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Spice up your Cooking!

Cutting sodium and fat from your cooking doesn't mean you need to sacrifice flavor. Spices and herbs are an innovative way to enhance the taste of your dishes. First, let's distinguish between herbs and spices. Spices come from the bark, buds, fruit, roots, seeds, or stems of plants and trees, and grow in tropical areas. They are usually dried, except gingerroot and garlic. Herbs are grown in temperate climates and are the fragrant leaves of plants. However, some plants may supply both. For example, the seeds of coriander are used in curry powder, while the leaves of the plant are called cilantro, which is used in many Mexican dishes.

Here are some tips on storing your herbs and spices:

Store them in tightly covered containers in a cool, dry, dark place. Heat and bright light destroy flavor. Moisture can promote mold.

Date the herbs and spices when you buy them. It is better to use them within a year. After that they tend to lose their full flavor.

To check for freshness, rub the seasonings between your fingers and smell the aroma.

If there's not much, get a new supply.

To keep fresh herbs longer, snip the stem ends, and stand them in water. Then cover them with a plastic bag and store in the refrigerator. Change the water every couple of days.

To freeze herbs, first wash and dry them well. Then seal them in plastic freezer bags.

To dry herbs in the oven you need to wash them and blot dry. Remove the leaves from the stems. Place the herbs on baking trays in a single layer. Heat them in the oven at 100 degrees F. for several hours with the door slightly open. Remove the leaves before they get brown. Cool and store in a tightly covered container.

Here is a great recipe using the fresh herb cilantro!

Grilled Corn with Cilantro Butter

6 large ears of corn, husks removed
4 tablespoons butter, softened
3 tablespoons fresh cilantro, chopped
Salt and pepper

Preheat your grill to medium-high heat. In a bowl mix butter and cilantro, set aside. Coat corn lightly with canola cooking spray and grill until tender, about 10-15 minutes.

Remove corn from grill and place on piece of aluminum foil. Spread butter mixture on each ear of corn and season with salt and pepper to taste. Tightly seal the foil around the corn and return it to the grill for about 5 minutes. Remove from grill and enjoy!

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