds of the plant.

Examples of herbs are basil, parsley, rosemary, thyme, chives, oregano, and dill. Spices include cloves, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, and cumin.

Both herbs and spices can add flavor, color, and aroma to foods. They are low in calories, sodium, and fat. In addition, they are cholesterol free. Herbs and spices are often used in place of salt.

The flavors available in herbs and spices range from delicate to strong. Strong flavored variants include

bay leaves, ginger, and curry. Medium flavors include basil, celery seeds (and leaves), cumin, and fennel. Burnet, chervil, chives, and parsley fall under the category of delicate flavored. Cinnamon, cloves, ginger, and anise are labeled as sweet flavored while peppers, mustard, and paprika are categorized as peppery flavored.

Herbs and spices should be stored in cool, dry places and in air-tight containers. It is a good idea to test whole spices for freshness once a year by crushing a small amount and sniffing it. The aroma should be fresh and pungent. Ground spices should be checked the same way every six months and dried herbs 2 to 3 times per year. Refrigeration or freezing will preserve flavor and reduce the chance of infestation.



Source: University of Delaware Extension

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Spiced Pears (serves 4)

Focus on Fruit with this spicy pear recipe. Use canned pears to bake desserts, add to salads, or use as a topping for low-fat yogurt. Choose pears packed in light or extra light syrup.

Ingredients

- 1 can pears (undrained, about 15 ounces)
- 4 slices fresh ginger (peeled, if you like)
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg (if you like)
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 cups low-fat vanilla ice cream

Directions

1. Drain liquid from pears into saucepan and add cinnamon. If using nutmeg and ginger, add that too.
2. Bring to boil; reduce heat and cook for 5 minutes.
3. Add pears, remove from heat, and chill in the refrigerator: Remove any ginger before serving.
4. Spoon pears and liquid over ice cream.



Chili & Spice seasoning (serves 7)

A combination of zesty herbs and spices add flavor without adding salt. Make this seasoning mix ahead of time and keep it in your pantry to use in soups, stews, sauces, casseroles, and more!

Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons paprika
- 2 tablespoons oregano (dried, crushed)
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon pepper (black)
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper (red)
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard

Directions

Mix together all ingredients and store in an airtight container.

Total Cost: \$1.37



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