

## HERBS AND SPICES

### History

Wars have been fought and countries discovered because of treasured spices. Marco Polo's stories of his trip to China in the late 1200s told of the spice trade in these then unknown lands and brought many Europeans in search of spices. In the 15th to 17th centuries, the Spanish, English, Portuguese, and Dutch traders competed in the spice trade from the Far East. America's first millionaires made their money in the spice trade.

Many families in the colonies had their own herb gardens. Herbs and spices were also imported. These were used in specialty foods, for preservatives, and for special medications. During the 1800s spices contained large amounts of fibrous or woody materials. Better processing techniques have done much to solve this problem. In the early 1900s many salesmen sold spices door-to-door; Golden Rule, Watkins, Raleigh, and Mc Ness were some of the well-known brands.

Today, herbs and spices come from all over the world. Almost half of the spices eaten in the United States are in manufactured products such as sausage, pickles, and baked products.

### Use of Herbs and Spices

Using herbs and spices in cooking offers the chance to prepare exotic, gourmet dishes or ethnic meals. But they also provide many other advantages. First, the use of herbs and spices offers a way to cut calories in cooking. The calories in herbs and spices are far less than in breadings, batters, gravies, sauces, and fried foods. Second, using herbs and spices can save you money if fewer ingredients are needed to prepare food or if they can be used to "dress up" inexpensive foods. Third, many people are looking for flavors to substitute for salt and/or fat.

### SUBSTITUTIONS



#### FRESH OR WHOLE SEASONING

1/3-cup sliced fresh onion  
1/2-teaspoon minced fresh garlic  
1 clove garlic  
1/2-cup diced fresh pepper  
1/2-cup diced fresh celery  
1/2-cup diced peppers, onion, celery and carrots  
1/2-to 1 cup fresh parsley  
1/2-to 1 cup chopped fresh ginger  
1 teaspoon grated fresh lemon or orange peel  
or 1/2-teaspoon lemon or orange extract  
1/4-cup chopped fresh mint  
1 whole bay leaf

#### DEHYDRATED SEASONINGS

1/4-cup onion flakes  
1/4-teaspoon instant minced garlic  
1/8-teaspoon garlic powder  
1/4-cup Bell pepper flakes  
1/4-cup celery flakes  
1/4-cup mixed vegetable flakes  
1/4-cup instant parsley flakes  
1/4-teaspoon ground ginger  
1 teaspoon dried lemon or orange peel  
  
1 tablespoon dried mint  
1 teaspoon cracked bay leaf

**DRIED HERBS** 1/2-teaspoon dried = 1/4-teaspoon ground = 2 to 3 teaspoons freshly minced

## Definitions of Herbs and Spices

*Herbs* are the leaves of low-growing shrubs. Examples are parsley, chives, marjoram, thyme, basil, caraway, dill, oregano, rosemary, savory, sage, and celery leaves. These can be used fresh or dried. Dried forms may be whole, crushed, or ground. Many herbs can be grown in the United States in- or out-of-doors.

*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.

Seasoning blends are mixtures of spices and herbs. Check labels for exact mixtures. Some examples of seasoning blends are:

- Chili powder (red pepper, cumin, oregano, salt, and garlic powder).
- Curry powder (coriander, tumeric, cumin, fenugreek seed, white pepper, allspice, yellow mustard, red pepper, and ginger).
- Poultry seasoning (white pepper, sage, thyme, marjoram, savory, ginger, allspice, and nutmeg).
- Pumpkin pie spice (cinnamon, ginger, allspice, nutmeg, allspice, and cloves).

Many dehydrated vegetable seasonings are available. These include onion, garlic, sweet peppers, mint, mixed vegetables, and freeze-dried chives and shallots.

Condiments are usually a combination of herbs and spices blended in a liquid form. Examples are prepared mustard, catsup, Worcestershire sauce, tabasco sauce, and many of the steak sauces and specialty vinegars. Many of these contain sodium.

### Storing Spices

Whole herbs and spices last much longer than crushed or ground forms. Consequently, many people prefer to buy the whole form and crush or grind it as needed for greater freshness.

Herbs and spices can be crushed with a mortar and pestle, by using a rolling pin on spices placed between two cloths, or by using the back of a spoon in a cup.

Check ground or crushed herbs and spices for freshness at least once a year. Test by crushing a small amount in your hand. If no aroma is detected, the seasoning needs to be replaced. Mustard seed and poppy seed aromas will be difficult to detect. Buying the smaller size instead of the economy size container will save you money if the larger package is not used while it is still fresh.

Heat, sunlight, and dampness cause herbs and spices to lose their flavor and aroma quickly.

1. Store away from moisture. Dampness causes caking and loss of quality.
  - Store in tightly covered jars.
  - Transfer from cardboard containers into airtight containers.
  - Use clean, dry spoons for measuring.
2. Store in a cool place. Storing in the freezer or refrigerator will help spices maintain their quality.
  - Do not store in a window or in sunlight.
  - Do not store near heat sources such as the range or dishwasher.

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### Shelf Life of Herbs and Spices

Seasoning	Storage Time
Whole	2-5 years
Ground Spices	6 months -2 years
Leafy Herbs	3 months -2 years
Dehydrated Vegetables	6 months

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### Adding Spices to a Recipe

#### Whole Spices and Herbs

Tie herbs and spices in a cheesecloth, nylon net, or muslin bag, or place them in a tea ring. The bag or ring is easy to remove to stop the seasoning process. Particles that may cause difficulty in chewing or swallowing also can be removed.

- Add whole herbs and spices at the start of cooking in recipes that will cook for an hour or longer. Examples are soups and stews.
- Many herbal and spiced teas can be made by using whole herbs and spices.
- Seeds used for flavoring can be toasted briefly in the oven or on top of the stove to enhance flavor.

### Crushed and Ground Herbs and Spices

Add about 15 minutes before the end of cooking. The flavors in crushed or ground spices are released quickly.

- Crushing or grinding whole spices and herbs provides more flavor than the whole form.
- Ground black pepper in a pepper shaker does not have the zest of freshly ground pepper. Grinding pepper from the pepper corn provides more flavor.
- For cold salad dressings, mix herbs and/or spices with vinegar for several hours before adding oil in order to develop the flavor.

### The Art of Seasoning

The art of using herbs and spices is learning how much to add and how to combine flavors. Several guidelines suggest amounts to use in developing recipes:

- Use strong, pungent spices such as red pepper in small amounts. More delicate seasonings can be used in greater amounts without ruining the final product. Although the herb or spice should enhance and not overpower the flavor, cultural preferences will influence your decision.



**Basil**



**Cinnamon**



**Dill**



**Nutmeg**

- Start with a tested recipe. After it has been prepared, decide if more or less seasoning is needed for the next time.

- Spice and herb companies recommend about 1/4-teaspoon of a spice per pound of meat or pint of liquid when creating recipes. Only use 1/8-teaspoon of stronger seasonings such as red pepper and garlic. Remember, it is easier to add more than to try to compensate for too much.

- More than one herb or spice can be used in a recipe. When creating, start by using only one or two choices. As you gain experience in cooking with herbs and spices, taste will tell if others might be added.

### Recipes

#### Herb Butters

For 1 stick (1/2-cup) of butter or margarine, try any of the following:

- 1 tsp. dried or 2 Tbsp. fresh basil, chervil, tarragon, thyme, or rosemary;
- 1/2-tsp. curry powder;
- 1/2-cup chopped green onions, 2 Tbsp. dried parsley, 2 Tbsp. prepared mustard, and 2 Tbsp. sesame seeds or poppy seeds;
- 1/2-tsp. basil, 1/4-tsp. marjoram, and 1/4-tsp. savory; or
- 1/4-tsp. marjoram, 1/2-tsp. powdered mustard, 1/2-tsp. tarragon, and 1/4-tsp. rosemary.

#### Tips:

- For color, add about 1 Tbsp. minced fresh parsley or spinach leaves.

**Chervil**



**Tarragon**



**Ginger**



**Mace**



**Mint**



**Oregano**



**Saffron**

- To highlight flavor, add about 1 tsp. lemon juice or wine vinegar.
- Have spread at room temperature for mixing herbs and spreading breads.
- Spread bread slices or a loaf of bread with herb butter and heat until lightly browned.
- Use herb butters also on vegetables, fish, or meat.

### Herb Bread

Many ethnic specialties feature yeast breads and quick breads using a variety of spices and herbs.

Add the following ingredients per pound (3 to 4 cups flour) of yeast dough.

- 1 tsp. sage, 2 tsp. caraway seed, and 1-1/2 tsp. nutmeg;
- 1-1/2 Tbsp. dill seed or 1-1/2 Tbsp. caraway seed and 1/8-cup instant minced onion; or
- 1/2-tsp. sage, 1/2-tsp. thyme, and 1/2-tsp. marjoram.

### Herb and Spiced Beverages

Many cookbooks contain recipes for chocolate and milk drinks and spiced punches which feature special seasonings.

Leaf Teas (Hot or Iced) (bay leaves, mint leaves, thyme leaves, rosemary leaves, parsley, marjoram leaves, sage leaves, or savory leaves)—Steep herbal blends with hot water for about 3 minutes. For stronger herbs use 2 tsp. fresh herb or 1 tsp. dried herb for 5 to 6 ounces of water. These amounts can be doubled if mild herbs are used.



Root and Seed Teas (ginger, cinnamon, or anise seed)—Boil root or seed teas for 15 to 20 minutes.

### Herb Vinegar Dressings

Use with vegetable salads or cooked vegetables.

- 1/8-tsp. ground black pepper, 1 tsp. dry mustard, 1/2-tsp. paprika, 3/4-tsp. garlic powder, 1 Tbsp. finely chopped chives, 3 Tbsp. cider vinegar, 1/2-cup vegetable oil, 2 Tbsp. pickle relish, 2 Tbsp. lemon juice. Yield: 3/4 to 1 cup.
- 3/4-cup tomato juice, 2 Tbsp. lemon juice, 2 Tbsp. instant minced onion, 1 Tbsp. basil leaves crushed, 1/4-tsp. garlic powder, 1/8-tsp. ground cumin seed, 1/8-tsp. ground red pepper. Yield: 3/4 to 1 cup.

### Be Creative

Be both a scientist and an artist as you learn to cook with spices. Start with a few herbs and spices; learn to recognize their flavors and how each complements different foods. Look for new ideas by checking labels on spice packages and by trying recipes of ethnic or other specialty dishes.

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