

Herbs are leaves or stems of plants that are used for flavoring food. They can be either fresh or dried. Dill, rosemary, thyme, parsley, and oregano are examples of herbs. Spices are made from the seeds, bark, or fruit of dried plants. Cinnamon, nutmeg and black pepper are examples of common spices. Using the right amounts and types of spices and herbs in a recipe is what will turn a bland, ho-hum meal into one that you'll never forget.

### Buying herbs and spices

**Fresh Herbs:** Choose an herb like you would a flower. You want the herb to be pretty and fragrant, not wilted and bruised. The flavor comes from the herb's oils, so if the leaf or stem is broken or bruised, much of the oil and flavor will have been lost. Generally, the more smell the herb has, the more flavor it has.

**Spices:** There are two reasons whole spices are better than ground. First, whole spices are cheaper. Second, they produce a stronger flavor than ground, which means you use less. As with herbs, choose spices that have a strong aroma, because they will be more flavorful.

### Storing herbs and spices

Wash and dry herbs after bringing them home from the store, or in from your own herb garden. Wrap herbs in a damp paper towel, seal in a zip-loc bag and store in the refrigerator. For herbs like cilantro and parsley, cut the ends of the herbs at an angle and then put them in a jar of water like you would flowers.

If dried herbs or spices are exposed to air, heat, or light, they will lose some of their oils, and be less flavorful. Keep them in tightly sealed containers in a cool, dark cabinet. If you open a container of spices or herbs and can't smell anything, or it smells musty, the flavor is likely gone.



### Cooking, Drying, & Toasting herbs and spices

The flavorful oils in herbs escape quickly into the air, making it difficult to retain them in your food. To maximize flavor when using fresh herbs:

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- Chop them with a sharp knife, cut them with scissors, or tear them by hand.
- Don't chop them finely. The more you chop herbs the stronger they start smelling. These smells are the oils escaping into the air, which means fewer flavors in your food.
- Chop or tear the herbs at the last minute so the oils don't have as much time to escape.

For a real flavor bonus, blanch your fresh herbs by dipping them in boiling, salted water for 15 seconds and then in ice water. This maximizes the flavor.

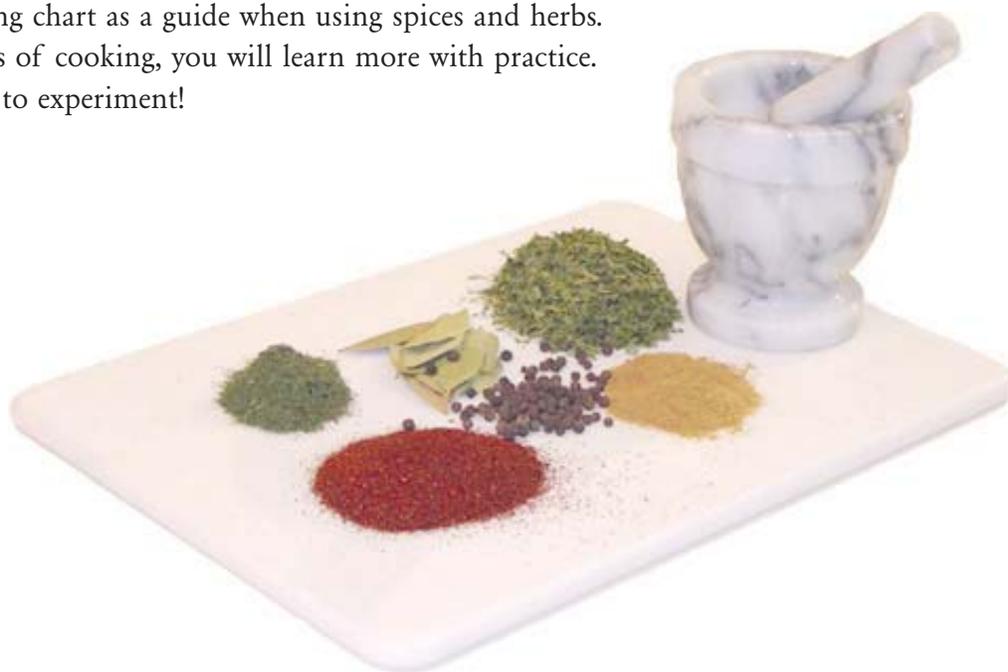
### Drying Herbs

It can be a good idea to dry fresh herbs, because dried herbs keep longer than fresh ones. Dried herbs are best used in sauces, stews, and soups, because they become re-hydrated. You can dry herbs with either your microwave or oven. To dry in the microwave, spread the herbs in a single layer on a microwave safe plate and heat for 1 minute. To dry in the oven, spread the herbs on a baking sheet in a single layer and cook for 30 minutes at 180 degrees Fahrenheit. Store dried herbs in a tightly sealed container in a cool, dark cabinet.

### Toasting Spices

To maximize the flavors of whole spices, toast them first by placing them in a small nonstick pan without oil. Cook over medium heat. Shake the pan continuously, until the spices are fragrant. Do not let them brown! Cool the spices before grinding them, because warm spices will turn to paste if ground.

Use the following chart as a guide when using spices and herbs. As with all areas of cooking, you will learn more with practice. Don't be afraid to experiment!



## Herbs & Spices

Herb/Spice	Flavor	Goes well with...
Allspice	Sweet	Beef, onions, squash, carrots and breads
Basil	Licorice/cloves	Tomatoes, cheese, poultry, eggs, fish & vegetables
Bay Leaf	Piney	Stews, soups, rice and grains
Caraway	Tangy	Rye breads, cabbage and sauerkraut
Cardamom	Sweet	Baked goods
Cayenne	Hotter than black or white	Anywhere you use paprika
Chervil	Licorice, parsley substitute	Carrots, eggs, fish, and salads
Chives	Onion	Salads, vinaigrettes and creams
Cilantro (Coriander)	Pungent. Soapy to some	Salsa, guacamole, root licorice to others. vegetables, and beans
Cinnamon	Sweet or hot	Desserts, breads, fruit
Cloves	Licorice	Hams, soups, breads, beef
Cumin	Spicy. Pairs with chilies.	Bean soup, chicken, lamb, and sausage
Dill	Tangy	Pickles, fish, cream cheese, sour cream
Dried Chili	Hottest	Pizza, pasta, salads
Fennel (Anise)	Licorice	Salads, apples, seafood, sausage
Garlic	Pungent	Sauces, all meats, rice, pasta, and vegetables
Ginger	Pungent	Baking, marinades, tomatoes, onions, ham and soups
Mint	Spicy/sweet, menthol	Candy, lamb, peas and tea
Mustard	Hot	Salad dressing, sausage, sauces
Nutmeg	Sweet & pungent	Breads, custard, BBQ sauce, spinach, carrots, and eggnog
Oregano	Bitter	Tomatoes, fish, potatoes and squash
Paprika	Mild peppery	Eggs, goulash, rice and potatoes
Parsley	Peppery	Chicken, eggs, fish, pasta, potatoes, rice vegetables
Pepper	Hot	Meats, vegetables, rice, pasta

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Herb/Spice	Flavor	Goes well with...
Poppy Seeds	Sweet	Salad dressing, fruit and muffins
Rosemary	Piney w/ lemon	Lamb, pork, beef, salmon, mushrooms and potatoes
Saffron	Medicinal	Risotto, paella, fish, rice and lamb
Sage	Musty mint	Pork, oily fish, stuffing and chicken
Savory	Cross between thyme & mint	Beans and chicken
Sesame	Mild	Breads, sushi, tuna, fish, noodles and eggplant
Tarragon	Licorice	Chicken, vegetables
Thyme	Pungent. Mint/lemon	All meat, goat cheese, figs, soups
Turmeric	Dye properties	Curry, chicken
Vanilla	Sweet	Flan, ice cream, milk drinks, fish, baked goods

### Creating Seasoned Oils

Seasoned oils make great salad dressings, topping for baked fruit or cooking oil for stir-fry. Make them in small amounts and store in the refrigerator. Use neutral oils like canola, walnut, or extra virgin olive oil.

### Fresh Herb Oils

Basil, parsley, mint, cilantro, thyme, rosemary, and oregano all make great seasoned oils, which will last one month in the refrigerator.

- Chop herbs coarsely and then blend in a blender or food processor.
- Add the same amount of oil as you have herbs and make it into a paste.
- Put the mixture into a jar and add an additional 1 cup of oil.
- Shake until mixed and refrigerate.

### Spice Oils

Use mustard, chili, curry, cumin, cinnamon, or saffron to make these tasty oils. They will keep up to 6 months in the refrigerator.

- Make a paste using 1 Tbsp. of powdered spice to every 1 tsp. of water.
- Put the paste in a glass jar and add 1 cup of oil.
- Shake until mixed.
- Let sit on counter for one day and then filter oil through cheesecloth into a glass jar and refrigerate.

### Root Oils

Roots like shallots, garlic, horseradish, or ginger can be used to make oil that will keep in the refrigerator for 2 weeks.

- Using a cheese grater, grate the root into a bowl.
- In a glass jar add 1 Tbsp. of root to 1 cup of oil.
- Shake until mixed and refrigerate.



## Herbs & Spices

### Creating Seasoned Vinegars

Seasoned oils can be used with seasoned vinegars for salad dressings or for adding flavor to cooked vegetables. Basil, caraway, cayenne, chives, coriander, curry, dill, fennel, garlic, horseradish, mint, rosemary, tarragon, and thyme all make good vinegars.

- Use mild vinegar like rice wine vinegar.
- Use ¼ cup herbs or spice to 1 cup of vinegar.
- Leave out on counter in jar and shake each day.
- It will take two weeks for the flavor to fully infuse into the vinegar.
- The vinegar will last for one year, in or out of the fridge.

### Creating Seasoned Rubs

Seasoned rubs are great on meats and vegetables. However, the premixed seasonings found at the grocery store often contain up to 90% salt in order for the manufacturer to reduce production costs. You can make your own flavorful rubs with much less sodium and more flavor.

#### All Purpose Blend

1 part of each:

Basil  
Bay Leaf (1 only)  
Marjoram  
Parsley  
Sage  
Thyme

#### Fish Blend

1 part each:

Basil  
Dill Weed  
Fennel Weed  
Lavender  
Lemon Balm  
Rosemary

#### Meat Blend

1 part each:

Bay Leaf  
Garlic Tops  
Marjoram  
Parsley  
Rosemary  
Thyme

#### Chicken Blend

1 part each:

Celery Tops  
Chervil  
Parsley  
Sage

#### Bouquet Blend

Tie together for easy  
removal later-

Bay leaf (1 only)  
Marjoram (1 sprig)  
Orange Rind (1 piece)  
Parsley (1 sprig)  
Thyme (1 small sprig)  
Savory Thyme

#### Vegetable Blend

1 part each:

Celery  
Chervil  
Dill Weed  
Fennel Leaves  
Lemon Balm  
Lovage  
Paprika  
Parsley  
Tarragon

## Herbs & Spices

### Salt Substitute

1 part each:

Basil  
Chervil  
Lovage  
Oregano  
Parsley  
Rosemary  
Savory  
Thyme  
Tarragon

### Salad Blend

1 part each:

Basil  
Celery Seeds  
Chervil  
Dill Weed  
Lemon Balm  
Marjoram  
Parsley

### Soup Blend

1/4 cup each:

Basil  
Bay Leaf  
Celery Tops  
Marigold Petals  
Oregano  
Parsley  
Sage  
Savory  
Thyme

### Spaghetti Blend

1 part each:

Garlic Tops  
Marjoram  
Oregano  
Parsley  
Rosemary  
Sage  
Savory

### Herb Garden

Combine in a shaker:

2 tsp. dried Parsley Flakes  
1/2 tsp. Garlic Powder  
1/2 tsp. Basil  
1/2 tsp. Marjoram  
1/2 tsp. Allspice  
1/4 tsp. Pepper

### Zesty Italian

Combine in a shaker:

1/2 tsp. dried  
Parsley Flakes  
1/2 tsp. Oregano  
1/2 tsp. Dried Mustard  
1/2 tsp. Celery Seed  
1/4 tsp. Pepper

## Herbs & Spices

### Creating Marinades

The basic ingredients of marinades are oil and vinegar. Marinades add flavor to meat and vegetables. It is best to marinate meats for about two hours.

- Coat the meat or vegetables in a zip-top plastic bag and then refrigerate.
- Use a combination of pre-spiced oils and vinegars or try the following recipe:
  - > 1¼ cup olive oil
  - > ¼ cup rosemary
  - > ¼ cup thyme
  - > ¼ cup parsley
  - > ¼ cup onion

### Creating Teas

Teas are simple to make. However, certain herbs can be harmful. If the leaves smell bad, don't use them.

- Get a package of tea bags from a grocery store or oriental market.
- Put the dried herbs or spices in a tea bag and soak for 2 minutes.
- Traditional benefits of herbs in herbal teas.
  - > Catnip- Used for relaxation.
  - > Chamomile- Calms stomachaches, relieves anxiety.
  - > Anise- Used to treat insomnia.
  - > Cloves/saffron- Used as an aphrodisiac.
  - > Ginger- Used to increase energy.
  - > Cumin/fennel/coriander- Used for indigestion.
  - > Thyme/sage/ginger- Relieve cold & flu symptoms.
  - > Rosemary- Used to increase circulation.

